

Islamic Religious Education As a Praxis of Transformative Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and the Social Praxis of Faith

Anwar Sadat ^{1*}, Akhsanul In'am ¹, Romelah ¹

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia



anwarsadat@webmail.umm.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to reconceptualize Islamic Religious Education (IRE) as a praxis of transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith. It responds to prevailing learning practices that remain largely normative and doctrinal, emphasize cognitive aspects, and maintain a dichotomy between religious texts and social realities conditions that have made IRE less responsive to social contexts. This research employs a qualitative approach in the form of a library study, using descriptive-critical analysis of various sources relevant to the research focus. The findings indicate that IRE, as a praxis of transformative learning, contributes to the formation of students' moral character, spiritual development, and social responsibility through the use of media such as Learning Management Systems, Virtual Reality, flipped classroom models, and dialogic-reflective approaches. As a praxis of critical pedagogy, IRE fosters the development of critical and reflective thinking skills, while also cultivating students' social awareness. This is implemented through problem-based learning, strategies such as "power of two" and "make a match," deliberative (musyawarah) learning practices, and wisdom-oriented pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, as a social praxis of faith, IRE integrates students' attitudes, behaviors, and social practices through methods such as experiential learning, service learning, collaborative learning strategies, and by positioning teachers as role models.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education, Transformative Learning, Critical Pedagogy, Faith Praxis, Religious Consciousness

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) has undergone considerable development over time. These changes have been shaped by historical dynamics, contemporary social challenges, and ongoing efforts to integrate traditional Islamic teachings with more modern pedagogical approaches. Despite this progress, however, IRE continues to face a number of challenges in responding to contemporary issues, particularly in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Siregar & Rizza, 2025). One persistent issue is that IRE instruction has largely remained normative and doctrinal in nature. It tends to present religious teachings as a fixed set of doctrines to be accepted without question, leaving limited room for critical reflection, reinterpretation, or meaningful engagement with evolving social realities. Such an approach often prioritizes the preservation of classical scholarly traditions, while paying insufficient attention to the contextual needs of modern society (Sahin, 2018).

In addition, the learning process frequently emphasizes cognitive aspects, focusing on the acquisition of religious knowledge through memorization, textual comprehension, and the reproduction of information. This orientation often overlooks the affective and psychomotor

dimensions, which are in fact essential for the formation of students' religious character. As a result, religious education has not fully succeeded in fostering moral awareness, social empathy, and the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life (Kurniawan et al., 2025). A strong orientation toward dogmatism and intellectual rigidity persists, largely due to learning approaches that are normative and doctrinal in nature. In such approaches, sacred texts are positioned as final and unquestionable truths, leaving little room for contextual reinterpretation (Abubakari et al., 2024). As a result, religious knowledge tends to develop within a closed, logocentric, and absolutist framework, which in turn constrains the dynamic reinterpretation of Islamic teachings in response to social change (Asnawi & Zuhdi, 2025).

Consequently, the integration of modern values—such as tolerance, justice, and pluralism into Islamic Religious Education becomes difficult to achieve, as these values are not cultivated through a dialogical and reflective framework of critical pedagogy (Ichsan et al., 2024). In the end, students often struggle to understand how Islamic values can be meaningfully actualized within contemporary social life (Mardatillah, Gumilang, et al., 2025). This condition also contributes to the emergence of exclusive patterns of religious thinking. When religious instruction does not provide space for critical dialogue, contextual understanding, and pluralistic perspectives, students tend to develop narrow views of diversity. Such tendencies may hinder the development of inclusive, tolerant, and open-minded attitudes qualities that are, in fact, central to Islamic values in a pluralistic society (Karwadi et al., 2025). Moreover, IRE learning is often trapped in a formalistic approach, limiting its ability to respond to the challenges posed by technological advancement and globalization, particularly in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. (Sya'bani & Rajiani, 2019). The rapid flow of information, which is not always aligned with the values of moderate Islam, further complicates this situation (Arim et al., 2024). These challenges are compounded by madrasa curricula that are not yet fully adaptive to rapid social change, developments in biotechnology, and the transformation of global society (Abu Bakar, 2017). The transformation of religious knowledge has not proceeded optimally, partly due to increasing workloads and emotional pressures faced by teachers, which diminish their vitality in engaging with technological developments in a critical and ethical manner (Yulianti et al., 2025). In addition, inconsistencies between national curriculum standards and local as well as global realities, unequal access to education, gender disparities, and discriminatory practices further exacerbate the problem (Yulianti et al., 2025).

