

# THE CONCEPT OF CRITICAL EDUCATION INFAZLUR RAHMAN'S THOUGHT: AN IMPLEMENTATION STUDY IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Bambi Bisana\*<sup>1</sup>, Saihan<sup>2</sup>, Muhith <sup>3</sup>, Yudi Ardian Rahman <sup>4</sup>

1,2,3 Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq

4 STIT Al-Ishlah Bondowoso

e-mail: \* <sup>1</sup>bambi.bisana314@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup> saihanelfirdaus286@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup> abdmuhith.ftik@uinkhas.ac.id, <sup>4</sup> yudiardianrahman1978@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of the concept of critical education in Fazlur Rahman's thought at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso and its impact on developing students' critical thinking skills within the context of Islamic education. This topic is significant as critical education plays a vital role in shaping a generation capable of analyzing and understanding Islamic teachings contextually. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation conducted at the research site. The findings reveal that the implementation of critical education at MAS Al-Islah involves contextual understanding of Islamic teachings and learning methods that encourage discussion and critical analysis. However, challenges such as resistance to traditional teaching methods, time constraints, and limited resources were identified. Despite these challenges, the results show a positive impact of critical education, including improved analytical thinking and communication skills among students. The study concludes that critical education based on Fazlur Rahman's thought significantly contributes to the intellectual development of students and is relevant for broader application in Islamic education.

Keywords: Critical Education; Fazlur Rahman; Islamic Education.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penerapan konsep pendidikan kritis dalam pemikiran Fazlur Rahman di MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso dan dampaknya terhadap pengembangan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa dalam konteks pendidikan Islam. Topik ini penting karena pendidikan kritis berperan dalam membentuk generasi yang mampu menganalisis dan memahami ajaran Islam secara kontekstual. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, di mana data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi di lokasi penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan pendidikan kritis di MAS Al-Islah melibatkan pemahaman kontekstual terhadap ajaran Islam serta metode pembelajaran yang mendorong diskusi dan analisis kritis. Namun, implementasi ini menghadapi tantangan, seperti resistensi terhadap metode pengajaran tradisional, keterbatasan waktu, dan kurangnya sumber daya. Meskipun demikian, hasil penerapan pendidikan kritis menunjukkan dampak positif, yaitu meningkatnya kemampuan berpikir analitis dan komunikasi siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan kritis berbasis pemikiran Fazlur Rahman memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap pengembangan kapasitas intelektual siswa dan relevan untuk diterapkan dalam pendidikan Islam secara lebih luas

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Kristis; Fazlur Rahman; Pendidikan Islam.

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic education has a very important role in the formation of the character, intellect, and spirituality of the younger generation (Siswanto, 2020; Taofik, 2021). In Indonesia, Islamic educational Institution, such as Madrasah Aliyah (MA), are faced with the challenge of producing graduates who are not only intelligent in religious knowledge, but also able to think critically, creatively, and relevant to the development of the times (Muhadi et al., 2021). One of the relevant approaches to be applied in Islamic education is the concept of critical education introduced by Fazlur Rahman, an Islamic thinker and intellectual known for his integrative and contextual thinking.

Fazlur Rahman, stated that Islamic education should not only rely on memorizing religious texts, but also prepare students to understand religion in social, historical, and scientific contexts (Dinata et al., 2023; Yumnah, 2019). The concept of critical education in Rahman's thinking aims to form students who not only understand religious values textually, but can also apply them in the context of complex modern life. Rahman emphasized the importance of an integrative approach between religious science and modern science, as well as the importance of critical reasoning in facing the challenges of the times.

According to Rahman, critical Islamic education must prioritize a deep understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as facilitate students to develop rational and analytical thinking skills (Suryadi et al., 2021; Tohet, 2019). He also criticized the traditional educational approach that tends to separate religious science from other sciences, and lacks space for students to develop free and critical thinking on religious teachings (Mawaddah & Karomah, 2018).

The implementation of critical education in the Indonesian context, especially in Islamic educational Institution such as MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, requires special attention. The education system in many madrassas still relies heavily on a normative approach that focuses on memorization and textual comprehension. This can hinder students' ability to think critically and develop their intellectual potential optimally. Therefore, this study aims to explore how the concept of Fazlur Rahman's critical education can be implemented at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso and how much impact it has on students' critical thinking skills.

By examining the application of Rahman critical education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, it is hoped that this research can provide new insights for the development of Islamic education curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of the times. This research also aims to identify challenges and opportunities in the application of the concept of critical education in Islamic educational Institution, as well as provide recommendations that can be applied to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia.

