

Critical Pedagogy and Islamic Education: Curriculum Reconstruction towards Transformative Learning

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the relevance of critical pedagogy in Islamic education and to formulate a reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum towards transformative learning. This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. Data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of main works discussing critical pedagogy, Islamic education, and curriculum theory, while secondary data includes nationally and internationally reputable journal articles, as well as academic books relevant to the research topic. Data analysis techniques are carried out using content analysis, which is interpretive-critical in nature. The research results show that critical pedagogy has strong alignment with Islamic educational values, particularly in the aspects of reflection (*tafakkur*), dialogue, and self-transformation. The integration of critical pedagogy into the IRE curriculum can be carried out through dialogical, contextual, reflective, and transformative principles. The reconstruction of this curriculum not only changes the learning structure but also the education paradigm from knowledge transmission towards the formation of critical awareness and social action. The implication of this reconstruction is the realization of transformative learning that can develop critical thinking skills, social awareness, and the contextual internalization of Islamic values. This study provides theoretical contributions to the development of an Islamic education curriculum based on critical pedagogy as well as practical implications for strengthening the quality of IRE learning that is more relevant to the challenges of the times.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy; Islamic Education; Curriculum; Transformative Learning.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis relevansi pedagogi kritis dalam pendidikan Islam serta merumuskan rekonstruksi kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam (IRE) menuju pembelajaran transformatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis *library research*. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini terdiri atas data primer dan data sekunder. Data primer berupa karya-karya utama yang membahas pedagogi kritis, pendidikan Islam, dan teori kurikulum, sedangkan data sekunder meliputi artikel jurnal nasional dan internasional bereputasi, serta buku ilmiah yang relevan dengan topik penelitian. Teknik analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan analisis isi (*content analysis*) yang bersifat interpretatif-kritis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pedagogi kritis memiliki keselarasan yang kuat dengan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam, khususnya dalam aspek refleksi (*tafakkur*), dialog, dan transformasi diri. Integrasi pedagogi kritis dalam kurikulum IRE dapat dilakukan melalui prinsip dialogis, kontekstual, reflektif, dan transformatif. Rekonstruksi kurikulum ini tidak hanya mengubah struktur pembelajaran, tetapi juga paradigma pendidikan dari yang bersifat transmisi pengetahuan menuju pembentukan kesadaran kritis dan tindakan sosial. Implikasi dari rekonstruksi tersebut adalah terwujudnya pembelajaran transformatif yang mampu mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis, kesadaran sosial, serta internalisasi nilai-nilai keislaman secara kontekstual. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dalam pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan Islam berbasis pedagogi kritis serta implikasi praktis bagi penguatan kualitas pembelajaran IRE yang lebih relevan dengan tantangan zaman.

Kata Kunci: Pedagogi Kritis; Pendidikan Islam; Kurikulum; Pembelajaran Transformatif.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has a strategic role in shaping the character, morality, and spiritual awareness of students. However, in practice, IRE learning in various educational institutions still tends to be normative, textual, and oriented towards knowledge transfer alone (Abdullah, 2022). The learning process emphasizes more on memorizing religious doctrines than on developing students' critical and reflective thinking skills. This condition causes IRE to be less able to respond to the challenges of an increasingly complex era, especially in the face of social, cultural, and technological dynamics (Kolb, 2021). This phenomenon also shows that there is a gap between the ideal goal of holistic Islamic education and the practice of learning in the field.

In the context of modern education, the need for a learning approach that is able to build critical awareness is becoming increasingly important. One relevant approach is critical pedagogy, which places education as a means of social liberation and transformation (Farias et al., 2025). Critical pedagogy emphasizes the importance of dialogue, reflection, and *critical consciousness* in the learning process. This concept is heavily influenced by the thinking of Paulo Freire who sees education not as a "banking system" process, but as a praxis that frees humans from various forms of oppression (Freire, 2018; Taff & Lazzaro, 2025). This approach is considered to be able to encourage students to not only understand reality, but also to criticize and transform it (Falaqi et al., 2025; McLaren & Jandrić, 2020).

