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## THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN IMPROVING CRITICAL THINKING IN MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH

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### Abstract

This research is entitled "The Role of Teachers in Improving Critical Thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah". The researcher wants to portray the concept of the teacher's role on the critical thinking ability of students. The research aims to find out what happens in Kalibagor Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Critical thinking is a process where a person thinks deeply, is able to solve problems, is able to develop the information he has and is an ability that students must have in the 21st century. This research uses a descriptive type of qualitative method. The subject of this research is the teacher in the Madrasah. Data collection techniques using interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis techniques use the stages of data condensation, data presentation, data verification. The results showed that teachers play an active role in 80% of students' efforts to improve students' critical thinking. They are active in learning activities, have high motivation in learning, and often ask critical questions to the teacher. This research shows a significant positive influence with efforts to provide analytical questions, problem-based learning, project-based learning, guidance, supervision, and motivation.

**Keywords:** Critical Thinking, Role of Teachers, 21st Century

### INTRODUCTION

21st century education is an educational strategy designed to enable students to face challenges in the global era (Astutik & Hariyati, 2021). This education focuses on developing students' skills by making students the main subject of education (AL-Ulum, 2025; Sri Nopiani et al., 2023). Learning in this century, not only prioritizes students' cognitive abilities, but also prioritizes students' critical and creative thinking abilities. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, 21st century skills include critical thinking, creativity and the ability to communicate and collaborate (Web-1). The 21st century skills that must be possessed by students include critical

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thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, character, and citizenship or commonly referred to as 6C (A. Rahman et al., 2025).

Critical thinking is one of the skills that must be mastered by students. Critical thinking is essentially a process where a person thinks deeply (T. Rahman et al., 2025), is able to express their opinions individually and does not necessarily accept the opinions of others, but they continue to develop the information they get. The critical thinking process is very necessary for students. Not only receiving information passively, but also being able to analyze and evaluate the information carefully (Wuisan et al., 2024).

Critical thinking is a skill that is needed by students. This ability is an asset in understanding a concept in learning. Someone who has critical thinking skills will find it easy to solve problems well (Nantara, 2021). In addition, by having critical thinking skills, a person will be able to examine the problems that occur (Yuniar et al., 2022), find and determine solutions that are logical, appropriate, and useful. Every student should have good critical thinking skills. People who have high critical thinking do not only think of an answer, but also develop the possibility of other answers based on the analysis and information they have obtained. Critical thinking skills should be honed since elementary school. Elementary school students who already have critical thinking will easily develop their abilities at higher levels.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is one of the educational institutions that is the initial foundation for students to learn (Sri Nopiani et al., 2023). This institution is also the basis for forming, developing attitudes and honing students' thinking skills (Siti Nur Maulidah et al., 2024). Critical thinking needs to be developed from an early age, especially in elementary schools, namely elementary and MI (Cahyani Kusuma et al., 2023; Mufaizah et al., 2024). However, not all students are able to think critically, this is due to learning methods that are less effective and interesting. Learners who already have critical thinking skills in elementary school, it will be easier to develop their critical thinking.

Teachers play a role in efforts to develop a student's critical thinking skills. A teacher, is the main key in a successful learning (Rarasanti et al., n.d.). The teacher is the main driver for students to think critically. Teachers are not only limited to delivering material, but teachers must also be able to create conducive learning for their students (Nurhalizah, 2025). Choosing the right strategy must also be done, a student-centered learning strategy can be

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an alternative in an effort to improve students' critical thinking (Nantara, 2021; Sri Nopiani et al., 2023). Teachers need to direct their students to be able to think critically in learning.

Studies on the role of teachers in developing critical thinking have been widely reviewed. Research by Nantara, et al (2024) found that critical thinking can be developed through the role of teachers and schools. Research by Cahyani Kusuma, et al (2023) showed that teachers in PAUD play a role in efforts to improve critical thinking in early childhood. Tumanggor et al's research (2024) shows that teachers have an important role in the critical development of students in junior high school. However, not many have examined research on the role of teachers in developing critical thinking of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students.

This research will involve Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teachers with interviews, observations, and data analysis. Interviews conducted with teachers will provide in-depth understanding of the considerations, constraints, and reflections of teachers in the application of the selected teaching methods. Observations were made so that researchers knew how the method was carried out in the classroom. While data analysis is carried out to understand and describe phenomena, study understanding, and draw conclusions.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers on Tuesday, April 2025 with the homeroom teacher of MI Ma'arif Kalibagor, namely Mrs. Asminah, S.Pd.I, it was found that initially there were 3 students who had difficulty in critical thinking. They tend to be slow in responding to questions asked by the teacher, passive in learning activities and rarely ask questions or express opinions. However, after the teacher provided motivation, gave extra hours, and chose methods that suited them, significant changes were seen. An interview was also conducted with Mrs. Ponisih, S.Pd, the second grade teacher, initially there were 4 students with relatively low critical thinking skills.