The importance of critical education in madrassas is very relevant to the need for a young generation who not only master religious knowledge, but also have the ability to think critically, independently, and be able to face global challenges. Therefore, this research will focus on two main things: first, how Fazlur Rahman's thoughts on critical education can be applied at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, and second, how such application can affect students' learning and character development.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design (Fiantika, 2022; Prof.Dr.Sugiyono, 2020). The purpose is to analyze the application of the concept of critical education in the thinking of Fazlur Rahman at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its nature that allows researchers to explore and deeply understand the application of the concept of critical education in the context of Islamic education. The main focus of this study is how Fazlur Rahman's thinking is translated into practice in madrassas as well as how this affects the learning and development of students' critical thinking.

The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, students, and madrasah managers who were directly involved in the learning process at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso. PAI teachers will provide insight into the application of critical education in the curriculum and teaching methods, while students will be the main subjects to understand the impact of such application on their critical thinking skills. Madrasah managers will also be interviewed to gain perspectives related to policies and curricula that support critical education in madrasas.

Data will be collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation (Moleong, 2020; Rijali, 2019). In-depth

interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and madrasah administrators to explore their views on the concept of critical education in Fazlur Rahman's thinking and how it is applied in the classroom. Participatory observation will be carried out to directly observe teaching and learning activities and classroom interactions that reflect the application of critical education. In addition, documents such as curriculum, lesson plans, and teaching materials will also be analyzed to assess the extent to which critical education concepts are reflected in the material being taught.

Data analysis is carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner through the stages of coding and data interpretation (Darmalaksana, 2020; Fadli, 2021). Data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation will be categorized and analyzed to identify key themes related to the implementation of critical education. The researcher will interpret the data based on Fazlur Rahman's thoughts on Islamic education that integrates religious understanding with science and encourages critical reasoning. In addition, triangulation of sources and techniques will be used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Source triangulation is carried out using various informants, while technique triangulation is carried out by combining interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checks will also be used to verify the accuracy of the data obtained.

This research will maintain research ethics by obtaining informed consent before conducting interviews and observations and maintaining the confidentiality of informants' personal data. The focus of this research is limited to MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso and the implementation of critical education in Islamic educational Institution, with the aim of providing an overview of the challenges and opportunities in integrating critical education in learning in madrassa.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Result

This study aims to analyze the application of the concept of critical education in Fazlur Rahman's thinking at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso. The findings of this study include insights into how Fazlur Rahman's thinking is translated into learning practices, the challenges faced by teachers and students, and the impact of the application of critical education on students' learning and critical thinking development.

Penerapan Konsep Pendidikan Kritis dalam Pembelajaran di MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso

Fazlur Rahman's thinking on critical education emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding of Islamic teachings. In Rahman's theory, Islamic education not only focuses on memorization and comprehension of texts, but also invites students to think critically about the application of religious teachings in daily life. Based on the results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, the application of critical education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso is carried out by introducing critical analysis of classical texts and providing space for students to discuss the relevance of Islamic teachings to contemporary issues.

For example, in the subject of tafsir, teachers not only teach the meaning of verses literally, but also invite students to discuss the historical and social context of these verses, as well as relate them to the current state of society. The teachers at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso adopt a learning method that prioritizes dialogue between teachers and students, where students are invited to not only receive information, but also criticize and relate it to other knowledge, both religious and non-religious.

Observations made in the classroom showed that teachers used interactive learning techniques, such as group discussions, case studies, and problem-solving. In the classroom, students are given the opportunity to express their opinions and debate existing views, in accordance with the principles of critical education that emphasize open dialogue and analytical thinking.

Challenges in the Implementation of Critical Education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso

Although the implementation of critical education has received a positive response from most teachers and students, there are several challenges faced in its implementation. One of the biggest challenges is the tendency to maintain traditional learning methods that focus on memorization and textual teaching. This is due to educational policies that tend to prioritize the achievement of test scores based on memorization of religious materials, which makes critical learning sometimes neglected.

In interviews with madrasah managers, it was found that despite support for the implementation of critical education, limited time and resources are an obstacle. The dense curriculum and limited training for teachers in applying critical methods make most of the teaching still based on conventional methods. In addition, the manager is also aware of the resistance from some parents who prioritize exam results rather than an approach that focuses on developing students' critical thinking skills.

Students also showed challenges in developing critical thinking skills. Some students find that learning based on discussion and analysis is often difficult to understand because they are used to simpler and more straightforward learning methods. This shows that the transition to a more critical education requires time and patience from all parties involved.