On the other hand, the values in Islamic education are actually in harmony with the principles of critical pedagogy. Islamic teachings encourage their people to think critically through the concepts of *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, and *ijtihad*. The Qur'an itself contains many verses that invite humans to use reason in understanding the reality of life. This shows that Islamic education is not only oriented to normative aspects, but also contains emancipatory and transformational dimensions (Taff & Lazzaro, 2025), (Hadi Mousavi, 2020). However, the implementation of these values in the IRE curriculum is still not optimal. Many curricula are not able to integrate critical and contextual dimensions in the learning process.

The curriculum as the heart of education has an important role in determining the direction and quality of learning. The current IRE curriculum still faces various problems, such as a *teacher-centered* approach, a lack of dialogue space, and a lack of connection with the social reality of students. As a result, IRE learning becomes less relevant to the needs of students in facing real-life challenges. Several studies show that non-contextual curricula tend to fail in shaping students' critical awareness and reflective abilities (Falaqi et al., 2025; Giroux, 2025; Kruszelnicki, 2026).

Departing from these problems, efforts are needed to reconstruct the IRE curriculum that is able to integrate the principles of critical pedagogy. This reconstruction not only aims to improve the curriculum structure, but also change the learning paradigm to be more dialogical, participatory, and transformative. In this case, transformative learning is the main goal, which is a learning process that is able to deeply change students' ways of thinking, attitudes, and actions. The transformative learning theory put forward by Jack Mezirow emphasizes the



importance of critical reflection in shaping new perspectives that are more inclusive and open (Farias et al., 2025; Joshi, 2025)

This research is important because it seeks to fill the gap between the ideal concept of Islamic education and the current curriculum practice. In addition, the integration of critical pedagogy in the IRE curriculum is still relatively rarely studied in depth, especially in the context of *library research*. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the concept of critical pedagogy, examine its relevance to Islamic education, and formulate a model for reconstructing the IRE curriculum oriented towards transformative learning.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problems in this study is: (1) what are the characteristics of the conventional IRE curriculum and its problems, (2) how is the concept of critical pedagogy and its relevance to Islamic education, and (3) how to reconstruct the IRE curriculum that is able to realize transformative learning. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education science, as well as a practical contribution to the development of a curriculum that is more contextual, critical, and relevant to the needs of the times.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on conceptual and theoretical analysis related to critical pedagogy, Islamic education, and curriculum reconstruction towards transformative learning. Literature research is a method that not only functions as a supporting activity, but has developed into a systematic methodological approach in studying, analyzing, and synthesizing various scientific sources comprehensively. This approach allows researchers to build a valid and tested literature-based knowledge construct (Leavy, 2023).

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of main works that discuss critical pedagogy, Islamic education, and curriculum theory, while secondary data includes articles from reputable national and international journals, as well as scientific books relevant to the research topic. The selection of sources is carried out purposively by considering the credibility, relevance, and novelty of the publication. In the context of literature research, a systematic literature search strategy is essential to ensure the quality and completeness of the data analyzed (Mezmir, 2020).

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely by identifying, classifying, and organizing various scientific documents that are relevant to the focus of the research. This process involves searching academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and other indexed journals. The collected data is then selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria to suit the needs of the analysis. This approach allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied through various theoretical perspectives.

The data analysis technique in this study uses qualitative *content analysis*. Content analysis is a systematic and flexible method for studying documents or texts with the aim of identifying the patterns, themes, and meanings contained in them. This method is widely used in social and educational research because of its ability to produce in-depth interpretation of textual data (Fitrah & Luthfiah, 2017) In



addition, content analysis can be carried out inductively or deductively, allowing researchers to develop categories of analysis based on theories and findings from data.

