

Strengthening Islamic Education in Developing 21st-Century Skills: An Analysis of Readiness and Implementation Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Technological advancements, globalization, and social dynamics require educational systems to prepare learners with competencies relevant to the demands of the 21st century. Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration have become essential abilities that must be developed in the learning process. This study analyzes the response of Islamic education to the demands of 21st-century skills, assesses the readiness of Islamic educational institutions in developing these competencies, and identifies policies and programs that support their development. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. Data were obtained from academic books, scholarly journal articles, and relevant educational policy documents. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify key concepts, previous research findings, and related patterns. The findings indicate that Islamic educational institutions need to undertake transformations in curriculum design, teaching methods, and educational management. Although the values of Islamic education support the development of critical and reflective thinking, several challenges remain, including limited teacher competence, suboptimal use of technology, and inadequate facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, integrated policies, competency-based curriculum development, teacher capacity building, and strengthened collaboration with various stakeholders are required.

Keywords: Islamic Education, 21st-Century Skills, Curriculum Transformation, Teacher Competence, Educational Globalization.

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PENDAHULUAN

In recent years, discussions on 21st-century skills have increasingly emerged in educational studies. This phenomenon is closely related to significant changes occurring across various aspects of life, particularly due to rapid technological advancements and the accelerated flow of information. As a result, the education sector can no longer focus solely on the mastery of subject matter. Learners must also be equipped with competencies that enable them to think critically, collaborate with others, and communicate ideas effectively. In various scholarly works, these competencies are commonly summarized into four core skills: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Vooget & Roblin, 2012).

Upon closer examination, the demand for these skills is not limited to general educational institutions but also applies to Islamic educational institutions. Social changes occurring within society have influenced expectations toward graduates of Islamic education. They are not only expected to possess a strong understanding of religious knowledge but also to actively participate in the dynamics of modern life. In other words, graduates of Islamic education are

expected to achieve a balance between a deep understanding of Islamic values and practical competencies relevant to contemporary needs.

Through Islamic education, the younger generation is equipped with strong character and ethical values to face the challenges of the times. The objective is both simple and noble: to develop individuals who are not only spiritually intelligent but also socially aware and capable of making meaningful contributions to society (Astuti et al., 2023). In this context, Islamic educational institutions hold a strategic position. From the outset, Islamic education has not merely emphasized intellectual aspects but has also focused on character building and the strengthening of moral values. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and social concern constitute essential components of this educational process. However, the development of the times necessitates efforts to integrate these values with more practical and applicable skills. For instance, Moh. Restu Hoeruman et al. (2025) emphasize that Islamic education should not be limited to the teaching of norms and ethics but should also be able to relate them to practical competencies required in everyday life. In this way, Islamic education can remain relevant without losing the value-based identity that forms its foundation.

The challenge that subsequently arises is how Islamic educational institutions can respond to these changes in a tangible manner. One aspect that often becomes a focal point is the curriculum. Fundamentally, the curriculum serves as the primary framework that guides the learning process within educational institutions. If the curriculum in use is unable to keep pace with the evolving needs of society, the educational process risks becoming less relevant to the realities faced by learners. Therefore, the development of an adaptive curriculum is of considerable importance.

Research conducted by Yuliana and Pangastuti (2024) indicates that a flexible and competency-based curriculum can help learners become better prepared to face future challenges. Such a curriculum not only emphasizes the mastery of theoretical concepts but also provides opportunities for students to develop various skills through practice, discussion, and problem-solving activities. In practice, this approach can encourage learners to be more active in the learning process while simultaneously fostering their ability to think independently.

However, curriculum reform alone is certainly not sufficient. The learning process in the classroom also needs to be adjusted. Teacher-centered instructional methods often limit students' opportunities to optimally develop their potential. Therefore, a more participatory learning approach that provides space for active student engagement is required. One approach that has been widely discussed in the literature is active learning.

Interactive learning strategies such as group discussions, project-based learning, and problem-solving can enhance students' engagement in the learning process. Through these approaches, students do not merely receive information passively but are actively involved in thinking, analyzing, and communicating their ideas. Instructional models such as Project-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning have been shown to promote collaborative learning activities and to develop 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Kartini et al., 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2024).

In addition to curriculum and instructional methods, policy support and institutional programs also play a crucial role. Islamic educational institutions need to design various programs that can bridge classroom learning with real-world experiences. In this regard, collaboration with various stakeholders can serve as an effective strategy.

