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Development of Critical Thinking Skills in Modern Islamic Boarding School

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Abstract

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This research analyses the development of critical thinking skills in activities organized by academic forums at the Gontor Modern Boarding School. Using a qualitative case study approach, data was collected through interviews, observation and documentation. Analysis in three stages collection, reduction, and verification. The findings of this study highlight the importance of critical thinking, which is essential for higher-order cognitive skills and education at all levels. Gontor Islamic Boarding School which accommodates various groups such as the ITQAN (Ilmi, Tarbawy, Qur'any) Group, an academic forum, prioritizes the development of critical thinking skills, placing great emphasis on fostering critical thinking through various activities including scientific discussions, critical reading, observation, cultivating a sense of be curious, and encourage reflection. These activities improve analytical and synthesis skills, problem-solving abilities, inference and evaluation skills, and explanation skills, thereby enabling strategic thinking among students. This study also identified several supporting factors, such as a conducive scientific environment and supportive supervisors, and inhibiting factors such as administrator competency problems, low student involvement, irregular scheduling, and inadequate facilities. In particular, this research uniquely focuses on explaining 12 indicators of critical thinking abilities, which are categorized into 5 aspects according to Robert Ennis. Despite the challenges, this illustrates how Gontor developed these aspects in the ITQAN Group (Ilmi, Tarbawy, Qur'any) by highlighting inhibiting and supporting factors.

Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis pengembangan keterampilan berpikir kritis dalam kegiatan yang

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diselenggarakan oleh forum akademik di Pondok Pesantren Modern Gontor. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis dalam tiga tahap pengumpulan, reduksi, dan verifikasi. Temuan penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya berpikir kritis, yang penting untuk keterampilan kognitif tingkat tinggi dan penting bagi pendidikan di semua tingkatan. Pondok Pesantren Gontor yang mewadahi beragam kalangan seperti Kelompok ITQAN (*Ilmi, Tarbawy, Qur'any*), sebuah forum akademik, mengutamakan pengembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis, sangat menekankan pada pembinaan berpikir kritis melalui berbagai kegiatan termasuk diskusi ilmiah, membaca kritis, observasi, menumbuhkan rasa ingin tahu, dan mendorong refleksi. Kegiatan-kegiatan ini berfungsi untuk meningkatkan keterampilan analitis dan sintesis, kemampuan pemecahan masalah, kemampuan inferensi dan evaluasi, serta keterampilan penjelasan, sehingga mendorong pemikiran strategis di kalangan siswa. Studi ini juga mengidentifikasi beberapa faktor pendukung, seperti lingkungan keilmuan yang kondusif dan dosen pembimbing yang mendukung, serta faktor penghambat seperti permasalahan kompetensi administrator, rendahnya keterlibatan siswa, penjadwalan yang tidak teratur, dan fasilitas yang tidak memadai. Khususnya, penelitian ini secara unik berfokus pada penjelasan 12 indikator kemampuan berpikir kritis, yang dikategorikan menjadi 5 aspek menurut Robert Ennis. Hal ini menggambarkan bagaimana Gontor mengembangkan aspek-aspek tersebut dalam Kelompok ITQAN (*Ilmi, Tarbawy, Qur'any*), meskipun terdapat tantangan, dengan menyoroti faktor penghambat dan faktor pendukung.

I. INTRODUCTION

High-order thinking skills (HOTS) generally refer to advanced cognitive processes. Krulik, Rudnick, & Milou categorize thinking activities into four types: recall thinking (remembering), essential thinking (basic reasoning), critical thinking (critical analysis), and creative thinking (creative problem-solving) (Susilowati & Sumaji, 2021). Recalling and essential thinking are termed low-order thinking, whereas critical and creative thinking are termed high-order thinking. The recalling phase is considered low-order thinking because it only involves remembering previously acquired knowledge. Similarly, the essential thinking stage is also classified as low-order thinking since it merely utilizes fundamental knowledge applicable to any problem. Conversely, the stages of critical and creative thinking are regarded as high-order thinking because students can examine a complex

situation from various perspectives, meticulously analyse an issue, and find efficient solutions (Darmawan & Sujoko, 2013).