The data analysis process is carried out through several stages, namely: (1) data reduction by selecting and focusing relevant information, (2) data categorization based on key themes such as critical pedagogy, IRE curriculum, and transformative learning, (3) data interpretation by examining the relationship between concepts, and (4) drawing conclusions that are synthesis and argumentative. In this case, the researcher also uses a critical analysis approach to evaluate the suitability between the concept of critical pedagogy and the values of Islamic education.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses the source triangulation technique, which is by comparing various references from different sources to obtain a more comprehensive understanding and reduce interpretation bias. In addition, the researcher also pays attention to the consistency of the logic of the argument and the relationship between the theory and the results of the analysis. Thus, this research method is expected to be able to produce an in-depth, systematic study, and have a theoretical contribution to the development of a critical pedagogy-based Islamic education curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Conventional Islamic Religious Education Curriculum and Its Implications

In recent decades, the discourse on the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum has shown a tension between normative-religious demands and contemporary pedagogical needs. On one hand, the IRE curriculum is expected to maintain the purity of Islamic teachings, but on the other hand, it is demanded to be responsive to social, cultural, and scientific developments (Nurhayati et al., 2024; Ruslan, 2025). This tension often results in learning practices that tend to be stagnant, where teaching materials are delivered textually and are less connected to the realities of students' lives. Consequently, IRE learning has not fully functioned as a means of forming critical awareness and social transformation.

Conceptually, the curriculum is a strategic tool that not only regulates the content of learning but also reflects the educational paradigm adopted. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the curriculum ideally should not only emphasize the cognitive aspects but also encompass integrated affective and practical dimensions (Ahmad Baht & Jeelani Bhat, 2019). However, various studies indicate that the implementation of the IRE curriculum is still dominated by a teacher-centered approach, minimal dialogue, and oriented toward quantitative academic achievements. This shows a reduction in the meaning of Islamic education, which is inherently holistic and transformative.

On the other hand, the development of modern educational theory-particularly critical pedagogy-offers a new perspective on viewing the curriculum as an instrument of liberation and empowerment (McLaren & Bosio, 2022). This perspective emphasizes the importance of connecting knowledge to social contexts and encourages students to be active in the learning process. When this perspective is related to Islamic education, a need arises to reconsider the structure and orientation



of the IRE curriculum to make it more relevant to contemporary challenges without losing its Islamic value roots.

Therefore, before formulating an ideal curriculum reconstruction model, an initial mapping of the characteristics and problems of the conventional IRE curriculum is necessary. This mapping is important to identify weaknesses and also serves as a basis for constructive criticism (Alcazar-Gonzales, 2026). The following is a summary of the general characteristics of the conventional IRE curriculum along with its implications:

Table 1. Characteristics of Conventional Islamic Education Curriculum and Its Implications

No	Curriculum Characteristics	Description	Implications in Learning
1	Normative-doctrinal	Emphasizes memorization of religious texts	Minimal contextual understanding
2	Teacher-centered	Teacher as the center of learning,	Students are passive
3	Minimal dialogue	Lack of space for discussion and reflection	The underdevelopment of critical thinking
4	Not contextual	Material is not connected to social reality	Low relevance of learning
5	Cognitive evaluation	Assessment based on memorization	Ignores affective and practical aspects

Based on this mapping, it can be seen that the conventional IRE curriculum still faces a number of fundamental challenges that require serious attention. This condition becomes an important basis for conducting a more in-depth critique of the existing curriculum structure and paradigm, as will be explained in the following subsection.

Criticism of the Conventional Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

The Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum in practice still shows a strong tendency towards a normative-doctrinal approach that places students as the object of receiving knowledge. The dominant learning pattern is the transmission of religious information through memorization, without being accompanied by a process of critical and dialogical reflection. This condition is in line with criticism in the school of critical pedagogy which calls this educational model banking *education*, which is an educational process that "deposits" knowledge into students without involving their critical awareness. In this perspective, learners are not given space to question, interpret, or contextualize the knowledge they receive.

In the context of Islamic education, this tendency is actually a simplification of the much more dynamic classical Islamic scientific tradition. The concept of thinking in Islam is not only textual, but also reflective and critical through the practice of *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, and *tadzakkur*. Studies show that in Islamic epistemology, critical thinking is not just a rational activity, but also an integration between reason and spirituality that leads to deep awareness (*ma'rifat*) (Adawiah & Sakdiah, 2025) Thus, the reduction of IRE learning to mere memorization shows a distortion of the essence of Islamic education itself.