Collaboration with industry, social institutions, and non-governmental organizations, for instance, can provide opportunities for learners to gain practical experience through internships, training programs, or social projects. Such experiences often offer forms of learning that are not always accessible within the classroom. Students can develop the ability to work collaboratively in teams, interact with diverse stakeholders, and navigate situations that require quick and adaptive thinking. For Islamic educational institutions, such collaborations also serve as a means of demonstrating that value-based Islamic education remains relevant to the needs of modern society.

Integrating global competencies into Islamic institutions requires a well-developed curriculum blueprint. A literature review conducted by Daud and Susilo revealed that

conventional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula in Indonesia generally still emphasize a classical approach oriented toward one-way lectures and textual memorization methods. This condition is considered insufficiently responsive in equipping students with 21st-century skills. Nevertheless, their analysis affirmed a fundamental alignment between Islamic theological values and the 4C skills pillars. This global framework presents a significant opportunity to be systematically integrated in order to transform religious learning patterns into something more contextual without diminishing the essence of its spirituality.

On the other hand, the success of curriculum transformation in the classroom depends greatly on the readiness of educators as the primary instruments of learning. A library research study compiled by Mahadi et al. (2026) explained that the readiness of Islamic Religious Education teachers in adopting 21st-century competencies is determined multidimensionally – not only by pedagogical and theological professionalism aspects, but also by digital literacy skills and reflective competence. Their study showed that teacher capacity-building cannot be done sporadically. Consistent structural intervention is required, including the establishment of professional learning communities at schools, practice-based mentoring, and continuous training to shift teachers' old paradigms toward student-centered learning methods.

This paradigm shift has become the epicenter of discussions regarding the future direction of religious education in the era of disruption. According to the analysis presented by Rayfansyah and Murhayati (2025), the new direction of PAI learning in the 21st century demands that religious institutions abandon rigid doctrinal transmission models and begin positioning religious subjects as spaces for developing reflective reasoning. The integration of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication is considered an urgent necessity to strengthen the intellectual fortitude and moral resilience of the younger generation amid the massive flow of global information. In this way, Islamic religious learning transforms from a normative function to a transformative one, enabling students to actualize religious teachings rationally.

Tactically, the application of innovative teaching methods by teachers becomes the primary key to stimulating student engagement. A study conducted by Moh Faizin (2023) highlighted the importance of implementing a student-centered learning approach through Project-Based Learning strategies and group discussions in Islamic subjects. Their findings showed that students' active involvement in collaboratively solving contemporary socio-religious problems in real-world settings effectively increased learning motivation while deepening their understanding of religious values. However, this effectiveness is still frequently hampered by the limited use of adaptive supporting media in the classroom.

To overcome the monotony of lecture-based methods, the use of digital technology can be optimized as a pedagogical solution. Field experiments researched by Yansyah and Maulana (2026) proved that implementing a digital platform-based flipped classroom model is capable of creating an interactive and independent PAI learning ecosystem. By studying digital materials or instructional videos at home before face-to-face sessions, classroom time can be fully allocated for higher-order thinking activities such as active debates, critical analysis of social cases, and group work. This model successfully enhanced students' learning independence and trained them to connect Islamic principles with modern realities.

Finally, the development of global competencies must continue alongside the strengthening of local character so that the direction of education does not lose its identity. A qualitative study by Andini and Sirozi (2024) affirmed that integrating local wisdom into Islamic education curriculum planning is crucial for strengthening students' cultural identity and morality amid the onslaught of globalization. The insertion of local content into teaching materials has proven capable of enriching teaching methods and making them more inclusive. Despite challenges such as resistance to change, limited institutional resources, and the dominance of foreign culture, the synchronization of local values and Islamic values serves as a solid foundation for producing graduates who are globally competent yet remain grounded in Islamic character.

Based on these considerations, examining the readiness of Islamic educational institutions in developing 21st-century skills becomes essential. This study seeks to analyze how

Islamic educational institutions respond to these changing demands, the extent of their preparedness, and the types of policies required to ensure that the process of skill development can be carried out more effectively.

Through this study, it is expected that a clearer understanding of the position of Islamic education within the dynamics of global education can be obtained. Beyond merely developing technical skills, Islamic education also bears the responsibility of preserving Islamic values as a moral foundation for the younger generation. Thus, the development of 21st-century skills should not only be viewed as an adaptation to the demands of the times but also as part of the process of nurturing a generation that is both competent and of strong character.