Pedagogical and structural challenges, along with broader socio-political configurations, also play a role (Rashimbetov et al., 2025). Stereotypical views of IRE have led to stigma, social suspicion, and prejudice toward religious education (Berglund, 2025). Another issue is the depoliticization of faith the separation of religious teachings from socio-political realities. As a consequence, IRE tends to avoid issues related to citizenship, social justice, and public responsibility, thereby losing its critical capacity to shape students' social and political awareness (Lundeto et al., 2025). In light of these challenges, IRE requires reconstruction through an integrative approach that positions it as a praxis of transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith. However, studies that integrate these three approaches remain relatively scarce. This can be observed in the following research findings:

A study by Mardatillah et al., (2025) *epistemological Reconstruction of Islamic Education: Developing a Transformative Pedagogical Model to Foster Creativity*, highlights the importance of integrating creative, rational, and morally responsible approaches in IRE to cultivate socially responsive learners. (Hasanah et al., (2024) in their study *Connecting with Nature: Tadabur Alam and Its Effect on Islamic Value Learning*, argue for learning approaches that encourage active engagement and deeper understanding of Islamic values, particularly for students with relatively lower academic achievement. Through direct interaction with nature, tadabbur alam fosters reflection on God's creation, allowing religious teachings to be connected with lived experience, thereby making learning more contextual and meaningful. A study by Cahyadi et al., (2025) in *The Urgency of Islamic Ethnoscience-Based Science Learning in the 4.0 Era*, discusses a model for integrating values and technology. He argues that IRE learning supported by digital technology has the potential to create more relevant, engaging, and contextual learning experiences without neglecting spiritual values. Such integration offers a viable

solution to address the challenges of Islamic education in the contemporary technological landscape.

A study by Rizal et al., (2025) in *Adat Geunareh, Syariat Geunaseh: Building Transformative Islamic Education Based on Aceh's Local Wisdom*, demonstrate a model of transformative IRE within Acehese society that integrates customary practices (adat) and Islamic law (sharia) into a unified system of values. Local traditions such as folklore, traditional zikr, and Khanduri are not only preserved but also incorporated into the curriculum and educational practices. This model is characterized as integrative, participatory, emancipatory, and culturally contextual (M. Rizal et al., 2025). Amirudin et al., (2025) in *Problem-Based Learning as a Pedagogical Innovation for Transforming Higher Education Students' Islamic Religious Comprehension*, conclude that problem-based learning is effective in enhancing students' conceptual understanding of IRE, critical thinking skills, and engagement in the learning process. Nevertheless, its implementation still faces challenges, including limited instructional time and insufficient facilitator support (Amirudin et al., 2025). Research by Steven Taff & Lazzaro, (2025) *Critical Pedagogy: Praxis and Social Reform through Education*, draws on the ideas of Henry Giroux and Paulo Freire, emphasizing that education should not be seen merely as a process of knowledge transmission, but as a means of social transformation aimed at fostering critical consciousness, empowerment, and democratic participation (Taff & Lazzaro, 2025). Similarly, Merchán et al., (2022) in *Critical Pedagogy in the Investigative Practice of the University Teacher*, argue that critical pedagogy can enhance both teaching and research quality in higher education by strengthening academic dialogue, active participation, and the production and dissemination of knowledge. Thus, critical pedagogy is not only relevant to classroom practice but also contributes to broader academic development. Furthermore, Ma'rof & Abdullah, (2025) in *Faith in the Digital Era: Transformations in Youth Spirituality and Belief Systems*, explain that digital technological developments have significantly reshaped the religious practices and experiences of young people. This calls for strategic responses from religious leaders, educators, and policymakers to harness digital opportunities while addressing associated risks, ensuring that young people continue to develop meaningful and ethical spiritual experiences (Ma'rof & Abdullah, 2025).

A review of these studies reveals a growing critical awareness among scholars of the need for an integrative, dialogical, and socially grounded approach to IRE one that can foster critical consciousness and social commitment among learners in embodying Islamic values within society. However, previous studies have not yet fully articulated an integrative framework that positions IRE simultaneously as a praxis of transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith. This study seeks to fill that gap by bringing these three approaches into a unified conceptual framework.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design, emphasizing a descriptive critical analysis of literature relevant to the focus of the study (Furidha & Sidoarjo, 2023; Yadav, 2022). This approach is chosen because the primary aim of the research is to formulate a conceptual synthesis of three major strands: transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith within the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The data are drawn from reputable journal articles and other scholarly works directly related to the research topic.