Furthermore, in the tradition of classical Islamic education such as those developed in Islamic boarding schools the practice of dialogical learning through the method of *deliberation* and discussion of the book has actually been known. This



practice shows that it is in accordance with the principles of critical pedagogy, especially in the aspects of dialogue, participation, and the formation of critical awareness. Recent research shows that discussion methods in traditional Islamic education are able to build *critical consciousness* and empower students as active subjects in learning (Radino & Mubarak, 2025). However, in the formal curriculum of modern IRE, these dialogical practices tend to be marginalized by rigid instructional approaches and are oriented towards purely cognitive achievement.

In addition, the fundamental problem in the conventional IRE curriculum is the lack of connection between the learning material and the social reality of students. The curriculum is often structured in an abstract and non-contextual manner, thus failing to build students' social awareness and transformation skills. In fact, both in critical pedagogy and Islamic education, the goal of education is not only limited to the transfer of knowledge, but also the transformation of individuals and society. In the perspective of critical education, education must be able to liberate human beings from the structure of injustice, while in Islamic education, this goal is reflected in the concept of *tarbiyah* that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions holistically (Asykur et al., 2025).

Another criticism is the dominance of *the teacher-centered* approach in IRE learning. The teacher is positioned as the sole authority of truth, while the learner becomes passive and lacks the space to actively participate. This is contrary to the principles of critical pedagogy which emphasizes the dialogical relationship between teachers and learners as fellow learning subjects (Ichikawa, 2022). Even in the classical Islamic tradition, the relationship between teacher and student is not completely hierarchical, but rather interactive and based on the search for knowledge together (*thalab al-'ilm*).

Thus, it can be concluded that the conventional IRE curriculum experiences several main problems, namely: (1) the dominance of memorization and doctrinal approaches, (2) the lack of space for dialogue and critical reflection, (3) the lack of relevance to social reality, and (4) *the teacher-centered paradigm is still strong*. This problem shows that there is a gap between the current educational practices of IRE and both the tradition of critical pedagogy and the treasures of classical Islamic education. Therefore, efforts are needed to reconstruct the curriculum that is not only technical, but also paradigmatic, by integrating critical, dialogical, and transformative values within the framework of Islamic education.

The Relevance of Critical Pedagogy in Islamic Education

Critical pedagogy as an educational paradigm that emphasizes *critical consciousness*, dialogue, and social transformation has a very strong relevance to the basic principles of Islamic education. In the perspective of critical pedagogy, education serves not only as a process of knowledge transmission, but also as a liberating praxis that allows learners to understand social reality reflexively and act to change it. Paulo Freire emphasized that education should be a process of humanization through dialogue and critical awareness, not just the reproduction of oppressive social structures. In this context, the concept of *conscientization* is at the core of critical pedagogy as an effort to build reflective awareness of social reality and injustice (Cole, 2022; Giroux, 2024; Halabi, 2026; McLaren & Jandrić, 2018).

Interestingly, these principles have significant overlap with the teachings of Islamic education, both in the classical tradition and in contemporary thought. In



Islam, the educational process not only aims to transfer knowledge, but also to form spiritual and social awareness through the integration of reason (*'aql*), revelation, and experience. Concepts such as *tafakkur* (reflective thinking), *tadabbur* (deep contemplation), and *ijtihad* show that Islam epistemologically encourages critical thinking activities. In fact, in classic works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of integration between knowledge, ethics, and self-transformation as the main goal of education.

The relevance of critical pedagogy to Islamic education is increasingly evident when examined through a comparative approach between the thought of Paulo Freire and al-Ghazali. Studies show that the two have similarities in viewing education as a means of liberation and the formation of a whole human being. Freire emphasized liberation from oppressive social structures, while al-Ghazali emphasized liberation from the domination of lust through the process of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). These two perspectives show that education must be transformative, both socially and spiritually (Janssens, 2022; McLaren & Jandrić, 2020; Rudolph, 2023).