The proficiency in critical thinking is not just an intellectual asset for learners, it is the cornerstone of cognitive maturity. Therefore, the enhancement of critical thinking skills is not just significant, it is imperative and should be integrated into the educational curriculum at all levels. The strong correlation between essential abilities of thinking and learning underscores the necessity to prepare students to become resilient problem solvers, mature decision-makers, and lifelong learners. The significance of critical thinking skills is not just important; it is crucial and deeply intertwined with the curriculum to ensure its utility in benefiting society. More importantly, it ensures that students are equipped with the skills that will help them throughout their lives (Nugroho, 2017).

The term critique, with its roots in ancient Greek, encompasses a range of meanings such as analysis, evaluation of value, and observation. In a broader sense, it refers to individuals expressing logical opinions and making interpretations, often used to describe those who disagree with a particular subject. Robert H. Ennis defines critical thinking as a reflective, rational process focused on decision-making. This process involves a series of steps, including accessing, analyzing, and synthesizing information, as described by Redecker. These critical thinking skills are not just theoretical concepts but practical tools that can be learned, trained, and mastered, and are crucial for making informed decisions in our daily lives. According to John Dewey, schools should teach children how to think correctly, involving active, diligent activities, carefully considering the beliefs or knowledge they receive, and evaluate various perspectives (Ekaningtyas, 2022).

According to Ennis as cited in Sulistiani & Masrukan (2017), critical thinking ability consists of twelve aspects divided into five main elements. Firstly, the ability to provide easily understandable explanations includes focusing on questions, analysis, and posing and answering questions related to explanations secondly, enhancing basic skills such as evaluating source reliability, seeing, and developing personal skills and thirdly, improving the ability to conclude using induction,

deduction, and value judgment and fourthly, providing additional explanations by identifying assumptions and defining terms. Fifthly, managing strategies and tactics, including determining actions and interacting with others.

Angelo TA as cited in Mumtahanah (2013) analyzed five methodological behaviours serving as indicators in forming critical thinking skills: the ability to analyze, synthesize, recognize and solve problems, draw conclusions, and evaluate.

Modern Darussalam Gontor is a boarding school institution with a mosque as the center of activities and the Kyai as the exemplary figure. This institution is a hub of diverse activities, each designed to develop students' interests, talents, and deepen their potential. One of these groups is known as the ITQAN Group. ITQAN, an abbreviation for *Ilmy Tarbawy Qur'any*, translates to Qur'anic educational knowledge. In linguistic terms, it means a person who is diligent. Its motto is a Platform for the Development of Scholarly Creativity and Information for Students. The ITQAN Group serves as a platform to explore the potential of students to become knowledgeable individuals, educated based on the Qur'an and Hadith (Prophetic traditions). ITQAN is an institution engaged in journalistic and press publications. Its publications include the weekly study of Al-Hambra, the Ulul Albab wall magazine, the Islamadina Bulletin, and the ITQAN Magazine.

The ITQAN Group has various types of activities that can be categorized according to their frequency: daily activities, weekly activities, monthly activities, and annual activities. Daily activities include mentoring, the One Day One Page writing collection activity, and fostering critical reading habits. Weekly activities consist of mobile book sales/marketing around the dormitories, the FPAIS (Forum for the Development of Aqidah & Scholarly) religious study forum, and the publication of the Ulul Albab wall magazine. Monthly activities involve study tours to various institutions and businesses within the Modern Darussalam Gontor campus. As for annual activities within the ITQAN Group, they include the writing of Ramadan and Shawwal journals and organizing scientific seminars integrated with the official campus event, the Santri Literacy Week (PELITA).

Here are some research studies related to this study: First, a survey conducted by Sakinah & Nasution (2023) aimed to describe the mathematical critical thinking abilities of eighth-grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Kota Sungai Penuh in solving linear equation problems, using essay tests and documentation as data collection methods. The results indicated varying levels of critical thinking skills from very high to low among the 33 students studied. Meanwhile, the subsequent study focused on analyzing the development of critical thinking skills at Gontor Modern Boarding School, Indonesia, employing a case study approach with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. This study highlighted the importance of critical thinking in higher education, particularly within academic forums like ITQAN, which promote vital skill development through various activities despite challenges such as limited administrator competence and inadequate facilities.