Data collection is conducted through a systematic and focused review of the literature. This process involves identifying key primary sources. In addition, the researcher applies a critical selection process to each source by considering its credibility, thematic relevance, and contribution to strengthening the study's theoretical framework (van Wee & Banister, 2024). Data analysis is carried out using a descriptive-critical approach. At the descriptive stage, the researcher systematically outlines the key concepts embedded in each perspective transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith (Wohlin et al., 2022).

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study employs source triangulation by comparing literature from diverse perspectives. Furthermore, consistency checks of the

arguments and an audit trail are conducted to ensure that all findings and conclusions are grounded in a solid and accountable academic basis (Morgan, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reconceptualizing Islamic Religious Education as a Praxis of Transformative Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and the Social Praxis of Faith

Islamic Religious Education when understood as a praxis of transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and the social praxis of faith, represents an approach that integrates Islamic values with critical thinking and social responsibility. This approach not only strengthens students' faith, but also shapes individuals who are adaptive, socially responsive, and spiritually mature in navigating the complexities of the modern era.

Islamic Religious Education as a Praxis of Transformative Learning

Transformative learning can be understood as a process centered on the formation and transformation of meaning within the learner (Mezirow, 1997). In this context, such formation and change refer to the development of students through the integration of Islamic values into the educational process, with the aim of shaping their moral character, spiritual depth, and social responsibility. Ultimately, this approach seeks to nurture human development in a holistic manner, encompassing intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions (D. Rizal & Putri, 2024).

Transformative IRE views education not merely as a means of transmitting knowledge, but as a process of shaping character grounded in Islamic values. It enables the creation of learning experiences that are both contextual and socially cohesive, strengthening bonds within the community (Mardatillah, Muchlinarwati, et al., 2025).

In transformative IRE practices, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process. They are not simply recipients of knowledge, but active agents capable of developing new perspectives and contributing to social transformation (Sholeh et al., 2023). Such an approach positions education as a means of empowerment, allowing learners to critically engage with social realities while playing an active role in building a more just and civilized society (Ortega-Sánchez, 2022).

Within this framework, several strategic steps can be identified:

First: Value-based learning

Islamic religious education as a transformative praxis requires the systematic integration of the normative principles of Islamic teachings with the surrounding environment (Muhamad, Khalil, & Basir, 2024). In this regard, IRE is no longer limited to a medium for transmitting religious doctrines, but becomes a constructive space for fostering ethical and ecological awareness through the internalization of Islamic values oriented toward environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and the continuity of life.

Value-based learning serves as a transformative instrument that not only enhances students' cognitive understanding but also encourages the actualization of values in everyday life, particularly in response to ecological crises and the dynamics of sustainable development. In line with this, environment-based learning emerges as a strategic approach that strengthens this transformative orientation by providing contextual and meaningful learning experiences. Well-managed educational environments contribute to the creation of a conducive academic atmosphere, enabling students to develop their full learning potential (Romlah et al., 2025).

Second: Learning through Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Virtual Reality (VR)

This innovative strategy enhances students' active engagement while reinforcing the internalization of Islamic values (Wedi & Mardiana, 2025). The integration of digital technologies not only expands access and flexibility but also offers immersive, reflective, and contextual learning experiences, enabling learners to construct a deeper understanding of religious teachings.

The use of LMS and VR in IRE functions as a medium of transformation, shifting learning from a purely textual orientation toward a more applied, critical, and contextually relevant religious practice. It enhances the concreteness, authenticity, and meaningfulness of learning experiences, enriching student engagement and broadening their experiential horizons (Asril et

al., 2023). In addition, other technologies such as artificial intelligence, gamification, and digital media can further strengthen student engagement and critical literacy in understanding Islam within the context of modern life (Widodo, 2025).

Third: The flipped classroom approach

In this model, students are encouraged to engage actively, collaboratively, and participatively. They are no longer positioned as passive recipients of information, but as subjects who independently construct knowledge through interaction, discussion, and shared reflection (Wedi & Mardiana, 2025). This approach fosters dialogical engagement and collaborative learning processes (Lapitan et al., 2023). Within the context of IRE, it opens up opportunities for a deeper internalization of Islamic values, as students are given space to connect religious texts with the social realities they encounter.

Scenario-based learning further complements this approach by allowing students to develop critical thinking skills and adopt new perspectives through contextualized situations. This strategy enables learners not only to understand Islamic teachings normatively, but also to interpret them contextually across various real-life situations, including cultural dynamics and professional environments (Sholeh et al., 2023). In doing so, IRE contributes to the development of reflective awareness and adaptive capacity, allowing Islamic values to be actualized in ways that are relevant, inclusive, and transformative within an ever-evolving social landscape.