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the integration of critical pedagogy is increasingly relevant to address various global challenges, such as social inequality, moral crises, and technological disruption. Several international studies show that a critical pedagogical approach can strengthen Islamic education by making it more dialogical, participatory, and contextual. For example, studies that affirm that the concepts of dialogue, participation, and reflective learning in critical pedagogy can encourage learners to understand Islamic teachings more contextually and applicatively in daily life (Adawiah & Sakdiah, 2025).

In addition, the concept of *of praxis* in critical pedagogy—that is, the combination of reflection and action—is also in harmony with the concept of charity in Islam. In Islamic education, knowledge does not only stop at cognitive understanding, but must be realized in concrete actions that bring benefits. Research shows that the integration of the concepts of *praxis*, democracy, and critical awareness in Islamic education is able to connect religious values with the reality of students' lives in a more meaningful way (Fauzi, 2024; Roberts, 2017, 2021).

Furthermore, in the discourse of modern Islamic education, the concept of transformative Islamic education has emerged which is the result of a synthesis between critical pedagogy and Islamic values. This concept developed among modernist Muslim intellectuals who sought to integrate the principles of liberation, social justice, and critical consciousness into Islamic education. This transformation shows that critical pedagogy is not in conflict with Islamic education, but can enrich and actualize Islamic values in the contemporary context (Ali, 2019; Bierdz, 2025; Farias et al., 2025).

However, the integration of critical pedagogy in Islamic education also requires a contextual and selective approach. Not all aspects of critical pedagogy can be directly adopted without considering the theological and epistemological foundations of Islam. Therefore, a process of reinterpretation and integration based on Islamic values is needed, so as to produce an educational model that is not only critical and emancipatory but also rooted in Islamic spirituality and ethics.

Thus, it can be concluded that critical pedagogy has a strong relevance to Islamic education, both philosophically and practically. Both place education as a process of human liberation and transformation. The integration of the two opens up opportunities to develop a IRE curriculum that is more dialogical, reflective, and



transformative, so as to be able to answer educational challenges in the modern era while remaining rooted in Islamic values.

Reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Based on Critical Pedagogy

The reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum is a strategic step to answer various problems inherent in conventional education practices. This reconstruction involves not only changes in the technical aspects of the curriculum, but also a paradigm transformation from normative-doctrinal to a dialogical, reflective, and transformative approach. In this context, critical pedagogy is a relevant conceptual framework for developing a IRE curriculum that is able to build students' critical awareness while remaining rooted in Islamic values.

Conceptually, a curriculum based on critical pedagogy departs from the assumption that education is a space of social praxis that is not neutral, but is loaded with values, ideologies, and power relations. Therefore, the curriculum must be designed as an instrument of liberation that allows learners to understand social realities critically and actively participate in the process of transformation. In international studies, this approach is known as the *transformative curriculum*, which emphasizes the integration between knowledge, critical reflection, and social action (Carmody, 2023; Farias et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Islamic education, curriculum reconstruction must remain based on the main goal of education, which is the formation of a kamil person who is balanced between spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. Therefore, the integration of critical pedagogy in the IRE curriculum does not mean adopting the Western paradigm rawly, but carrying out a synthesis process that combines critical values with Islamic principles such as *monotheism*, *justice ('adl)*, and *benefit (maslahah)*. This approach is in line with the idea of Islamization of science which emphasizes the importance of integration between revelation and reason in the development of science (Khoiriyati & Daulai, 2023)

The reconstruction of the IRE curriculum based on critical pedagogy can be formulated through several main principles. First, the principle of dialogism, namely the curriculum must provide space for two-way interaction between teachers and students. Learning is no longer one-way, but dialogue-based that allows for a critical exchange of ideas. This principle is in line with the concept of *shura* in Islam which emphasizes deliberation as part of collective decision-making and learning (Radino & Mubarak, 2025; Rymarz, 2024)

Second, the contextual principle, namely that learning materials must be related to the social realities faced by students. The IRE curriculum not only discusses religious texts in the abstract, but also relates them to contemporary issues such as social justice, the environment, and diversity. Research shows that a contextual curriculum is able to increase the relevance of learning and build students' critical awareness of their social environment (Apple, 2018; Millei & Imre, 2025)

Third, the reflective-critical principle, namely the curriculum must encourage students to reflect on the knowledge obtained. In this case, learning does not only stop at understanding, but also involves a process of evaluation and reinterpretation. This principle is in harmony with the concept of *muhasabah* in Islam, which is self-reflection as a means of improving the quality of faith and action.



