



AMERICAN  
SCIENTIFIC  
PUBLISHERS

Copyright © 2018 American Scientific Publishers  
All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2018.12529>

Advanced Science Letters  
Vol. 24, No. 11 Nov, 2018

## CRITICAL EDUCATION PARADIGM IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

(A Philosophical, Pedagogical and Interdisciplinary Analysis)

Saifullah Idris<sup>1</sup>; Tabrani. ZA<sup>2</sup>; Fikri Sulaiman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Serambi Mekah, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Senior Researcher at SCAD Independent, Indonesia

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>[saifullahnadia@gmail.com](mailto:saifullahnadia@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>[tabraniza@scad-independent.org](mailto:tabraniza@scad-independent.org); & <sup>3</sup>[ibnusulis@gmail.com](mailto:ibnusulis@gmail.com)

*This article is an assessment of critical education concepts reviewed in a paradigmatic frame and seen from the perspective of Islamic education. As education aims to work on the reality of human consciousness, free will, critical reasoning, and creativity, critical education should methodologically rest on the principles of total reflection and action. In other words, these are the principles used to transform static facts into dynamic conditions for both individual actors of education (educators and learners) and the society as a whole. As for the concept of Islamic education, it essentially emphasizes humanization and liberation as an educational orientation and places learners and educators as a subject in the learning process. Islamic education combines vertical (spirituality) and horizontal (social) aspects in a single educational orientation. This is in contrast to the paradigm of critical education which places its emphasis more on materialistic matters and less on spiritual aspects.*

**Keywords:** Paradigm, Critical Education, Islamic Education, Relevance.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The critical education paradigm is an education paradigm which encourages critical thinking, creativity, freedom to appreciate, and critical awareness of students. It projects education as a critical reflection on ideologies and dominant interests which are dehumanistic in nature in order to give birth to social transformation. In a critical paradigm, the main tasks of education are to conduct critical reflection on unjust systems and their structure deconstruct them, and advocate for a more just social system. In the perspective of critical education paradigm, education should be able to provide enough space for stakeholders to identify and analyze social transformation in a free and critical way. In other words, the main task of education is to “humanize” humans who have been dehumanized by existing unjust systems and structures (Fakih, in William F. O’neil, 2002: xv).

The critical education paradigm proposed by Freire contains a very fundamental criticism of the liberal and conservative education paradigm which has failed to project education as a humanizing process. An implication which results from such dominant education paradigm education outputs that are unable to bring constructive changes to human reality (Fakih, in William F. O’neil, 2002: xvi).

Such failure also attracts interests from some figures of contemporary Islamic education. Muhammad Iqbal, an Islamic scholar from Indian subcontinent (in Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 110-11), in an effort to formulate an Islamic education paradigm, criticizes modern Western education for being the culprit behind the prolonged humanity crisis. According to Iqbal, the failure occurring in modern Western

education is due to the fact that such education only focuses on the aspect of knowledge transformation, without any regard for the aspect of ‘*isyq* or love. He believes that Islamic education includes not only the process of teaching and learning which transfers knowledge, but also the aspect of integral self-fostering in order to bring humans to their true sense and to the highest level of their humanity. Finally, Islamic education is oriented towards solving the problems of human beings in general and towards helping them realize their life goals.

### 2. METHOD

This research was a descriptive analysis which employed a qualitative method. The approach used was a philosophical-pedagogical approach. In addition, an interdisciplinary approach was also used so that the research problems could be understood more deeply. The data analysis employed in this research was the content analysis technique. It was presented in the form of a descriptive analysis, i.e. the interpretation of the content was made and arranged systematically and holistically by using two methods, i.e. deduction and induction methods.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The education paradigm proposed by Iqbal is basically an effort to make one self perfect (as an individual). Meanwhile socially, his idea refers to an effort to bring humans as a whole to their best ability in solving any problems related to ever-changing human conditions and to take humans collectively closer to their life goals so that

their life becomes more meaningful.