Fourth: Dialogical and reflective approaches

From the perspective of IRE as a praxis of transformative learning, this is realized through systematically designed reflective and dialogical learning processes, in which the construction of religious knowledge involves all educational actors – students, educators, and social realities as the learning context (Dos Santos Silva & Carvalho Neto, 2012). In this process, Islamic teachings are not treated merely as normative doctrines, but as living values shaped through critical engagement with social experience (Cranton, 2009).

Within this paradigm, IRE emphasizes the importance of critical reflection (*muhāsabah fikriyyah*) and participatory dialogue (*hiwār ta'allumī*) in developing an open, contextual, and socially oriented religious mindset. In sum, IRE as a praxis of transformative learning underscores the holistic development of individuals through the integration of Islamic values, critical thinking, and social engagement. This approach not only facilitates personal transformation but also contributes to broader social change, positioning IRE as a vital instrument in fostering a just and civilized society.

Islamic Religious Education as a Praxis of Critical Pedagogy

IRE can be more comprehensively understood through the lens of critical pedagogy an approach that emphasizes the development of critical thinking within the learning process. From this perspective, religious instruction is not merely oriented toward the transmission of doctrines; rather, it becomes a dialogical space that encourages students to engage with social realities in reflective and critical ways (Sanches & D'Amico, 2026).

A key aspect of applying critical pedagogy in IRE is the cultivation of critical thinking skills. Traditionally, religious learning has often been dominated by memorization, which can limit students' intellectual exploration (Fitriani, 2023). In contrast, critical pedagogy promotes dialogical and reflective methods, enabling learners to participate actively in constructing knowledge (Taff & Lazzaro, 2025).

Critical pedagogy also seeks to transform the traditional power relations between teachers and students. In conventional settings, the teacher is often positioned as the sole authority (Patel et al., 2020). By contrast, a critical pedagogical approach emphasizes dialogical interaction, allowing students to express their views, question religious understandings, and actively engage in interpreting religious texts (Karwadi, Bin Zakaria et al., 2025).

Several strategic steps can be identified in implementing IRE as a praxis of critical pedagogy: First: Problem-Based Learning (PBL) integrated with faith-based collaborative approaches

Within this framework, learning is not limited to cognitive problem-solving but also involves the internalization of Islamic values in addressing social (Husna, 2024; Usman, 2025). Teachers are no longer mere transmitters of normative knowledge; instead, they act as emancipatory facilitators who encourage students to critically reflect on lived experiences

(Carletti, 2025). They guide learners in examining socio-religious issues through dialogue, fostering moral awareness (al-wa'y al-akhlaqī) that extends beyond the individual to encompass social responsibility grounded in faith (Rohmadani & Achadi, 2026).

Through this approach, IRE becomes a space of critical praxis that integrates cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions. Students not only understand Islamic teachings textually, but also contextualize them in real-life actions—responding to injustice, building social solidarity, and acting as agents of change with a transformative Islamic consciousness.

Second: Interactive learning strategies such as “power of two” and “make a match.”

These strategies can serve as effective critical pedagogical tools to enhance student engagement while strengthening character formation through dynamic interaction between teachers and learners (Poelstra, 2009). They embody the principles of active learning, where students are not passive recipients but active participants in knowledge construction. Through collaboration, discussion, and teamwork, these strategies help internalize values such as responsibility, cooperation, and mutual respect key components of character development in IRE.

Third: Deliberative (musyawarah) learning practices

By focusing on specific themes related to social issues, this approach aims to foster students' critical awareness and reinforce their role as active subjects in the learning process, in line with Paulo Freire's conception of education as a practice of liberation (Radino, Mubarak, 2025). In this context, the IRE teacher is no longer the sole authority but a facilitator who guides, stimulates critical dialogue, and encourages students to interpret social realities through the lens of Islamic values (Raihani, 2020). As a result, IRE becomes a space where reflection and action intersect, enabling Islamic teachings to be not only understood normatively but also actualized in transformative social practices.

Fourth: An integrative-critical pedagogical model

This model seeks to balance the preservation of Islamic values with the development of students' analytical and reflective capacities. It challenges hierarchical structures in education while maintaining the spiritual foundations that are central to Islamic learning (Karwadi, Bin Zakaria et al., 2025). Its implementation is closely linked to the promotion of social justice and equality. In this regard, strengthening teachers' competencies is crucial. Educators are expected to act as agents of change who instill values of justice, equity, and social responsibility within the learning process (Raihani, 2020).