Second, a study conducted by Septiany et al. (2024) focused on assessing the critical thinking skills of senior high school students in understanding ecosystem material using Ennis's indicators. It employed six essay questions to analyze the skills of 60 tenth-grade students from a school in West Nusa Tenggara, categorizing their abilities as very low, low, and moderate. This research provides valuable insights into students' critical thinking proficiency levels, which is essential for educators to tailor effective learning strategies. Meanwhile, the subsequent study examined the development of critical thinking skills at Gontor Modern Boarding School, Indonesia, emphasizing their cultivation through academic forums like ITQAN. Using a case study approach with data from interviews, observations, and documentation, the study underscored critical thinking as pivotal for higher cognitive skills in education, highlighting supportive factors and challenges in fostering these skills among students.

The third study conducted by Rofi'uddin et al. (2022) endeavoured to devise and assess a creative and critical learning model within Bahasa Indonesia classes at the senior high school level, emphasizing the integration of blended learning techniques such as online learning platforms, interactive multimedia, and collaborative learning. The model, comprising stimulation, exploration, response

giving, production, and reflection activities, was implemented at SMA Laboratorium UM and SMA Brawijaya Smart School Malang, resulting in a notable enhancement of student academic performance. This study diverges from prior research conducted at Gontor Modern boarding school, which focused on the development of critical thinking skills and underscored their significance in education, along with Gontor's dedicated efforts to cultivate them.

Drawing from disparities in previous research findings, this study centres on the cultivation of critical thinking skills within activities orchestrated by the academic forum at Gontor Modern Boarding School, Indonesia, specifically within the academic forum ITQAN Group at Modern Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia. Employing Robert H. Ennis's critical thinking indicators, the research adopts a scientific analytical approach to delve deeper into the critical thinking formation process within the framework of academic forum activities.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research is qualitative descriptive with a case study approach. In this study, the researcher uses a descriptive method to align empirical reality with applicable theories. According to Kirk & Miller (1986), qualitative research refers to a specific tradition in the social sciences that primarily relies on observations and human interactions within their contexts, which are associated with language and its details. In the context of this research, the researcher seeks to describe the phenomena, interactions, and dynamics within the ITQAN Group with detail and objectivity.

Research data are obtained from interviews, observations, and written or visual documentation. Interviews involve direct interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Yusuf, 2017), Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the supervising teachers and executives of the ITQAN Group to understand their perspectives on the organization's activities and characteristics, as well as the factors influencing the formation of critical thinking skills within it. The researcher will also employ observation techniques (Sugiyono, 2015), In the context of the ITQAN Group, observation involves monitoring a variety of activities

within the organization to gather field data on its operations and amenities. This process, which relies on scrutinising phenomena in the field and using sophisticated tools to extract empirical evidence from real-world occurrences, enables a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics and provides valuable data for further analysis and decision-making. Written and visual documentation techniques are also employed to acquire supplementary information concerning the characteristics and overall activities within the ITQAN Group, with a particular focus on the impact of its graduates.

The data analysis technique utilizes the theory proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three steps: data condensation, data display, and conclusions drawing. Data condensation refers to selecting, emphasizing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data originating from various sources such as written field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and empirical materials to reflect comprehensive information collected regarding developing critical thinking skills conducted by ITQAN Group. This process occurs after the researcher interviews and obtains written data from the field, where interview transcripts are carefully examined to extract the required research focus.

Data presentation is an organization and synthesis of information drawn from research findings and analysis related to developing critical thinking skills in ITQAN Group. It aids in understanding the research context and in-depth analysis of the subject matter. In conclusion, researchers gather data by exploring various sources to understand critical thinking patterns, recording consistent explanations, and elucidating cause-and-effect relationships. Subsequently, a comprehensive synthesis and analysis of this data can be conducted to comprehend the factors influencing the development of critical thinking. Then, the researcher concludes effective strategies for fostering critical thinking skills in the academic activities undertaken by ITQAN Group, potentially leading to tailored interventions or curriculum adjustments to enhance students' critical thinking abilities.