Phenomenological background, definition, and orientations of education proposed by Iqbal on the one hand, and critical education paradigm on the other hand seem to have a common ground. Both seem to have based their education paradigm on a criticism of other failed existing education paradigms. In addition, the two are also similar in terms of their orientations, i.e. achieving humanization both individually and socially.

Such relevance can be seen especially in their orientations to shape an integral human personality by respecting and developing any potential that humans in general possess. Besides, both also have sociological relevance, which means that the social orientation of education is to solve any problems that emerge in ever-changing contexts for the sake of achieving social transformation.

The paradigm of critical education, from its foundation, content, process, and objectives, does not contradict the paradigm of Islamic education. The whole ideas and practical methods of the implementation of the critical education paradigm in a learning process in general do not contradict Islamic education. However, the paradigm of Islamic education focuses more on the understanding of spiritual values and awareness of Islamic ethical values in validating the knowledge that someone possesses. The process and objectives of such critical education paradigm should be based on Islamic spiritual values.

Critical awareness in Islam is based on the foundation of faith in Allah the Almighty, as the creator and purpose of life. This is different from that in the paradigm of critical education which only focuses on the shaping of human's critical awareness where the awareness only includes aspects of psycho-ethics and socio-ethics, not aspect of theo-ethics.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

##### a. Relevance of the Critical Paradigm to Islamic Education

According to Muthahhari (2005: 14), the main objective of Islamic education is to create a better society. Being in line with Freire, with his concept of critical awareness, which states that education should make humans become aware of all aspects of their social life and that these aspects should be closely related. Education should make humans critically aware of all those aspects. Muthahhari (2005: 17) states that one objective of education and teaching is to shape human personality and regulations in the field of law, economy, and politics which are directly related to the field of education.

Al-Toumy al-Syaibany (1983: 47) also agrees with the concept saying that Islamic education should be neither untouchable nor alienated from social and cultural reality. Islamic education should be in harmony with the existing cultural, social, economic and political systems in a society. Such education should not only adjust to what is happening in a society, but also position itself as a pioneer, advisor, leader, and critic to such dominant systems.

From an Islamic perspective, education based on human's natural character, is absolutely needed in order to fulfill human's natural function, role, and existence. Education, according to Islamic thinkers, is self-fulfillment or the fulfillment of human's status in front of God. In such a context, education based on Islamic perspective, functions more as a mechanism to maintain, make use of, and develop human's natural characters (Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 114). According to Muthahhari (2002: 12-15), natural character is a fundamental potential which is only owned by humans and such thing is what differentiates humans from other God's creatures. Islamic education is identical to development processes which aim is to promote and activate any potential (*al-malakah al-kaminah*) existing in humans.

Such education contradicts the paradigm of conservative education which tends to position education as a means of legitimizing social, political, and cultural systems (dominant ideology) which exist in a society. Islamic education, according to Muthahhari (2005: 39), should liberate a human's mind from the limitation of traditions. In other words, it should direct humans to the freedom of thinking.

Muthahhari (2005: 25-26) believes that Islamic education should be aimed at maximizing students' potential of thinking. Teachers, for instance, should work hard to orient their students toward developing the ability to research and analyze, instead of only giving non-meaningful instructions. Regarding their students, what teachers should pay attention to is the ability to make conclusions from whatever they learn through the rules of making conclusions (*istinbath*). Afterwards, they should teach them how to make a very crucial conclusion (*ijtihad*) by referring to relevant sources.

This opinion is in accordance with a statement of Muhammad Iqbal (in Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 116) that humans are always critical and will not be quickly satisfied by only accepting any reality as it is. Naturally, humans exist in order to make use of their creativity in absolute freedom. Such critical awareness is then realized in the form of creative will by maximizing their potential in order to make various innovations. Education, in Islamic perspective, is a means to achieve such things.