LITERATURE REVIEW

21st-Century Skills in the Perspective of Education

In recent years, the term 21st-century skills has almost always appeared in discussions regarding the direction of modern education. Initially, this concept emerged from the awareness that social and technological changes are occurring much more rapidly than in previous decades. The world of work has evolved, the ways in which people communicate have transformed, and even the ways individuals acquire knowledge have changed. These conditions have made it insufficient for education to focus solely on the mastery of subject matter (Yusuf & Sodik, 2025).

Several scholars have attempted to formulate the competencies required by the current generation. One of the most frequently cited concepts is the 4C framework, which consists of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. These four skills are considered the core competencies that learners must possess in order to navigate complex and uncertain situations (Sepriyanti et al., 2022; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In other words, students are not only expected to acquire knowledge but also to be able to process information, collaborate with others, and communicate their ideas effectively.

However, upon closer examination, 21st-century skills extend beyond these four aspects. Several international educational studies also incorporate additional elements such as digital literacy, information literacy, problem-solving skills, and lifelong learning abilities. Mailis and Mansor (2025), for instance, emphasize that the ability to continuously learn and adapt has become critically important in the context of rapid technological advancement. Individuals who are unable to adjust to change will face difficulties competing in an increasingly dynamic labor market.

Consequently, the education system must also undergo adjustments. Learning models that are entirely teacher-centered are increasingly considered less relevant for developing these skills. Therefore, much of the educational literature advocates for the implementation of more student-centered approaches. Within this approach, students are given opportunities to engage in discussions, collaborate with others, express their opinions, and even attempt to solve problems independently. Supriadi et al. (2025) state that such active learning processes enable students not only to understand the material but also to develop higher-order thinking skills that are essential in real-life contexts.

Islamic Education: Concepts and Orientations

When discussing Islamic education, there is a dimension that is somewhat distinct from general education. From its inception, Islamic education has not only aimed to develop intellectual intelligence but also to shape individuals whose personalities are grounded in religious values (Astuti et al., 2023). This implies that spiritual, moral, and social aspects hold equal importance alongside academic aspects.

Dube and Zheba (2025) explain that the primary objective of Islamic education is to cultivate individuals who are faithful, possess noble character, and are capable of fulfilling their role as khalifah (stewards) on earth. Within this framework, education is not merely a process of knowledge transmission but also a process of character formation. Learners are expected not only to be intellectually competent but also to demonstrate moral responsibility in social life.

Interestingly, when viewed from the perspective of the Islamic intellectual tradition, the activity of thinking has long been an integral part of the learning process. Concepts such as

ijtihad, tafakkur, and tadabbur demonstrate that Islam encourages its adherents to engage in deep reflection on various aspects of life. In other words, a culture of critical thinking is not foreign to the tradition of Islamic education (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023).

However, in current educational practice, several challenges remain. Some Islamic educational institutions still maintain relatively traditional learning patterns. The learning process is often dominated by lecture-based methods and memorization. These methods certainly have their own value, particularly in preserving mastery of religious knowledge. However, in some cases, such approaches are considered to provide limited opportunities for students to develop critical and creative thinking skills (Yuliana & Pangastuti, 2024). Therefore, there is a need for innovation without abandoning the fundamental values of Islamic education.

Integrasi Keterampilan Abad ke-21 dalam Pendidikan Islam

When discussing the integration of 21st-century skills in Islamic education, a common question that arises is how to connect Islamic values with the demands of modern competencies. Essentially, the two should not be seen as contradictory. Rather, if properly designed, they can complement one another (Andini & Sirozi, 2024).

One of the approaches widely discussed in the literature is the development of a more adaptive curriculum. Such a curriculum does not merely involve adding new subjects, but rather focuses on how the learning process is designed to foster a balanced development of knowledge, skills, and values. Graduates of Islamic educational institutions are expected not only to have a strong understanding of religious teachings but also to be capable of contributing to social, economic, and technological spheres.

Research conducted by Kartini et al. (2022) indicates that a competency-based curriculum can create opportunities for students to become more actively engaged in the learning process. Through approaches such as project-based learning and problem-based learning, students are encouraged to participate in more contextualized activities. They not only learn concepts but also attempt to apply them in real-life situations.

In addition, technological advancements have introduced new opportunities in the field of education. The use of information technology can expand access to various learning resources and enable more flexible interactions between teachers and students. Sartimah (2025) explains that the integration of technology in learning can enhance the effectiveness of the educational process while also helping students develop digital literacy—an increasingly essential skill in the modern era. Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom into the planning and development of Islamic education curricula can strengthen cultural identity and reinforce moral values.