To ensure data accuracy, the researcher employs the triangulation method, which consists of triangulating sources, data collection techniques and theory, thus rendering the obtained data more accurate and reliable (Creswell, 2019). The

researcher employs source and data collection triangulation to cross-verify information obtained from interviews with observations, or between interviews conducted by different supervisors, or among students participating in the academic forums. This comparative analysis investigates the correlation between the academic endeavours undertaken by the ITQAN Group and the theoretical framework of critical thinking development. Simultaneously, it assesses whether the implemented academic forum programs are perceived by students and educators to enhance critical thinking skills or remain purely theoretical constructs effectively.

To verify the credibility of a fact, researchers employ theoretical triangulation by juxtaposing data against two or more theories. Here, the researcher seeks to determine the alignment between the activities conducted within the ITQAN Group and theories of critical thinking development, as well as the congruence between the theories utilized by the organizers of the academic forums and those comprehended by the student participants.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Activities in the ITQAN Group

1. Discussion Activities

The ITQAN Group routinely organizes various scholarly discussions for its members, such as debates, academic mentoring sessions, talk shows, and more. Here, members are obligated to express their opinions according to the themes provided by the organizers. The organisers typically present discussion themes that are currently prevalent in society that involve pros and cons. Some examples of discussion themes provided by the committee include: "Relocation of the Capital City from Jakarta to Kalimantan," "President Jokowi's 3rd Term," "Utilization of the 2013 Curriculum," "The Law on Smoking in Islam," and "The Law on Greeting Christmas for non-Muslims." These diverse themes ensure that every member feels included and represented, and from these themes that contain pros and cons, each member will attempt to explore various information,

develop their critical thinking skills, and broaden their perspectives, both from an affirmative and oppositional standpoint.

Discussion activities have the characteristic of each student being asked to provide analysis and opinions on a topic. The discussion method significantly influences students' social interactions within the school environment and dramatically increases student engagement (Haq, 2019). Critical thinking entails possessing skills that support the arguments one produces. Understanding how the critical thinking process can achieve this involves tasks such as identifying issues, analyzing, comparing, and applying acquired information (Zakiah & Lestari, 2019).

2. Critical Reading

To mediate the development of students' insights, the ITQAN Group provides various reading materials for its members, including biographies, literature, encyclopedias, and academic books. It is not uncommon for ITQAN to bring in several books that have become popular among the public, such as the book "Api Sejarah" by Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara. ITQAN encourages all its members to read books every day regularly. The supervisors, who reside in the office 24 hours a day, are also actively inquiring about the books typically read by the members and providing explanations about certain aspects of the reading material that the students may need to be more familiar with. Sometimes, during mentoring sessions, there are also book review sessions where members critique the books they have read, thus training them to assess them critically. These mentoring sessions contain discussions about a particular book that all members must read and understand beforehand.

Effective scholarly discussions require students to employ various methods to gain insights from different perspectives, with critical reading being an essential skill. In essential activities of reading, students are not only required to comprehend the content of the reading material but also to understand, analyze, summarize, and evaluate its content to ensure optimal comprehension of the material (Restuningsih et al., 2017). Critical reading is closely related to critical thinking because it involves critical thinking skills to uncover the depth of meaning

or significance while also providing judgments on the text being read. Critical reading requires a high level of reading comprehension. Readers can formulate questions and evaluate the content of the reading material. Therefore, critical reading necessitates essential skills of thinking (Yono et al., 2017).

The ITQAN Group provides a scholarly environment that significantly enhances its academic pursuits. The Group's editorial office near the Darussalam Library offers convenient access to many educational resources. With its private library, the ITQAN Group ensures an abundance of literature for self-improvement. Proximity to other scholarly institutions like FP2WS and Darussalam Pos facilitates effective knowledge exchange, creating an intellectually stimulating atmosphere. This optimal learning environment, encompassing physical, social, and psychological elements, influences students' academic achievements. When students find their learning space comfortable and supportive, their intrinsic motivation to learn increases, positively impacting their performance (Santoso & Oktafien, 2018).