After some time, students began to show better critical thinking skills. This was evidenced by being able to respond to questions posed by the teacher, being active in learning activities, and having a high enthusiasm for learning. This ability is also seen when they ask critical questions to the teacher and are able to ask, and respond to friends when discussing.

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Based on the background description, this study aims to analyze the role of teachers in developing students' critical thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The involvement of a teacher in the learning process greatly impacts the abilities possessed by students. So that a teacher must be able to choose the right method so that it can improve the critical thinking of students.

### **METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. According to Creswell, qualitative research is a research method where researchers refer to the views of participants or informants. Researchers will ask questions to participants, collect data and write it down (Safarudin et al., 2023). The subjects of this research are educators or teachers in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Kalibagor. Data collection techniques were conducted by interview, observation, and documentation. The data analysis technique uses the stages of data condensation, data presentation, data verification.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The teacher is the main figure for students. A teacher has a big contribution to learning activities. The main task of the teacher is as an educator. This role is very important, especially in the world of education (Anti et al., 2023). Teachers have high performance demands, these demands also have an impact on the quality of human resources. Based on the results of the study, there are several important roles that teachers can play to improve critical thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

First, always motivate students to learn. A teacher is the main motivator of students. This role requires a teacher to be able to inspire students, increase interest, build students' enthusiasm, and become a role model for students. According to Ponisih, S.Pd. one of the teachers at MI Ma'arif Kalibagor Kebumen, explained that providing motivation for students every day is very important. Learners must know what they want, aspire to, and what they will do in the future. This can increase the enthusiasm and motivation of students to learn.

Second, strive for a conducive classroom. Supervision in every learning activity needs to be done. A conducive classroom will make students comfortable, follow learning activities effectively and encourage students to think critically. An attractive classroom arrangement can create an open and

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collaborative atmosphere, (Nurhalizah, 2025) so that they are not reluctant to ask critical questions and are able to put forward their ideas.

Third, ask questions that can stimulate students' critical thinking. For example, with questions that are analytical, open and generate many answers. "Learners must often be given questions that can generate critical thinking" said Mrs. Asminah. Learners can get used to solving problems and being able to think critically is one of the benefits of problem-based learning. Learners' critical thinking skills can be reflected in their ability to reject misinformation, correct understanding, make decisions based on facts, and create new solutions (Ningsih & Rizki, 2024). Providing guidance by giving keywords that direct a problem also needs to be done by the teacher. This can encourage and improve students' critical thinking.

Fourth, encouraging students to ask questions and discuss. According to the grade II teacher of MI Ma'arif Kalibagor, routine discussion activities will help students in critical thinking, they will be able to respond to problems, respond to other friends' opinions, and have the ability to think critically. Through questioning and discussion, students learn to express their opinions logically and reasonably.

Fifth, using learning methods that attract students' attention. Effective learning is in accordance with the talents, interests, and psychology of students (Nissa & Putri, 2021). Teachers play a role in efforts to improve students' critical thinking through the selection of learning methods. For example, by playing games, singing, and telling stories about what they see, what they do, and what they want. The use of problem-based methods can also be done to stimulate learners in conducting critical analysis. The use of project-based methods can also be done as an effort to increase creativity, problem-solving skills, and be able to improve in-depth understanding of concepts.

Sixth, guiding students in evaluating and reflecting on learning. One of the routine activities at MI Ma'arif Kalibagor is to reflect and evaluate learning. This activity aims to improve the quality of learning and measure the ability of students. With this activity, it can also facilitate students in knowing how they learn so that it is not boring.

The results of research that have been conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Kalibagor, show the significance of the teacher's role in efforts to improve students' critical thinking. This is relevant to the research conducted

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by Siti Nurhaizah and Putri Octa Hadiyanti in 2025 that teachers have a role in fostering critical thinking of students. This research is expected to be a solution and reference for teachers in an effort to improve critical thinking in the 21st century.

### **CONCLUSION**

The results showed that teachers play an active role in 80% of students towards efforts to improve students' critical thinking in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ma'arif Kalibagor, Kebumen by always motivating students to learn, striving for a conducive class, giving questions that can arouse students' critical thinking, encouraging students to ask and discuss, using learning methods that attract students' attention, and guiding students in evaluating and reflecting on learning. Although there are challenges such as the lack of enthusiasm for learning from students, the diversity of students' abilities, and result-oriented assessments, teachers must always innovate in learning activities. With some support provided by the school and other teachers, it is hoped that they can overcome the challenges of weakening students' critical thinking skills.

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