Fifth: The hikmah pedagogy approach

This approach positions students as reflective subjects who construct meaning from Islamic teachings in rational and contextual ways. It encourages higher-order thinking through critical dialogue, philosophical discussion, and deep reflection on both religious texts and social realities (Hussien et al., 2021). Through this process, students move beyond merely understanding abstract concepts; they are able to critique, interpret, and relate them to real-life issues. Learning becomes a dialectical space where revelation, reason, and experience intersect, giving rise to critical awareness grounded in values of justice, humanity, and meaningful existence (Hussien et al., 2021).

Within the framework of IRE as a praxis of critical pedagogy, hikmah pedagogy functions as a medium for intellectual and social transformation. It not only develops students' critical thinking capacities but also cultivates reflective attitudes and ethical commitments in practicing Islamic values in everyday life.

Islamic Religious Education as the Social Praxis of Faith

IRE when understood as the social praxis of faith, represents an educational process that integrates religious values with reflective action and social engagement. It aims to produce learners who not only understand Islamic teachings but are also of actualizing them in real life in a transformative way (Rekan et al., 2024). In this framework, learning is not merely viewed as the cognitive transmission of religious knowledge, but as a social praxis of faith that shapes students' religious awareness, moral character, and social responsibility within society (Muzaki & Nurhayati, 2026). IRE thus becomes a learning space that connects the theological dimensions

of Islamic teachings with the realities of human life. Faith-based values are not confined to conceptual understanding; rather, they are internalized in students' attitudes, behaviors, and social practices in everyday life (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024).

Historically, the development of Islamic education shows that the relationship between faith, knowledge, and social life has been a foundational element of the Islamic intellectual tradition. From the early period of Islam, education was not only intended to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate morally upright individuals with a strong sense of social responsibility (Hefner, 2025). This tradition has continued to evolve alongside shifts in the social, cultural, and political contexts of Muslim societies. As a result, Islamic education has consistently undergone adaptation and reformulation whether in curriculum, teaching methods, or educational orientation so as to remain relevant to contemporary challenges without losing its core values (Shaleh, 2024).

In this regard, IRE holds a strategic role in shaping religious identity while strengthening social cohesion. Religious education functions not only as a means of internalizing faith-based values, but also as a social mechanism for building collective awareness, solidarity, and tolerance in communal life.

To effectively realize this social function, IRE requires a social praxis approach to faith through the following learning strategies:

First: Experiential learning

This approach serves as an effective strategy for deepening students' understanding of Islamic values through direct, reflective, and contextual experiences (Muhamad, Khalil, & Basir, 2024).

One example is the Eco-Bazaar program, which integrates the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle (3R). This program functions not only as project-based learning but also as a space for internalizing Islamic values related to environmental ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability (Muhamad, Khalil, Basir, et al., 2024). Through active participation, students are encouraged to transform normative knowledge into concrete action, positioning IRE as a medium for fostering critical awareness and environmentally responsive religious praxis.

Second: Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning, as an educational approach, places group interaction at the center of achieving shared goals. Through this process, students do not merely acquire knowledge; they also develop essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility (Collis & Moonen, 2005; Laal & Laal, 2012; Shaik, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, this approach is adapted by integrating Islamic values, enabling the cultivation of cooperation, empathy, and social awareness in ways that align with Islamic ethical principles (Ataie & Shah, 2018; Herlina et al., 2025; Usman, 2025).

In practice, collaborative learning within Islamic education is marked by several key characteristics. First, it incorporates core Islamic values such as mutual assistance (ta'awun), brotherhood (ukhuwah), sincerity, and justice (Kurniati & Trapsilasiwi, 2017). These values serve not only as a normative foundation but also as an ethical framework that shapes group dynamics, including accountability, conflict resolution, and character formation. Second, the role of the teacher undergoes a significant shift. Rather than acting solely as a transmitter of knowledge, the teacher becomes a moral and social facilitator (Shaik, 2025). In this capacity, teachers guide students to internalize Islamic ethical values through reflective activities, religious practices, and context-based collaborative tasks.

Third, collaborative learning is directed toward the practical application of values. Islamic teachings are not confined to abstract understanding but are connected directly to real-life contexts. Students are encouraged to engage with contemporary social issues such as gender equality and mental health through integrative and reflective project-based learning approaches (Kurniati & Trapsilasiwi, 2017).

Third: The teacher as a role model

Teachers serve not only as facilitators but also as exemplary figures (uswah hasanah) who embody faith-based values in their actions (Zakiyyah, 2024). Their example is crucial because,

within a praxis-oriented framework, faith is not limited to cognitive understanding but must be manifested in observable social behavior that students can emulate and reflect upon.