Another important goal of Islamic education is to make humans understand that whatever becomes the decision of common people does not always mean it is the truth to uphold or follow. This is also in line with the characteristics of critical education which rejects the hegemony of dominant ideologies as an authoritative source of knowledge, norms, and values whose truth is to be absolutely upheld by common people (Fakih, in William F. O'neil, 2002: xvii).

The refusal to uphold what common people tend to uphold, according to Muthahhari (2002), is based on Allah's words in Surah al-An'am (6) verse 116. The paradigm of Islamic education, which refuses to totally uphold either the tradition inherited by ancestors or dominant ideologies, shows that Islamic education encourages the emergence of

critical awareness which is also an objective of critical education. The Islamic concept focusing on the importance of critical thinking is spread in many verses of Al-Quran as the main reference and guidance for Moslems.

The paradigm of critical education is also in line with the paradigm of Islamic education in terms of its way of seeing humans and the world. The paradigm of critical education rejects the liberal education paradigm which believes in separation between humans and the world. In the paradigm of Islamic education, al-Taomy al-Syaibany (1983: 76-7) explains that nature is humans' partner in developing all potentials to improve the humans themselves. Humans and nature are not two entities that contradict. Nature is a source of inspiration and signs which help direct humans to find truth and virtue. Therefore, the paradigm of Islamic education clearly rejects the dichotomy between human beings and nature which liberal education paradigms uphold.

Finally, both critical and Islamic education position education as a conscientization (developing awareness) process which will make humans possess critical, reflective, and holistic awareness in interpreting, facing, and solving all problems of life.

#### **b. Elaboration of Critical Education in Islamic Education**

In the Islamic perspective, humans are creatures who are capable of thinking, who can be taught, educated, and who can read. Humans are also creatures with speaking capabilities who are able to communicate their ideas. Islam believes that humans have natural tendencies to recognize religion, have desires, conscience, and self awareness, conduct self-reflection, and have free will (Tabrani. ZA, 2014: 129).

As explained previously, like critical education paradigm, Islamic education is oriented toward holistically encouraging and actualizing all potentials that humans have. From an Islamic perspective, humans are creatures that have dignity in front of God because they have been blessed with two basic potentials that other God's creatures have not. Those two potentials are mind and conscience. Therefore, developing these two potentials may result in intellectual and spiritual dimension (knowledge and faith) (Al-Farisi, 1982: 12).

Therefore, Islamic education should finally aim at the shaping of humans based on their natural character including immanent (horizontal) dimension, i.e. the dimension about worldly or physical matters as well as transcendent (vertical) dimension, i.e. the dimension related to faith and spiritual matters which are related to humans' responsibility to the Creator (Ma'arif, et. al., 1991: 29-31).

As explained earlier, the paradigm of critical education, from the aspects of foundation, content, process, and objectives, does not contradict the paradigm of Islamic education. Holistically, the theory of critical education paradigm is quite "Islamic". However, like other theories proposed by Western thinkers in general, the theory of critical education does not pay much attention to humans' spiritual aspect, which is at the heart of Islamic education. The concepts discussed in the critical education paradigm are

based more in material and profane matters. The concept of liberating, which is an essential objective of the critical education paradigm, only focuses on liberating humans from social, political, economic, and cultural oppressions. It does not really focus on liberating humans from their passion/desire which tends to control them.

According to Muthahhari (2005: 14), in the context of Islamic education, students are not only encouraged by their passion to gain knowledge. In other words, Islamic education not only directs students to gain knowledge, but also educate them to become individuals who always seek the truth/virtue and avoid being fanatic, rigid, and arrogant because these characters do not represent the virtue. This way, education in the Islamic perspective not only liberates humans from any social "limitations" in which such limitations are only external ones but also focuses more on liberating humans from any "internal limitations".