Certainly, the integration of 21st-century skills does not rely solely on curriculum and instructional methods. Institutional support also plays a crucial role. Teacher training, the provision of adequate learning facilities, and collaboration with various external stakeholders are factors that significantly influence the success of this process.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Islamic education and the development of 21st-century skills. Freeman et al. (2014), for instance, found that the implementation of active learning methods in Islamic religious education can enhance students' critical thinking abilities as well as their communication skills. These findings indicate that innovation in instructional methods has a significant influence on the development of learners' competencies.

Another study conducted by Voogt and Roblin (2012) also highlights the importance of developing a competency-based curriculum. The findings indicate that an adaptively designed curriculum can enhance students' readiness to face global challenges and the development of a knowledge-based society. Such a curriculum not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also provides opportunities for the development of creativity and social skills.

Meanwhile, Ping et al. (2004) argue that Islamic education actually holds significant potential for developing 21st-century skills. The ethical and moral values embedded in Islamic education can serve as an important foundation for character building among learners. When these values are integrated with practical skills and critical thinking abilities, Islamic education

has the potential to produce graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also possess strong moral integrity.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Sahil et al. (2024a) underscores that the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration should be an integral component of the learning process across various educational fields. This highlights the need for educational systems, including Islamic education, to pursue innovations in both curriculum design and instructional strategies in order to effectively address global challenges.

From these studies, it can be observed that the issue of 21st-century skills in Islamic education has begun to receive attention in academic discourse. Nevertheless, most studies still focus on aspects of curriculum or instructional methods. Research that specifically examines the institutional readiness of Islamic educational institutions in developing these skills remains relatively limited. Therefore, this study seeks to provide a more in-depth understanding of how Islamic educational institutions respond to the demands of 21st-century skills, as well as what policies and programs are required to support their development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. Library research was chosen because this study aims to conduct a conceptual and critical analysis of various scholarly literature related to the readiness of Islamic education in developing 21st-century skills, without involving field data collection. This approach enables the researcher to carry out an in-depth exploration of theories, policies, and previous research findings relevant to the focus of the study.

RESULTS

Institutional Responses to the Demands of 21st-Century Skills

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the *Problem-Based Learning* (PBL) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant positive impact on students learning motivation and the development of their social-religious character. Specifically, there was an increase in four character aspects: religiosity, worship, responsibility, and tolerance. These results were derived from a quantitative analysis of 128 respondents, which showed high average scores across all indicators using a Likert scale. These findings were further supported by qualitative data from interviews with students and teachers, indicating heightened enthusiasm, active engagement, and students' ability to relate PAI materials to real-life contexts. PBL was found to foster a contextual, enjoyable, and emotionally engaging learning environment, encouraging students' active involvement while reinforcing spiritual and social values.

Based on a review of various literature relevant to this study, it is evident that global changes characterized by the advancement of information technology, the flow of globalization, as well as socio economic dynamics have had a significant impact on the field of education. Education is no longer understood merely as a process of transmitting knowledge from teachers to students. Rather, it is now expected to equip learners with the ability to navigate complex situations in the future.

In many educational studies, 21st-century skills are often conceptualized through the 4C framework, which includes critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). These four skills are considered essential as they are directly related to how individuals solve problems, collaborate with others, and generate new ideas in addressing various life challenges.

In line with these developments, educational institutions in various countries have begun to make several adjustments. One of the most noticeable adjustments is in curriculum and instructional approaches. Curricula are no longer solely focused on mastery of subject matter but are also designed to develop higher-order thinking skills. Sepriyanti et al. (2022) emphasize that 21st-century education should encourage learners to analyze information, solve problems creatively, and adapt to changes in their surrounding environment.

In this context, Islamic educational institutions share responsibilities similar to other educational institutions. Islamic education functions not only as a place to study religious knowledge but also as a means of character building and the holistic development of human potential. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions need to respond to these demands by integrating Islamic values with 21st-century skills within the learning process.

One approach that is frequently discussed in the literature is the implementation of more participatory learning methods. Approaches such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative learning provide students with opportunities to engage actively in the learning process. Through these approaches, students not only receive information but also learn to analyze problems, discuss with peers, and seek solutions independently. Voogt and Roblin (2012) explain that such active learning can help students develop critical thinking skills while also enhancing their communication abilities.