3. Observation and Monitoring Activities

ITQAN develops observation and monitoring activities by encouraging its members to observe various events and activities in the boarding school. They are assigned to cover and write news articles about events in the boarding school or to discuss the nature and meaning of various events in the boarding school. They are encouraged to observe critically analyze and develop new perspectives on the events before them. This approach enables students to think beyond the obvious and delve deeper into the meanings and facts, such as the philosophy behind the motto and symbol of the festive stage and the preparation of its implementation.

To foster critical thinking skills, individuals must broaden their scope and perspectives in receiving and interpreting information. This entails not only expansion but also the refinement of observational abilities, including scrutiny of intricate details. Given that thinking activities inherently reflect observation, it is imperative to recognize that observation is the primary instrument for acquiring information. Subsequently, this information is subjected to cognitive processes.

Therefore, monitoring or developmental activities represent integral stages within the mental process (Zakiah & Lestari, 2019).

4. Cultivating Curiosity

To enhance students' curiosity, the ITQAN Group introduces its members to various fields within the boarding school. As commonly understood, the boarding school represents a microcosm of life. Therefore, ITQAN endeavours to stimulate its students to become acquainted with various aspects of life at Gontor. This includes elements of both student and teacher life. One of the methods employed is through study tours. During these activities, members are introduced to various enterprises managed by the boarding school, such as the minimarket, bakery, stadium, printing press, etc. Members encounter novel experiences through this exposure, fostering their interests and perpetuating their curiosity.

In cognitive activities, the impetus for initiation and volition are paramount. It is inconceivable for an individual to commence cognitive endeavours without being driven by a desire. Curiosity manifests as a mental disposition characterized by an inclination towards understanding and an ongoing pursuit of knowledge concerning specific subjects. Curiosity leads to a deeper understanding of the subject and fosters creativity, problem-solving skills, and a love for learning. It encompasses a cognitive modality, disposition, and behaviour indicative of an eager and inquisitive approach towards exploring and comprehending various phenomena encountered, perceived, and studied in depth (Disas, 2021). Curiosity also catalyzes initiating multiple learning processes. With heightened curiosity, students learn more eagerly to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. Through their curiosity, students embark on learning endeavours and develop them to achieve stages of critical thinking (Ameliah & Munawaroh, 2016).

5. Reflective Activities

Members of the ITQAN Group are also trained to develop their reflective abilities or capacity to provide feedback on various information they receive. This is facilitated through mentoring sessions, where members are asked to provide responses to the information presented during the mentoring session. Beyond oral responses, members are also encouraged to give feedback on previous mentoring

sessions through the 'one day, one-page' writing activity. In this activity, each member is required to write a daily page of reflection on the content of the previous mentoring session. This consistent practice helps reinforce learning and enhance reflective abilities. In producing weekly news and bulletin boards, members also learn how to write news articles using feedback from information gathered through observation or interviews.

Within the broader construct of pedagogy, reflection serves as a mechanism for providing feedback to learners, enhancing desired learning outcomes and their performance within the learning process. Rooted in the learners' existing or evolving knowledge base, the reflective process necessitates curiosity, open-mindedness, and accountability. The sequential stages of reflection support students' critical thinking, encompassing process monitoring, procedural control, performance evaluation, and continuous introspection (Lala et al., 2023). Reflective practice within the learning process is pivotal in augmenting critical thinking skills. Beyond its relevance to critical thinking, reflective practice is the foundational framework in the learning process, facilitating understanding development and enhancing anticipated learning outcomes (Widiastari & Fithriani, 2024).

Correspondence of Activities of the ITQAN Group with Critical Thinking Theory

Through the diverse activities within the ITQAN Group, students are provided with a medium to nurture various competencies, including critical thinking skills. This study will examine the correlation between these activities and critical thinking abilities based on Ennis's as cited in Sulistiani & Masrukan (2017) framework, which outlines twelve aspects into five main elements. These elements include providing clear explanations by focusing on questions and analysis; enhancing basic skills such as evaluating source reliability and observation; improving the ability to conclude using induction, deduction, and value judgment; offering additional explanations by identifying assumptions and defining terms; and managing strategies and tactics, including decision-making and interaction with others. Activities such as group discussions, presentations, independent

research projects, problem-solving, debates, essay writing, and collaborative projects at ITQAN Group are expected to foster these critical thinking aspects in students.