More broadly, Tabrani. ZA (2014: 235) explains that education in Islam aims to make humans aware of and willing to conduct their (leadership) duties, and willing to enrich themselves with knowledge without any restrictions. However, humans are also expected to believe firmly that knowledge and life itself originate from and end with Allah the Almighty, the Creator and the Knower of All. The main point of Islamic education is to create people who are faithful, knowledgeable, individually and socially religious, and responsible for the prosperity of a society in general (Ma'arif, et. al., 1991: 8-10). In other words, the objectives of Islamic education in general are geared towards directing humans to the real implementation of their leadership duties. When such duties are already achieved, people's expectation to obtain happiness, both individually and socially, is also achieved.

This is also in line with the paradigm of critical education which clearly rejects the paradigm of liberal education because it lures its students to exclusive individualism in the way they compete or fulfill their desire for achievements. Islamic education paradigm also rejects such individualism values; it, instead, stresses the importance of communal orientations in its education objectives.

Furthermore, Islamic education paradigm focuses on social and communal aspects. Although education in Islam also speaks to individuals, that Islamic education is based on the principle of *Ibda' bi nafsik* (begin with yourself), such a principle does not refer to selfishness, but focuses on one's self as the beginning point of an education process. *Ibda' bi nafsik* has positive consequences in relation to communal interests. In real life, people would perform their roles better when they individually are ready and equipped with sufficient knowledge to make certain that change in the real world happen (Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 115).

In relation to critical awareness proposed by Paulo Freire, in Laleh Bakhtiar (2002: 45) maintains that from the Islamic perspective, humans' critical awareness is universal because it is related to three fundamental aspects: humans as servants of Allah (theoethics); humans as individuals (psychoethics); and, humans' awareness of their relations to

others (socioethics). The balance of these three aspects is centered in the theo-ethic awareness, which is the center of humans' awareness.

According to Muhammad Iqbal (in, 2003: 96), Islam is a "religion of action" which directs humans to:

- 1) Critical attitude toward traditions;
- 2) Active attitude toward changing a given reality with full acceptance of their position as God's co-creator;
- 3) Respectful attitude toward the world as a place for the realization of humans' creativity in performing their duties as God's co-creators.

Based on the elaboration given by Iqbal, it can be concluded that critical awareness in Islam is based on the foundation of faith in Allah the Almighty, as the Creator and goal (end) of life. This is different from the paradigm of critical education which only stresses the shaping of humans' critical awareness taking into account only aspects of *psychoethics* and *socioethics*, but not aspect of *theoethics*.

Muhammad Iqbal often criticizes the system of modern Western education which tends to ignore the aspect of human faith and spirituality often resulting in moral and spiritual crises, especially among Moslems. That is why Iqbal proposed an Islamic education system to address the gap left by the Western education system. The paradigm of critical education proposed by Freire et al is, in fact, much better than the other two education paradigms. However, critical education paradigm which neither bases its education concept on sacred values nor includes the human spirituality aspect will possibly fail in achieving its education objectives like what has happened to liberal and conservative education paradigms. The spiritual aspect is in fact the most sublime aspect of human experience which should become the foundation in achieving perfection. Therefore, Islamic education purposefully stresses the aspect of human spirituality in order to achieve its education objectives.

Sociologically, the main point of liberating humans through the paradigm of critical education is based on the assumption that humans have an equal position. It is based on the assumption that there is no dichotomy or hierarchical difference between students and teachers in this paradigm (see Freire, 2004: 176). Seen from a socio-political perspective, the paradigm of critical education believes that education should be oriented toward ensuring the equality of rights and the absence of oppression among humans. This way, the objective of education in the paradigm of critical education is to liberate humans from oppression and hegemony.

In Islam, the principle of social equality is a fundamental one. Horizontally, social stratification is largely unacceptable, which means that sociologically, no one's dignity is above others'. This way, there should be no reason for any one to oppress others. Human stratification in Islam is only acceptable in the spiritual (vertical) perspective, with righteousness determining one's dignity in front of Allah. Humans' dignity seen from such a spiritual perspective does not give them any authority to oppress and discriminate others because righteousness is an abstract variable, the quality of which is only known to Allah the Almighty. This

is stated in QS. al-Hujarat verse 13.