Thus, the response of educational institutions to the demands of 21st-century skills cannot be addressed partially. Changes need to be implemented comprehensively, ranging from curriculum updates and innovations in teaching methods to the creation of an academic culture that fosters creativity and collaboration within the educational environment.

The Readiness of Islamic Educational Institutions in Equipping Graduates with 21st-Century Skills

Based on previous studies, the readiness of Islamic educational institutions in developing 21st-century skills can be assessed from several key aspects. These include the curriculum in use, the quality of human resources, and the availability of educational facilities and infrastructure.

From the curriculum perspective, several Islamic educational institutions have begun to demonstrate efforts to adapt to contemporary developments. Some institutions have developed more competency-based curricula, which not only emphasize knowledge acquisition but also pay attention to the development of students' skills and attitudes. These efforts reflect an awareness that graduates of Islamic educational institutions need to possess competencies relevant to the needs of modern society.

Nevertheless, in practice, several challenges remain. One challenge frequently mentioned in various studies is the continued dominance of conventional teaching methods. In some Islamic educational institutions, the learning process still heavily relies on lectures and memorization. While these methods play an important role in maintaining understanding of religious material, they are often considered to provide limited opportunities for students to develop critical and creative thinking skills (Sahil et al., 2024).

Besides the curriculum, another crucial factor is the quality of human resources, particularly teachers. In 21st-century learning, teachers no longer serve solely as information providers but also as facilitators who guide students throughout the learning process. This requires teachers to possess adequate pedagogical competencies, including the ability to design innovative learning experiences and to utilize technology effectively in teaching and learning. However, several studies indicate that limitations still exist in terms of teacher competencies, particularly regarding the use of information technology and the implementation of more creative instructional methods.

Another equally important aspect is educational facilities and infrastructure. The availability of resources such as computers, internet access, and digital learning media greatly influences the implementation of interactive and collaborative learning. Unfortunately, not all Islamic educational institutions have adequate access to these facilities. This issue is particularly felt by institutions located in areas with limited infrastructure.

Despite facing various challenges, Islamic education actually has considerable potential to develop 21st-century skills. This is because the Islamic intellectual tradition contains numerous concepts that encourage critical thinking and reflection. Concepts such as *ijtihad*, *tadabbur*, and *tafakkur* demonstrate that Islam has long encouraged its followers to think critically and deeply about various life issues. Ping et al. (2004) note that the intellectual values in Islamic education emphasize the importance of developing reason, moral reflection, and individual responsibility in understanding knowledge. If these values are applied contextually

in the educational process, Islamic educational institutions can create learning models that are relevant to contemporary needs without losing their Islamic identity. Moreover, integrating Islamic values with modern learning approaches can strengthen students' critical thinking skills and character in facing global challenges (Adawiah & Sakdiah, 2025).

Policies and Programs Required to Strengthen 21st-Century Skills

In order for Islamic educational institutions to optimally develop 21st-century skills, targeted policies and programs are required. These policies are not only related to curriculum aspects but also concern the development of teacher capacity and the provision of adequate educational facilities.

One measure that can be undertaken is the development of a more flexible and adaptive curriculum responsive to contemporary changes. The Islamic education curriculum needs to be designed integratively by combining Islamic values with 21st-century skills. This integration can be realized through problem-based learning, simple research activities, or collaborative projects that actively engage students in the learning process.

In addition, enhancing teacher competence is also a crucial step. Teachers need to receive continuous training on various innovative teaching methods, the utilization of technology in education, and more authentic assessment strategies. Through such training, teachers are expected to be able to create a learning environment that is more creative, participatory, and relevant to the needs of students.

Furthermore, collaboration between educational institutions and various external stakeholders can serve as an effective strategy. Partnerships with industries, research institutions, and community organizations can provide students with opportunities to gain broader learning experiences. Programs such as internships, skills training, and entrepreneurial activities can help students understand how the knowledge acquired in the classroom can be applied in real-life contexts.

Equally important is the support from the government and educational stakeholders in providing adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. Sufficient technological infrastructure will enable Islamic educational institutions to develop more innovative digital learning systems and support the enhancement of students' digital literacy.

Synthesis of the Discussion

Based on the overall findings of the literature review, it can be understood that the development of 21st-century skills in Islamic education is an unavoidable necessity. Global changes require educational institutions to focus not only on the mastery of knowledge but also on the development of thinking, communication, and collaboration skills.

