

CASE BASED HIGHER ORDER THINKING ASSESSMENT FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION ISSUES AT S2 PAI UNZAH

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Keywords:

Higher-Order Thinking, Case-Based Assessment, Critical Thinking, Contemporary Islamic Education, Argumentation

Abstract

This article proposes a case-based higher-order thinking assessment model for contemporary Islamic education issues in the S2 PAI Program at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong. Graduate students are expected to move beyond reproducing normative statements toward analysing complex contexts, evaluating competing evidence, and formulating responsible educational decisions. A qualitative descriptive library research method was used to synthesize literature on higher-order thinking, critical thinking, case-based learning, authentic assessment, and Islamic education pedagogy. The analysis indicates that high-quality cases should contain ambiguity, multiple stakeholders, incomplete information, ethical tension, and a requirement for justified action. Cases relevant to S2 PAI may address religious moderation, digital religious authority, curriculum controversy, ecological responsibility, inclusive education, pesantren transformation, and the use of artificial intelligence. Assessment should evaluate problem framing, source criticism, conceptual integration, argument quality, contextual sensitivity, counterargument, and decision justification. A structured sequence of individual analysis, collaborative deliberation, written recommendation, and oral defense produces richer evidence than a conventional essay alone. The study's novelty lies in combining higher-order cognition with Islamic scholarly reasoning and dialogical adab, ensuring that critical inquiry remains rigorous, ethically responsible, and sensitive to religious and social complexity.

INTRODUCTION

Graduate Islamic Religious Education faces issues that rarely have a single uncomplicated answer. Educators must respond to digital religious authority, polarization, ecological crisis, curriculum change, artificial intelligence, inclusive education, and tensions between inherited traditions and contemporary demands. Assessment that asks students only to define concepts or repeat lectures cannot demonstrate whether they can reason responsibly in such situations.

Higher-order thinking includes analysing relationships, evaluating claims and evidence, generating alternatives, and creating defensible solutions. The revised

taxonomy of educational objectives distinguishes these processes from remembering and understanding (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In Islamic education, critical thinking should not be misrepresented as rejection of religious authority. It involves disciplined inquiry, source awareness, contextual interpretation, intellectual humility, and responsible judgement.

Case-based assessment places students within a bounded but complex situation and requires them to make sense of evidence. Authentic assessment literature indicates that cognitive challenge, realism, criteria, feedback, and student agency are central design elements (Villarroel et al., 2018; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024). A case can therefore bridge theory and practice while revealing how students deal with ambiguity and competing considerations.

This article aims to design a case-based HOTS assessment model for contemporary Islamic education issues at S2 PAI UNZAH. It identifies case characteristics, assessment stages, criteria, and safeguards for academically rigorous and ethically appropriate deliberation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher-order thinking and critical judgement

Higher-order thinking is demonstrated when students reorganize knowledge to address unfamiliar problems rather than reproduce a known answer. Critical thinking requires interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and self-regulation. Effective assessment must therefore examine reasoning processes and the quality of justification, not only the final position.

Case-based assessment

Cases provide a narrative, data set, dilemma, or institutional problem that requires decision-making. A strong case contains relevant and irrelevant information, competing stakeholder interests, and more than one plausible response. The assessment task should require students to identify assumptions, select concepts, evaluate evidence, and justify consequences.

Critical inquiry in Islamic education

Research on Islamic education has noted the risks of pedagogies that offer limited space for questions, debate, and reflexive deliberation (Altinyelken, 2021). At the graduate level, critical inquiry can be framed through *adab*: accurately representing sources, listening to other positions, avoiding personal attack, acknowledging uncertainty, and distinguishing critique of an argument from disrespect toward persons or traditions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used qualitative descriptive library research. Sources included higher-order thinking frameworks, critical thinking meta-analyses, case-based learning studies, authentic assessment reviews, Islamic education pedagogy, and higher education regulation. The analysis focused on design principles applicable to graduate assessment.

Thematic analysis identified seven dimensions: case authenticity, cognitive demand, evidence quality, conceptual integration, ethical deliberation, dialogical process, and assessment criteria. These dimensions were synthesized into a model for S2 PAI

UNZAH. The study does not present empirical findings from students or claim that the proposed cases have been tested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constructing intellectually demanding cases

A case should be sufficiently detailed to prevent generic answers. For example, a case on religious moderation may include curriculum documents, teacher statements, community objections, social media posts, and student experiences. The task should ask students to frame the central problem, distinguish facts from claims, and identify which additional evidence is required. Ambiguity is productive when students have clear criteria for reasoning.

Integrating Islamic sources and educational theory

Students should be required to integrate relevant Qur'anic or hadith principles, Islamic educational thought, contemporary research, and educational policy. Merely attaching a verse to a predetermined opinion does not demonstrate integration. Strong performance explains the interpretive relevance of sources, recognizes contextual limits, and connects normative reasoning with pedagogical consequences.

Using a staged assessment sequence

A robust sequence begins with individual analysis to reveal each student's reasoning. It continues with small-group deliberation in which students test assumptions and counterarguments. Students then produce a written recommendation and complete an oral defense. This sequence captures independent thought, collaboration, revision, and the ability to respond to scrutiny.

Assessing argumentation rather than agreement

Lecturers should not grade students according to whether their final position matches the lecturer's preference. Criteria should focus on problem framing, evidence, conceptual coherence, counterargument, feasibility, ethical consequences, and clarity. A student may defend a different position and still demonstrate high achievement when the reasoning is rigorous and responsibly presented.

Maintaining dialogical adab

Case discussion can become polarizing if it rewards rhetorical victory. Ground rules should require accurate paraphrase of opposing views, source citation, respectful language, and acknowledgement of uncertainty. Reflection after discussion can ask students which assumption changed, which evidence was decisive, and what ethical risk remains unresolved.

Table 1. Case-based HOTS assessment matrix for contemporary PAI issues

Case focus	Higher-order performance	Assessment evidence
Digital religious authority	Evaluate credibility and consequences	Source audit and reasoned recommendation
Religious moderation controversy	Compare interpretations and stakeholders	Policy memo and oral defense

Ecological Islamic education	Design an integrated intervention	Project blueprint and impact logic
AI use in PAI learning	Balance innovation, ethics, and integrity	Decision brief with counterarguments

The model advances beyond generic HOTS questions by placing Islamic scholarly reasoning, stakeholder complexity, counterargument, ethical consequences, and dialogical adab within one assessment architecture.

CONCLUSION

Case-based assessment can provide valid evidence of higher-order thinking in S2 PAI when cases are complex, evidence-rich, and open to more than one defensible response. The focus of judgement should be the quality of analysis, source use, conceptual integration, counterargument, ethical reasoning, and decision justification rather than conformity to a predetermined opinion.

The model can be piloted in courses on contemporary Islamic education, curriculum, educational philosophy, and learning theory. Future studies should develop validated rubrics, compare individual and group reasoning, analyse the quality of student arguments, and investigate whether repeated case-based assessment improves transfer to thesis research and professional practice.

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