In Islam, the principles of liberation, social equality, and fight against oppression are all based on the principles of spirituality, faith, and obedience to Allah and the Prophet. Education as a means of liberation should manifest Islamic values in all its learning processes (Murtadha Muthahhari, 2005: 168).

### c. Implementation of Critical Education in Islamic Education

The implementation of an education paradigm in the teaching-learning process is a main requirement in achieving a desired education objective. As explained previously, the critical education paradigm has many similarities to the Islamic education paradigm. Islamic education does not always reject any ideas that come from outside Islam. Therefore, the Islamic education paradigm is not a paradigm which should be contrasted to other secular education paradigms (Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 128).

Although the paradigm of critical education belongs somewhat to the paradigm of secular education, the learning process portrayed in critical education can still be a methodological reference for Islamic education in formulating a humanistic learning process. It can support Islamic education in achieving its education objectives.

The paradigm of Islamic education also clearly rejects the patterns of liberal and conservative education which Freire refers to as an education with "bank style". In the paradigm of Islamic education, students are not a means of investment which can be described as fruitful later. The paradigm holds that education should not be an arena of indoctrination to legitimize and prolong any social, political, and economic structures which are oppressing. However, one thing to pay attention to is that Islamic education, according to Hasan Langgulung, is *tarbiyah al-muslimin* (education for all Moslems) and *tarbiyah inda al-muslimin* (education among Moslems) (Muhaimin, et. al., 2002: 36).

The implementation of the critical education paradigm can be used as an inspiration and reference in developing Islamic education. According to Ma'arif (in Solikin and Anwar, 2005: 109), the Eastern world, especially Islamic nations, has long been trapped in spiritualism and has long been "sterile" from significant dynamics. This has made the Islamic world in constant deterioration. In order to develop a far better civilization, Muhammad Iqbal (2002: 14) claims that the Islamic and the western world should be united by combining "logic" (*idraak*) and "love" (*isyq*). Such combination is believed to be able to lead to logic which contains spirituality and enlightenment.

Combining "logic" (intellectual) and "love" (spiritual) as a basis for education is crucial, i.e. to signal the beginning of a new dawn for the Islamic world. In this case, the Islamic learning methods can be combined with the learning methods contained in the paradigm of critical education. According to Al-Toumy al-Saybany (1983: 561-82), there are five general methods contained in the Islamic learning method, i.e.: 1) the method of decision making (deductive);

2) the method of comparison (analogy); 3) the method of having lectures; 4) the method of discussion; and 5) the method of small groups (*halaqah*).

Those five learning methods can be combined with the patterns of critical education which Paulo Freire (2004: xix) refers to as functional learning method which consists of three main stages:

- 1) The stage of codification or de-codification; which is an elementary education stage in a “theoretical context” and “concrete context”. This stage is similar to the stages of making decision, comparing, and lecturing in the learning method proposed by Omar Muhammad Al-Toumy al-Saybany.
- 2) The cultural discussion stage; which is the follow-up stage at which small working groups work together to solve problems. At this stage, students are expected to enhance their ability to solve problems. It is at this stage that Islamic young generations are hoped to be able to quickly solve any life problems faced by Islamic nations nowadays.
- 3) The stage of cultural actions; which is the real practical stage. It is a stage where every action of students both individually and communally can become a direct part of the reality.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The critical education paradigm is an education paradigm largely influenced by critical theories proposed by Frankfurt teaching. One main characteristic of the critical education paradigm is education oriented toward problem solving in various contexts. Both the critical and Islamic education paradigms have relevance in their education orientation and process. They both focus on humanization and liberation as education orientations. Both also regard students and teachers as a subject in the teaching and learning process.