Fourth, the transformative principle, namely the curriculum must be directed at changing the attitudes and actions of students. Education is not only aimed at knowing, but also to be and act. In this context, the concept of *praxis* in critical pedagogy has similarities with the concept of *righteous charity* in Islam, where knowledge must be embodied in tangible actions that bring benefit (Ali, 2019; Farias et al., 2025)

The implementation of these principles in the IRE curriculum can be carried out through several strategies. First, the development of teaching materials that are integrative between religious texts and social reality. Second, the use of participatory learning methods such as discussion, problem-based learning, and critical reflection. Third, the change in the evaluation system from one oriented to an authentic assessment that measures students' critical and reflective thinking skills. International studies show that the learning approach based on reflection and dialogue is able to improve students' critical thinking skills and social awareness (McLaren & Jandrić, 2018, 2020).

Furthermore, the reconstruction of this curriculum also requires a change in the role of teachers from *knowledge transmitters* to facilitators and dialogue partners in the learning process (Luthfiyah et al., 2022; Ruslan et al., 2024). Teachers are no longer the only source of truth, but play a role in guiding students to discover and build knowledge independently. In the Islamic tradition, this role has actually been known in the concept of *murabbi* which not only teaches, but also guides and fosters the development of students holistically.

Thus, the reconstruction of the IRE curriculum based on critical pedagogy is an integrative effort that combines critical, dialogical, and transformative values with the principles of Islamic education. This curriculum model is expected to be able to produce learning that is not only cognitive, but also forms critical awareness, reflective attitudes, and transformative actions of students. Ultimately, such a curriculum will contribute to creating a generation of Muslims who not only understand the teachings of Islam textually, but are also able to actualize them in social life in a contextual and meaningful way.

Implications of Curriculum Reconstruction on Transformative Learning

The reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum based on critical pedagogy has significant implications for changing the learning paradigm, especially in realizing transformative learning. Transformative learning is no longer understood as a process of knowledge transfer alone, but as a process of deeply changing students' awareness, ways of thinking, and actions. Within this framework, education becomes a *praxis* space that integrates critical reflection and social action as an inseparable unit.

One of the main implications is the change in the relationship between teachers and students. In the perspective of critical pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire, the relationship between education is no longer hierarchical, but dialogical. Freire rejects the "bank-style" model of education and replaces it with a *problem-posing education* approach, in which teachers and learners are jointly subjects in the learning process (Giroux, 2024; Hill, 2022; McLaren & Jandrić, 2020). Dialogue is the core of learning because through dialogue students can develop critical awareness of their social reality. Freire emphasized that education should be based on students' life experiences and directed at the transformation of that reality (Random & Uk, 2022)



This implication is particularly relevant to IRE learning, where the teacher is no longer the sole authority on truth, but plays the role of a facilitator who guides a process of contextual religious reflection. In this case, the concept of the teacher as *a murabbi* in Islam finds its relevance, namely as a guide who fosters awareness, not just a conveyor of material.

In addition, the reconstruction of the curriculum based on critical pedagogy also changes the orientation of learning from memorization to critical reflection. Henry Giroux emphasizes that critical pedagogy provides space for learners to understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and to develop a broader social consciousness (Hill, 2022; Taff & Lazzaro, 2025). In this context, IRE learning is no longer only oriented to mastering teaching materials, but also to students' ability to study, criticize, and actualize Islamic values in real life.