Teachers also act as key agents in upholding values such as honesty, responsibility, and ethical conduct, particularly in the learning process. For instance, in the use of digital media, teachers demonstrate discernment in filtering information, respect for differing opinions in virtual spaces, and a clear stance against hate speech and misinformation.

Fourth: A holistic-integrative curriculum

From the perspective of IRE as a social praxis of faith, the curriculum is not merely a structure of subjects but an integrative space that connects the principle of tawhid (divine unity) with all aspects of students' learning experiences (Shaleh, 2024). Faith-based values are not confined to religious subjects alone, but are internalized and enacted across disciplines as ethical foundations and sources of meaning.

Fifth: Service learning

In the context of IRE, activities such as community service, collective prayer for ill classmates, or helping local communities can enhance students' empathy and spirituality. These practices reflect faith values translated into concrete actions (Ochoa & Ochoa, 2004). Service-learning strategies that involve students in community-based activities such as collaboration with local organizations or faith-based initiatives can strengthen the relationship between learners, society, and religious values (Wilson, 2019).

Sixth: Collaborative engagement between formal and non-formal institutions

Partnerships between schools, Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), and religious social institutions such as mosques can serve as centers of transformation and spaces for internalizing faith-based social values (Bensaid & Machouche, 2013). These institutions function as social arenas that reinforce the practice of faith within Muslim communities. Through such collaboration, faith values can be more broadly internalized within social life.

Institutional leaders play a crucial role by establishing regulatory frameworks that guide the implementation of learning activities, ensuring that all processes are systematic, measurable, and aligned with educational objectives. These regulations help organize learning activities effectively and ensure the achievement of intended outcomes.

Seventh: Religious moderation and the prevention of radicalism

This approach contributes to the construction of an inclusive and peaceful society. Faith is not confined to cognitive understanding but is transformed into contextual social action oriented toward the common good. It serves as an ethical foundation guiding students to internalize values such as tolerance (tasamuh), justice ('adl), balance (tawazun), and moderation (wasatiyyah) in social life (Masturbasi, 2022).

This approach frames learning as a reflective and practical process that connects Islamic teachings with social realities. The internalization of the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (a mercy to all creation) is realized through inclusive social interactions, the rejection of violence, and active participation in fostering social harmony. Its implementation is reflected in collaborative, dialogical, and experience-based learning designs that enable students to construct contextual meanings of faith (Fitriani, 2023).

In essence, IRE as the social praxis of faith does not merely cultivate individual piety, but also fosters transformative social piety. This underscores the role of IRE as both an ideological and pedagogical instrument in shaping learners who are moderate, inclusive, and oriented toward peace within the broader context of civic life.

Islamic Religious Education as a Praxis of Transformative Learning

One of the central strategies in this approach is encouraging learners to develop new perspectives through critical thinking. Transformative Islamic education provides space for students not only to understand religious teachings, but also to interpret them in ways that are relevant and applicable to everyday life (Shaleh, 2024). In practice, the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) model has proven to be particularly effective, as it connects religious concepts with real-life issues faced by students. Through PBL, learners are encouraged to actively seek solutions,

engage in discussion, and reflect on their learning experiences, leading to a deeper and more meaningful understanding of religion rather than mere memorization (Amirudin et al., 2025; Dian et al., 2023).

In addition, experiential learning activities play a significant role in fostering transformative learning. Approaches such as learning by doing, cross-institutional collaboration, and direct engagement within social environments allow students to internalize Islamic values in more concrete ways (Nuruddaroini & Kusaeri, 2023). This not only enhances critical thinking skills but also strengthens collaboration and communication abilities (Susanto et al., 2023). As a result, learning extends beyond the cognitive domain to include affective and psychomotor dimensions.

A transformative approach in Islamic education also highlights the importance of integrating local and spiritual values. In certain contexts, such as in Aceh, Islamic education is developed by combining customary traditions with Islamic law, resulting in a learning model that is both contextual and closely aligned with the social realities of the community (M. Rizal et al., 2025). Meanwhile, a Sufi perspective through the concept of *tajalli* offers a holistic learning framework that balances intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Ghufron Hamzah et al., 2021).

Alongside these developments, digital transformation has become an essential component in strengthening transformative learning. The use of technology, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), enables more flexible and interactive learning processes while still maintaining core Islamic values. This integration demonstrates that the modernization of Islamic education can go hand in hand with the preservation of its religious foundations (Wedi & Mardiana, 2025).