1. Providing Elementary Clarification

Analytical competence is a fundamental indicator of critical thinking, particularly in providing elementary clarification. This competency involves the ability to dissect relevant informational components, discern connections among pertinent factors, and establish perspectives on the objectives of acquiring specific information (Novita et al., 2016). These processes are essential for providing clear explanations, a critical thinking element emphasized by Ennis as cited in Sulistiani & Masrukan (2017).

In the ITQAN Group, students' analytical proficiency is continually enhanced through activities emphasising scrutinizing diverse events and utilizing various information sources. Mentoring sessions train members to dissect and analyze issues, cultivating a robust analytical acumen. Such analytical prowess enables students to elucidate interrelationships and integrate disparate elements into a coherent whole, providing clear and elementary clarifications essential for critical thinking.

Students' synthesizing ability is poised for continual enhancement and development. Members are accustomed to gathering diverse information through interviews, observations, daily mentoring, and study tours and integrating this acquired information into a new informational framework. Within the ITQAN Group, this synthesized information takes the form of bulletin board writings, news coverage, study tour activity summaries, and even daily reflections, thereby fostering a more scholarly approach.

Synthetic capability denotes the adeptness to systematically amalgamate disparate elements into a cohesive or novel pattern (Saidah, 2023). According to Ennis, this competency aligns with the critical thinking indicator of providing additional explanations, which involves identifying assumptions and defining terms to create comprehensive clarifications. The ability to synthesize information can be augmented through activities that facilitate students synthesizing diverse facts and

correlating objects with analogous characteristics. Such activities include reading, writing, and engaging in scholarly discussions.

Problem-solving abilities are notably advanced among ITQAN Group members. This progression is facilitated by their exposure to observing and engaging with various issues and subsequently offering responses and solutions to these predicaments. During mentoring sessions, for instance, they delve into discussions concerning contemporary issues in Indonesia, such as the relocation of the capital city or the potential extension of a presidential term. Herein, they are encouraged to proffer solutions grounded in the context of these matters. Furthermore, throughout the execution of diverse activities within ITQAN, they frequently encounter obstacles such as the unavailability of speakers or pending permits. These diverse activities provide a rich and engaging environment for them to acquire the skills to address the problems encountered directly, thus equipping the ITQAN Group members with the capability to tackle a myriad of issues effectively.

The capacity for problem-solving denotes the ability to dissect complex issues, evaluate potential solutions, and implement effective strategies to resolve them. This cognitive skill necessitates critical thinking to examine the problem thoroughly and creative thinking to generate innovative solutions. It can be honed through exposure to multifaceted problems and the encouragement of students to offer analytical insights and solutions. However, the real inspiration for their problem-solving skills comes from the real-world challenges they face. These challenges provide invaluable opportunities for students to apply problem-solving techniques, fostering their proficiency in addressing diverse and dynamic issues (Patnani, 2013).

2. Inference

The capacity for inference among the members will experience heightened development and refinement. This is underscored by their habitual assimilation and comprehension of diverse factual data and information, culminating in generating novel insights aligned with their perspectives yet maintaining coherence with previously validated knowledge. For instance, during mentoring

sessions focusing on effective interviewing techniques, members internalize the imparted knowledge and extrapolate methodologies for conducting successful interviews based on their discernment. Subsequently, they articulate these deductions within their one-day page compositions. Similarly, while covering celebratory stage events, members acquire the skill to infer the underlying philosophies and procedural intricacies, which they subsequently expound upon in news articles or editorial pieces featured in ITQAN's publications.

The capacity for concluding involves abstracting concepts by identifying patterns across instances until reaching a conclusive deduction. This process requires deep cognitive engagement, fluency in connecting concepts, and flexibility in idea generation. Authenticity of thought and diverse perspectives are crucial in conclusion synthesis, while creativity aids in crafting comprehensive conclusions. These skills can be cultivated through inquiry-based learning, fostering critical and creative thinking and collaborative aptitude (Trianggono, 2017).