Islamic educational institutions have considerable potential to respond to these demands because the values embedded in Islamic teachings are fundamentally aligned with the principles of modern learning. Nevertheless, various challenges still need to be addressed, particularly those related to curriculum implementation, the enhancement of teacher competence, and the provision of adequate educational facilities.

With targeted efforts and support from various stakeholders, Islamic education has the potential to produce graduates who not only possess strong intellectual capabilities but also demonstrate moral integrity and readiness to face contemporary changes. Thus, strengthening 21st-century skills in Islamic education is not only aimed at enhancing graduates' competitiveness but also at cultivating a generation capable of making positive contributions to society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the various literature reviewed in this study, it is evident that the changes of the era have significant implications for the field of education, including Islamic education. Developments in technology, shifts in work patterns, and increasingly complex social dynamics have made it no longer feasible for educational institutions to maintain traditional teaching models. Education is now expected to prepare students not only to master knowledge but also to develop skills that are relevant to the needs of modern society. In many educational studies, these skills are often summarized under the concept of 21st-century skills, which include critical

thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. These four skills are considered essential because they are directly related to how individuals understand problems, cooperate with others, and generate new ideas to address various life challenges.

In relation to the first research question of this study, namely how educational institutions including Islamic education should respond to the demands of 21st-century skills, the literature review indicates that such a response cannot be achieved through minor adjustments in the learning process. What is required is a more comprehensive adaptation effort. Several studies emphasize the importance of developing a more adaptive and competency-based curriculum, so that learning not only focuses on the delivery of content but also provides students with opportunities to enhance their thinking and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the instructional approach needs to shift from being overly teacher-centered to one that actively engages students in the learning process.

In the context of Islamic education, responding to these demands also requires consideration of the Islamic values that form the foundation of the educational system. Islamic education is not only aimed at transferring knowledge but also at shaping the character and personality of students. Therefore, integrating Islamic values with 21st-century skills becomes essential. Through such an approach, the learning process produces not only students who understand religious teachings but also individuals who can think critically, collaborate with others, and contribute positively to social life.

Meanwhile, in relation to the second research question, which concerns the readiness of Islamic educational institutions to equip their graduates with 21st-century skills, the analysis reveals two interesting perspectives. On one hand, conceptually, Islamic education possesses significant potential to support the development of these skills. The intellectual tradition in Islam encompasses concepts such as *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, and *tadabbur*, which essentially encourage individuals to engage in reflective and critical thinking about various life issues. This indicates that the core values of Islamic education are not inherently incompatible with the principles underlying 21st-century skills development.

On the other hand, in practice, several challenges still exist in the implementation of education. Some studies indicate that the learning process in certain Islamic educational institutions still relies heavily on lecture and memorization methods. While these methods have particular advantages, especially in maintaining students' understanding of religious material, they often provide limited opportunities for students to develop creativity and critical thinking skills. In addition, the limited utilization of educational technology also affects the readiness of Islamic educational institutions to cultivate 21st-century skills. Uneven availability of facilities and infrastructure, as well as constraints in teacher competency development, further influence the implementation of more innovative learning processes.

Regarding the third research question concerning the policies and programs necessary for Islamic educational institutions to effectively develop 21st-century skills, the findings indicate that targeted policy support is a crucial factor. For instance, curriculum development needs to be designed in a more integrative manner, combining Islamic educational values with 21st-century competencies. This integration can be realized through various learning activities that encourage students to engage in discussions, problem-solving, and collaborative projects.

Furthermore, enhancing the competence of educators is another aspect that cannot be overlooked. Teachers play a crucial role in determining how the learning process unfolds in the classroom. Therefore, continuous training programs need to be provided so that teachers are capable of implementing more innovative teaching methods and effectively utilizing technology in the learning process.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the development of 21st-century skills in Islamic education is an indispensable necessity. Global changes require educational institutions to continuously adapt in order to remain relevant to societal developments. In this context, Islamic education possesses considerable potential to prepare young generations who are not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually strong. Through curriculum renewal, the development of innovative teaching methods, and appropriate policy support,

Islamic educational institutions are expected to produce graduates who are adaptive, competent, and able to make positive contributions to society in the global era.

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Author Contributions: Sholeh Hasan contributed as the concept developer and article writer; M. Sirozi contributed as the data analyst and translator; Mardiah Astuti contributed to data collection and critically revising the article. All authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of this work.

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