Overall, this approach contributes positively by enhancing students' understanding of religious concepts, strengthening critical thinking skills, and increasing active participation in the learning process (Amirudin et al., 2025; Susanto, 2023). However, its implementation still faces several challenges, including time constraints, the readiness of facilitators, and uneven institutional support (Amirudin et al., 2025).

In this regard, IRE as a praxis of transformative learning offers a promising direction for developing a more contextual, reflective, and change-oriented educational model. It not only shapes individuals who possess a deep understanding of religious teachings but also enables them to apply these teachings in social life in a critical, creative, and responsible manner (Zulhijra et al., 2025).

Islamic Religious Education as a Praxis of Critical Pedagogy

IRE can be understood as a praxis of critical pedagogy that goes beyond the mere transmission of religious knowledge by fostering critical awareness, dialogical engagement, and social responsibility (Adawiah & Sakdiah, 2025). Within this perspective, learning is not a passive process but an active and reflective engagement that connects Islamic teachings with real-life contexts (Ain et al., 2025). Dialogical practices such as *musyawarah* in Islamic boarding schools illustrate how interaction and discussion can nurture critical consciousness and empower students to express ideas while remaining grounded in ethical and spiritual values (Radino, Mubarak, 2025).

In line with this, transformative pedagogical models such as the critical-integrative approach encourage students to engage critically with religious content through the integration of epistemological awareness, cultural context, and pedagogical innovation, which has been shown to enhance student engagement and higher-order thinking skills (Karwadi, et al., 2025). Likewise, research-based learning approaches shift the focus from rote memorization to active knowledge construction through inquiry, analysis, and academic exploration, thereby strengthening analytical capacity and intellectual independence (Ikhwan et al., 2025).

At the same time, the concept of double hermeneutics provides a constructive way to navigate potential tensions between critical inquiry and religious commitment by distinguishing between divine revelation and human interpretation, allowing for critical engagement without undermining faith (Karwadi & Setiyawan, 2025). Despite these strengths,

challenges remain, including uneven participation, limited facilitation skills among educators, misconceptions about the compatibility of critical pedagogy with Islamic values, and structural constraints such as limited technological resources (Ismail & Astuti, 2023; Radino, Mubarak, 2025).

Addressing these issues requires strengthening teacher capacity, fostering collaborative learning environments, clarifying the alignment between critical pedagogy and Islamic principles, and integrating technology to support innovative instruction (Ismail & Astuti, 2023). When effectively implemented, this approach contributes to the development of critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills, while also enhancing students' (Ikhwan et al., 2025; Karwadi & Setiawan, A.Ferdi Hasan, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education as the Social Praxis of Faith

Experiential learning is an effective approach in Islamic Religious Education, as it provides learners with opportunities to connect Islamic teachings to their everyday lives. Through active engagement in learning activities, students not only gain a theoretical understanding of the material but are also able to reflect on it and apply it in real-life contexts (Muhamad, Khalil, & Basir, 2024). This process helps cultivate critical thinking skills while strengthening both their spiritual awareness and practical abilities (Anshari et al., 2025).

However, the success of this approach does not occur automatically. It requires teachers to be well-prepared in designing meaningful learning experiences, active participation from students, and support from the educational institution (McGuire, 2019). When implemented more broadly and integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, this approach has the potential to enrich the learning experience and foster more contextual religious practices within social life (Susanto, 2023).

DISCUSSION

This research yields several substantive findings that reveal how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) operates simultaneously as a transformative learning practice, a vehicle for critical pedagogy, and a medium for the social practice of faith. The first finding demonstrates that an effective PAI learning process is not limited to the transmission of normative doctrine, but rather serves as a catalyst for critical reflection that encourages perspective transformation in students. Within Mezirow's transformative theory framework, this change is mediated by the experience of disorienting dilemmas that force individuals to reevaluate their basic assumptions about values, identity, and social relations. This finding strongly correlates with the results of (Aziza, 2025) study, which documented that a reflective orientation in PAI learning significantly increases students' capacity to internalize religious values in everyday practice. This process does not occur linearly, but rather through a dialectical cycle between the internalization of Islamic values and confrontation with complex social realities. This finding confirms that transformative PAI demands a paradigmatic reorientation from an instructive-normative model to a dialogical-reflective model (Rahma, 2026).