As the Islamic education paradigm bases its ideas, objectives and process on spiritual foundation and faith in Allah and its prophet, it combines vertical (spiritual) and horizontal (social) aspects as its education orientation. This is in contrast to the critical education paradigm which only focuses on material matters. The paradigm does not pay much attention to the spiritual aspect, which is actually the most sublime aspect of human beings.

The method of critical education can be implemented in Islamic education as an effort to improve Islamic education in general. It is hoped that this will result in education outputs that are able to bring improvement to Islamic civilization. Critical-constructive contents in the critical education paradigm can also act as a methodological reference in implementing Islamic education.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Adian, D.G. (2003), *Muhammad Iqbal*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Bandung: Teraju.
- [2] Al-Farisi, Muhammad Riswar. (1982), *Manusia dalam Perspektif Islam*, Surabaya: Hikmah Semesta.
- [3] Al-Toumy al-Syaibany, Omar Muhammad. (1983), *Falsafaut al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah*, translated by Hasan Langgulung with the title of *Falsafah Pendidikan Islam*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.
- [4] Bakhtiar, L. (2002), *Meneladani Akhlak Allah: Melalui Asma al-Husna*, Bandung: Mizan.
- [5] Fakhri, M. (2002), “*Ideologi-ideologi Pendidikan*”, in William F. O’neil *Educational Ideologies: Contemporary Expression of Educational Philosophies*, translated by Omi Intan Naomi with the title of *Ideologi-Ideologi Pendidikan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [6] Freire, P. (2004), *The Political of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*, translated by Agung Prihantoro and Arif Yudi Hartanto with the title of *Politik Pendidikan: Kebudayaan, Kekuasaan, dan Pembebasan*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, Cet. V.
- [7] Idris, S., & Tabrani, ZA. (2017). Realitas Konsep Pendidikan Humanisme dalam Konteks Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Edukasi: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling*, 3(1), 96-113.
- [8] Iqbal, M. (2002), *The Reconsturction of Religion Thought in Islam*, translated by Ali Audah, et. al with the title of *Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Agama dalam Islam*, Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- [9] Ma’arif, Ahmad Syafi’i, et. al. (1991), *Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia; Antara Cita dan Fakta*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana.
- [10] Muhaimin, et. al. (2002), *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam*, Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.
- [11] Muthahhari, M. (2002), *al-Fitrah*, translated by Muhammad Jawad Bafaqih with the title of *Fitrah*, Jakarta: Lentera Basritama.
- [12] Muthahhari, M. (2005), *Tarbiyatul Islam*, translated by Muhammad Bahrudin with the title of *Konsep Pendidikan Islami*, Depok: Iqra Kurnia Gumilang.
- [13] Nufiar, N., & Idris, S. (2016). “Teacher Competence Test of Islamic Primary Teachers Education in State Islamic Primary Schools (MIN) of Pidie Regency”. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 4 (3), 309-320.
- [14] Saifullah. (2015). The Internalization of Democratic Values into Education and Their Relevance to Islamic Education Development (Synthetic, Analytic, and Eclectic Implementation of John Dewey’s Thoughts). *Advanced Science Letters*, 21 (7), pp. 2301- 2304, DOI: 10.1166/asl.2015.6257
- [15] Saifullah. (2017). Learning by Conscience as a New Paradigm in Education. *Advanced Science Letters*, 23, (2), pp. 853-856, DOI: 10.1166/asl.2017.7447
- [16] Solikin, M and Anwar, R. (2005), *Hakekat Manusia: Menggali Potensi Pendidikan Kesadaran Diri dalam Psikologi Islam*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition; Bandung: Pustaka Setia.
- [17] Tabrani. ZA. (2014). Islamic Studies dalam Pendekatan Multidisipliner (Suatu Kajian Gradual Menuju Paradigma Global). *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 2(2), 127-144.