# The Impact of the Implementation of Critical Education on Students at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso

The impact of the application of critical education in learning at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso can be seen in improving students' ability to think analytically and critically. Students who engage in a more interactive learning process demonstrate a deeper understanding of Islamic values and its ability to relate religious teachings to relevant social issues. For example, in fiqh subjects, students not only learn about religious laws, but also discuss the application of such laws in the context of daily life, such as about the role of women in society or Islamic economic law.

In addition, students who engage in critical learning show improvements in communication skills, such as the ability to express opinions clearly and listen to the views of others. This is in accordance with the principles of critical education of Fazlur Rahman who emphasizes the importance of dialogue and openness in knowledge development.

Another impact is an increase in students' confidence in expressing their opinions. Before the implementation of critical education, many students tended to be passive and only follow what was taught by the teacher without asking many questions or discussions. However, after the implementation of a critical education approach, students become more active in the learning process and feel more confident in speaking in front of the class. This shows that critical education can have a positive impact on students' personal development, not only in terms of religious knowledge, but also in social and communication skills.

Implementation of Curriculum and Teaching Materials in Critical Education

As part of this study, an analysis of the curriculum and teaching materials used at

MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso shows that although the existing curriculum already includes

the basic materials necessary for Islamic religious education, there is room to integrate more

critical educational elements. In the curriculum documents reviewed, some subjects already

include components that allow the application of critical thinking, such as interpretation

materials that invite students to analyze the historical, social, and cultural context of

Qur'anic verses.

However, in practice, the application of this critical aspect is still limited. These

materials are often not deepened with methods that can trigger further discussion and

analysis. Therefore, increased training for teachers in designing and implementing critical

and contextual learning materials is urgently needed. Teachers also need to be given more

freedom in developing teaching materials that not only focus on memorization, but also on

developing students' critical thinking skills.

**Discussion** 

This study aims to explore the application of the concept of critical education in

Fazlur Rahman's thinking at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, as well as its impact on the

development of students' critical thinking skills in the context of Islamic education. This

discussion will relate the research findings to Fazlur Rahman's theory of critical education

and discuss the challenges and practical implications faced by Islamic educational

Institution in implementing the concept.

Application of the Concept of Critical Education in Learning at MAS Al-Islah

Bondowoso

Fazlur Rahman, a modern Muslim thinker, proposes an approach to Islamic

education that focuses not only on memorizing texts, but also on developing a contextual

understanding of Islamic teachings (Ethics, 2021; Suryadi & Salahuddin, 2022). According

to Rahman, education should encourage critical thinking that allows students to understand

religious texts in their social and historical contexts (Fazrul, 1984). This is very relevant

to the goal of critical education that focuses on a deeper understanding, not just passively

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receiving knowledge (Spiritual Imam, 2020).

At MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, the application of this concept can be seen in a more interactive and discussion-based learning method. For example, in learning tafsir, teachers invite students to understand the verses of the Qur'an in the historical and social context behind them. Teachers not only teach literal interpretation, but also invite students to analyze the relevance of the verse to contemporary issues facing society. This is in line with Rahman's view who emphasized that religious texts cannot be understood only based on literal interpretation, but must be seen in a broader context (Fazrul, 1984).

In practice, this learning not only relies on memorizing texts, but also encourages students to think critically and express their opinions. Teachers act as facilitators who facilitate dialogue between students and direct discussions to stay within the corridor of Islamic values. Discussions of various views on religious, social, and political issues allow students to develop critical thinking skills, which is a key focus in critical education, according to Rahman.

## **Challenges in the Implementation of Critical Education**

Although there are significant efforts in implementing critical education, this study finds some of the challenges faced by teachers and students at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso. One of the biggest challenges is resistance to changes in teaching methods. Many teachers are still used to conventional learning methods that focus on textual teaching and memorization. This is an obstacle in developing students' critical thinking skills, because the one-way learning process does not provide space for students to question or analyze the material in more depth.

In addition, as revealed by some teachers in interviews, limited time and resources are also an inhibiting factor. The dense curriculum and the need to prepare students for exams often make more discussion-based learning and critical analysis neglected. Teachers feel pressured to complete the material according to curriculum targets, which does not always allow to apply a more interactive and in-depth approach.

Critical education theory according to Paulo Freire, who argues that education must liberate and enable students to become agents of social change, can be used to understand this challenge (Alves & De Oliveira, 2021; Prastowo, 2020). Freire emphasized that to develop critical thinking skills, education must provide freedom for students to

speak, discuss, and express opinions (Gomes, 2022). However, in many educational Institution, including MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, educational structures based on exams and grades often limit this freedom.