The next implication is the emergence of social reality-based learning (*contextual learning*). In critical pedagogy, the curriculum must depart from the life experiences of students and the social issues they face. Peter McLaren emphasized that education must have an orientation of social transformation and side with marginalized groups. He sees critical pedagogy as a means to "improve and transform the world" through education that favors social justice (McLaren, 2021).

In Islamic education, this approach can be integrated through learning that links Islamic teachings to contemporary social problems, such as social inequality, the environment, and plurality. Thus, students not only understand religious teachings textually, but are also able to apply them in a real-life context.

Furthermore, the reconstruction of this curriculum also has an impact on changes in learning methods. The dominant lecture method needs to be replaced or enriched with dialogical methods, critical discussion, *problem-based learning*, and reflection (Almulla, 2020). This approach is in line with Freire's idea of the importance of *problem-posing* education that encourages students to be active in building knowledge. Education is no longer "giving answers", but "asking questions" that challenge students' critical awareness. This is important for building *higher-order thinking skills* that are the demands of 21st century education (Gómez-Martin & ArronteAlvarez, 2026).

Another implication is a change in the learning evaluation system. Within the framework of critical pedagogy, evaluation not only measures cognitive aspects, but also includes affective and practical dimensions. Evaluations must be able to assess the extent to which students experience changes in consciousness and be able to apply the values learned in real life. This is in line with the concept of transformative learning that emphasizes perspective change as the main indicator of learning success.

On the other hand, the reconstruction of this curriculum also has implications for strengthening the ethical and spiritual dimensions in learning. In contrast to Western critical pedagogy that tends to focus on social liberation, Islamic education adds a transcendental dimension as the foundation of transformation. Thus, transformative learning in IRE not only aims to liberate humans from social injustice, but also leads humans to divine awareness (*monotheism*) and moral responsibility (Farias et al., 2025; Kruszelnicki, 2026).

However, the implementation of transformative learning based on critical pedagogy also faces challenges. Among them are resistance to paradigm changes, limited teacher competence, and an education system that is still oriented towards



exam standards. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed in the form of teacher training, curriculum policy development, and institutional support so that this transformation can run effectively.

Thus, it can be concluded that the reconstruction of the IRE curriculum based on critical pedagogy has broad implications for transformative learning, including changes in teacher-student relationships, learning orientation, methods, evaluation, and integration of social and spiritual values. This integration not only strengthens the relevance of Islamic education in the modern context, but also opens up space for the birth of a generation that is critical, reflective, and able to contribute to the constructive transformation of society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the conventional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum still faces various fundamental problems, especially related to the dominance of normative, textual, and memorization-oriented approaches. The learning pattern that tends to be *teacher-centered* and the lack of space for dialogue and critical reflection cause IRE to be less able to develop students' critical awareness. This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideal goal of holistic Islamic education and the learning practices that take place in the field.

Critical pedagogy is present as a relevant approach to bridging these gaps. By emphasizing dialogue, reflection, and *critical consciousness*, critical pedagogy views education as a process of liberation and transformation. The results of the analysis show that the principles of critical pedagogy have a strong alignment with the values of Islamic education, such as *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, *ijtihad*, and orientation to the formation of the whole human being (*insan kamil*). This confirms that the integration of critical pedagogy in Islamic education is not a form of contradictory adoption, but a synthesis that enriches the paradigm of Islamic education.

The reconstruction of the IRE curriculum based on critical pedagogy is a strategic step in developing more dialogical, contextual, reflective, and transformative learning. The reconstructed curriculum serves not only as an administrative tool, but as an instrument of liberation that allows learners to understand, criticize, and transform their social reality. Principles such as dialogical, contextual, reflective, and transformative are the main cornerstones in the development of the curriculum.

The implication of this reconstruction is the realization of transformative learning in Islamic education. Learning is no longer oriented to the transfer of knowledge alone, but to changes in the consciousness, attitudes, and actions of students. These changes include a more egalitarian relationship between teachers and students, the use of participatory learning methods, and a more authentic and comprehensive evaluation system. Thus, Islamic education not only produces individuals who understand religious teachings textually, but are also able to actualize them in social life in a critical and constructive way.



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