The varied activities within ITQAN contribute to enhancing and refining students' evaluative skills. Members develop the capacity to critically assess the merit of ideas, creations, methodologies, and approaches. The wealth of information accessible within ITQAN is the bedrock upon which their evaluations are constructed. Exposure to diverse methods affords members a broadened perspective, enabling them to discern nuances in evaluating, such as contrasting deductive and inductive writing methodologies.

The evaluative skills entail the systematic assessment of the worth of an entity or object based on predefined criteria to ascertain specific objectives. This proficiency evolves through stages of appraising the overall efficacy of concepts concerning values, outputs, efficiency, suitability, critical analysis, strategic review, comparative scrutiny, alongside assessments linked to diverse criteria. Thus, in nurturing this evaluative prowess, critical thinking emerges as the fundamental strength in its cultivation (Nuriyah, 2016).

3. Providing Advanced Clarification

The developing competencies extend beyond abstract or general aptitudes to include specialized and practical skills. ITQAN members can furnish diverse explanations for events or information, ranging from elementary clarifications to more intricate analyses. For instance, they provide straightforward explanations during mentoring sessions as part of their reflective practice and deliver more sophisticated analyses in written formats such as weekly bulletin boards, magazine articles, Ramadan and Shawwal journals. These basic or advanced explanations are communicated through various channels, encompassing oral and written modes of expression.

The ability to explain involves clearly articulating views on diverse topics in a logical and linguistically adept manner, emphasizing comprehensible meaning to enhance understanding for others. Critical thinking skills are essential in developing this capacity, as individuals engage in cognitive processing before conveying information to others, highlighting its significance in social interactions (Tsiura, 2023).

They are also trained to cultivate essential skills and competencies for personal development. Various tasks and responsibilities within the ITQAN Group serve as catalysts for them to hone crucial skills pertinent to self-improvement and goal attainment. For instance, those crafting weekly bulletins are prompted to refine their writing prowess. Similarly, organizing seminars fosters the development of analytical understanding, practical communication skills, and more.

Individuals are also expected to develop a spectrum of skills inherent within themselves proficiently. The evolution of knowledge and the contemporary era, notably in the 21st century, necessitate individuals to be adept and agile in adapting to the evolving landscape. Mastery of diverse skills and competencies is essential for individuals to navigate the multifaceted challenges that lie ahead effectively. Individuals must develop an extensive array of ideas within their cognitive faculties to cultivate these critical proficiencies. To amass a wealth of ideas, individuals must broaden their scope of observation across various

informational reservoirs. Furthermore, fostering compelling learning experiences must be coupled with a keen curiosity and unwavering motivation (Martini, 2018).

4. Strategies And Tactics

Moreover, members of ITQAN also demonstrate adeptness in devising strategies and tactics to attain particular goals. For instance, when ITQAN plans to host a Scientific Seminar, they meticulously outline steps and strategic approaches to achieve this aim. Moreover, in the face of challenges, they are proficient in identifying alternative strategies to surmount obstacles, ensuring that such hindrances do not obstruct their endeavours to reach their objectives.

In the contemporary context, individuals are increasingly called upon to adeptly devise strategies, tactics, and methodologies to attain specific objectives. Strategic formulation denotes the capacity to craft various techniques and concepts to navigate forthcoming shifts and challenges, ultimately facilitating the realization of envisioned goals. This competence is pivotal in propelling individuals toward desired outcomes. It can be honed through rigorous analytical cogitation, allowing for the assimilation of ample information to construct strategies, synthesising diverse data to align with predetermined objectives, and applying problem-solving acumen to ensure the effective execution of devised strategies (Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013).

The involvement of mentors and administrators also plays a crucial role in fostering the development of members' critical thinking skills. Members can engage in discussions, seek advice, and inquire about various topics of interest and talents with the mentors and administrators of the ITQAN Group. These mentors and administrators possess diverse expertise, including design, literature, and debate. Furthermore, mentors and administrators reside alongside members around the clock, providing ample opportunities to cultivate their interests and talents and learn from the right individuals.

Establishing a conducive learning environment is crucial for enhancing students' academic performance. This environment refers to the educational setting where students engage in learning activities and interact with peers. It includes all elements present in the learning space. Therefore, educational

institutions must prioritize creating such environments. When students feel comfortable in their learning environment, their learning motivation increases, leading to improved academic outcomes (Santoso & Oktafien, 2018).