# The Impact of the Implementation of Critical Education on Students

The implementation of critical education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso has a significant impact on the development of students' critical thinking. Students who engage in discussion- and analytical-based learning show improvements in analytical thinking and evaluation skills. For example, in fiqh learning, students are not only taught about Islamic law, but also involved in discussions about how it is applied in today's social context. They are encouraged to think about whether the law is relevant to the problems that exist in modern society.

This experience is in line with Fazlur Rahman's theory of critical education, which teaches that Islamic education must integrate religious understanding with a developing social and intellectual context. According to Rahman, Islamic education must be able to accommodate rational and contextual thinking which in this context is reflected in students' ability to criticize the application of Islamic law and religious values in daily life (Fazrul, 1984).

In addition, students involved in critical education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso show improvement in communication skills. They become more confident to express their opinions in class discussions and can speak more openly about their views on religious, social, and political issues. This improvement in communication skills is very important, as it helps students to develop speaking and argumentative skills, which is an important aspect of critical education according to Freire.

## **Integration of Curriculum and Teaching Materials in Critical Education**

The lack of integration between the existing curriculum and the critical education approach is a challenge in itself. Although the curriculum at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso covers a wide range of topics that can support critical education, such as tafsir and fiqh, there are still gaps in its implementation. The curriculum documents reviewed show that the teaching materials have not fully accommodated the learning that encourages students to think critically about Islamic teachings in the modern context.

The application of Fazlur Rahman's critical education theory in the Islamic education curriculum can be done by integrating more content that challenges students to think about the relationship between religious texts and current social realities. One example is the teaching of fiqh which emphasizes more on contextual analysis of the application of Islamic law, rather than just providing textual explanations. This will open up space for students to explore critical questions related to Islamic teachings and their relevance in the modern era.

According to Rahman, good education is education that is able to stimulate students' intellect by giving them the challenge to think critically about religious texts and their social world (Fazrul, 1984). This is in line with the need to update the curriculum at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso in order to better integrate critical educational elements in each subject.

# Recommendations for the Development of Critical Education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be given for the further development of critical education at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso. First, madrasah managers need to develop a more flexible curriculum and be based on the development of critical thinking skills. The curriculum should include more material that encourages discussion, analysis, and application of Islamic teachings in a modern context.

Second, teacher training in the application of critical education is very important. Teachers need to be given further training on how to integrate critical thinking in their teaching, not only in PAI subjects, but also in other relevant subjects. In-depth education on critical education theory, both from the perspective of Fazlur Rahman and other critical education theories, will greatly help teachers in designing more effective learning and encouraging students' critical thinking.

Third, students need to be given more space to express their opinions, both in the classroom and in other forums in the madrasah, so that they can develop critical thinking and speaking skills effectively.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to examine the application of the concept of critical education in Fazlur Rahman's thinking at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso, as well as its impact on the development of students' critical thinking skills in the context of Islamic education. Based on the findings obtained, it can be concluded that several important things related to the implementation of critical education in Islamic educational Institution can be concluded.

The application of the concept of critical education in learning at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso has included several important aspects of Fazlur Rahman's thinking. Teachers at these schools sought to teach Islamic teachings with regard to the social and historical context, as proposed by Rahman. Learning not only focuses on memorizing religious texts, but also encourages students to think critically and discuss the relevance of Islamic teachings in daily life. This learning process reflects the principles of critical education, which emphasizes contextual understanding and the development of analytical thinking skills in students.

Despite significant efforts in implementing critical education, the study found several challenges, including resistance to changes in traditional teaching methods and limited resources and time available. The dense curriculum and the pressure to achieve good exam results often hinder the implementation of more discussion-based and analysis-based learning methods. This shows that the implementation of critical education requires a paradigm change in the perspective of educational goals, as well as stronger support from school management and students' parents.

The impact of the implementation of critical education can be seen in the improvement of students' critical thinking skills and communication skills. Students who engage in discussion-based learning demonstrate a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings and their ability to relate religious values to social issues that exist in society. In addition, they become more confident in expressing their opinions and more open in discussion. This is in line with the principles of critical education that emphasizes freedom of thought and the empowerment of students to become agents of social change.

Although the curriculum at MAS Al-Islah Bondowoso already includes materials that support critical education, there is still room for improvement. The existing curriculum has not fully accommodated the development of critical thinking as a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to adjust the curriculum and teaching materials so that there is more room for critical analysis of Islamic teachings and their application in the modern context.

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