At times, certain administrators within the ITQAN Group need to improve in effectively leading activities, particularly in facilitating daily mentoring sessions. This deficiency often stems from inadequate preparation in crafting instructional materials and structuring activities. Furthermore, there exists a variance in the skill sets among the administrators, making it challenging to establish uniformity. While some may demonstrate proficiency in oral communication but need more written expression, others may excel in scholarly writing but need help with verbal articulation.

Teachers serve as the primary guides in the learning process. They embody an inseparable unified role and function, encompassing the abilities to educate, guide, teach, and train. The teacher's role in learning is closely related to providing guidance and supervision to learners, understanding the challenges faced by learners, identifying issues related to the learning process, and ultimately providing solutions to problem-solving (Sopian, 2016).

Aside from the involvement of administrators, the participation of members is also recognized as a significant indicator of the success of activities within ITQAN. All members' active participation is essential in every ITQAN activity. Members are expected not only to absorb information passively but also to seek and explore additional knowledge actively. However, in certain instances, some members lack enthusiasm and appear disengaged, demonstrating a tendency towards idleness. They often need to pursue further information actively. Furthermore, there are cases where certain members consistently fail to attend ITQAN activities, prompting multiple reprimands from the administrators.

Besides the teacher's role, the student's role is crucial in achieving learning objectives. Students are integral to the learning process and are expected to participate actively. This participation is demonstrated through engagement in classroom activities, attentiveness during teacher explanations, questioning to clarify understanding, and interactive communication during learning. Student

participation can be encouraged by posing questions, positively acknowledging student responses, utilizing structured experiences, and employing diverse teaching methods involving students actively.

Efficient time management is crucial for the success of ITQAN activities. Delays, often caused by poor time organization, hinder the optimal delivery of materials. For example, marketing events may be postponed due to overlooked permission processes, while daily mentoring sessions may start late because of delinquent members. Effective time organization is essential for seamless learning progression, encompassing systematic teaching and learning activities. It involves preparing materials, arranging facilities, fostering conducive environments, and scheduling time to achieve curricular objectives (Rozalena & Kristiawan, 2017).

Regarding the provision of facilities and amenities, ITQAN possesses a sufficient range of resources for its activities. However, there are notable areas for improvement, particularly in the quantity of certain facilities, such as computers, which are limited to just one set. This scarcity often results in parties needing to yield to one another if multiple individuals require simultaneous access. For instance, a member interested in design may need to defer their activities if the computer is utilized for tasks like compiling the weekly bulletin.

More learning facilities are needed to dampen students' motivation and comfort, hindering optimal teaching and activity execution and thus impeding desired outcomes (Siahaan & RI, 2019). Adequate facilities are integral to effective education, facilitating the smooth knowledge transfer from educators to learners (Agustina et al., 2022).

Table 1. Indicators of critical thinking skills and corresponding activities in ITQAN group

Critical Thinking Skills Indicators	Activities in ITQAN Group	Supervisors Roles
1. Providing Elementary Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Discussion • Critical Reading 	
2. Building Basic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Discussion • Observation • Curiosity Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring • Guiding • Providing Feedback
3. Inference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Discussion • Observation • Critical Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluating

4. Providing Advanced Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Discussion • Critical Reading • Reflection
5. Strategies & Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Discussion • Curiosity Development • Reflection

IV. CONCLUSION

The ITQAN Group implements activities such as daily mentoring, critical text analysis, community observation, and study tours to foster critical thinking skills, including Providing elementary clarification, Building Basic Support, Inference, Providing Advanced Clarification, Strategies & Tactics. Feedback mechanisms like ITQAN publications and one-day-one-page writing tasks further support skill enhancement. The group's scholarly atmosphere, continuous guidance from resident educators, and ample access to information are significant supporting factors. However, the ITQAN Group encounters challenges, including limited administrator competency, low student participation, irregular time management, and insufficient facilities, which hinder the group's efforts. Despite these obstacles, the ITQAN Group remains committed to cultivating a conducive learning environment and enhancing students' academic performance through its structured activities and supportive community.

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