The second finding relates to the operationalization of critical pedagogy in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This study identified that the problem-posing approach, rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition, particularly the concepts of *tadabbur* (deep contemplation), *tafakkur* (analytical reflection), and *ijtihad* (independent critical reasoning), has a deep epistemological alignment with Freire's critical pedagogical framework. This alignment is not merely a methodological similarity, but rather a shared ontological foundation that recognizes humans as active subjects with the capacity to transform themselves and their social reality. The results of (Artha et al., 2025) study of dialogic learning practices in Islamic schools (*madrasah diniyyah*) reinforce the finding that the critical-dialogic approach in PAI consistently increases students' cognitive engagement and social awareness. PAI teachers who implement critical pedagogy successfully shift students' positions from passive consumers of knowledge to active agents of meaning production. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the integration of Freirean critical consciousness and Qur'anic literacy produces a new form of consciousness, which this study conceptualizes as critical-faith consciousness (Nawawi & Muhammad, 2024).

The third finding reveals the dimension of social practices of faith as an empirical manifestation of transformative Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. This study documents that students who experience a critical pedagogy-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process demonstrate a stronger tendency to translate faith values into concrete social actions, including active participation in community activities, concern for social justice issues, and the formation of collaborative networks based on Islamic values. (Sari & Salim, 2026) in their study of epistemic integration in minority Muslim communities asserted that authentic Islamic education produces forms of social practices that transcend the boundaries of conventional religious rituals. This finding also suggests that social practices of faith serve as empirical validation of the depth of transformation that occurs in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process, while also being a more holistic indicator of pedagogical success than solely academic-based measurements. Thus, successful PAI has been proven to produce what, in this perspective, is referred to as faith-in-action (Ali, n.d.).

This study makes a distinctive conceptual contribution through two key innovations that have not been systematically explored in the international Islamic education literature. The first innovation lies in the formulation of the Critical Faith Consciousness (CCK) construct as a new analytical category that bridges the gap between Mezirow's transformative theory, Freire's critical pedagogy, and the Islamic epistemological tradition. Unlike previous studies that tend to position Freire and Islam as diametrically opposed or merely parallel, this study demonstrates that the two traditions can be productively integrated through the mediation of key Islamic concepts such as *aql* (reason), *hikmah* (wisdom), and *amal shalih* (good deeds). (Hikmah, 2026) in their systematic literature review on the transformation of Islamic education curricula identified that such philosophical integration remains a significant theoretical lacuna. The CCK construct proposed by this study has the potential to become an applicable analytical framework for developing Islamic education curricula that are more responsive to contemporary challenges.

The second novelty is methodological and empirical: this study is one of the first to systematically document the mechanisms of converting Islamic Religious Education (PAI) values into social practices of faith in the context of formal learning in Indonesia. While most literature on transformative PAI focuses on the cognitive or affective dimensions separately, this study proposes an integrative Triadic Transformative PAI (TPAIT) model that dynamically connects the three dimensions of critical reflection, value internalization, and social actualization as a unified pedagogical process. (Ramadhan et al., 2026) have documented a transformative PAI pedagogical model in the context of Society 5.0, but have not explicitly articulated the mechanisms of transition from individual internalization to collective social actualization. This study fills this gap by offering a process framework that can be operationalized in learning planning and PAI program evaluation. This novelty has significant implications for religious education reform at the national policy level and pedagogical development at the institutional level (Cover, 2026).

This research contributes at three interrelated levels: theoretical, methodological, and policy-practical. At the theoretical level, this research enriches the landscape of transformative learning theory by demonstrating that the Islamic intellectual tradition possesses rich epistemological resources to expand and deepen Mezirow's theory, which has been dominated by Western perspectives. (Parhan et al., 2024) have identified the potential for expanding transformative theory into dimensions of social change and justice, but have not yet explored the dimension of faith as a driver of transformation. This research fills this gap by demonstrating that faith, from an Islamic perspective, is not merely an affective variable but a transformative force with tangible and measurable social change. This contribution also addresses the long-standing debate within the critical pedagogy tradition about whether true transformation must be oriented toward structural social change or can begin with individual spiritual transformation. This research answers that, in the context of Islamic Religious Education, these two orientations are not dichotomous but rather move dialectically toward a common telos.

At the methodological level, this research develops a discursive analysis instrument capable of capturing the nuances of the transformation process in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, including a critical-faith pedagogy observation rubric and a reflective interview protocol sensitive to Islamic values. These instruments can be adapted for comparative studies across Islamic education contexts in various Muslim countries. At the policy-practical level, this research provides an empirical foundation for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers to develop Islamic Religious Education (PAI) that consciously integrates transformative, critical, and social dimensions. Such integration will not only increase the relevance of PAI in addressing contemporary challenges but also strengthen the contribution of Islamic education to the character formation of citizens who are critical, empathetic, and committed to the values of faith-based social justice (Bima, 2026).

This research is not without limitations that need to be transparently acknowledged to encourage the development of more comprehensive research in the future. The first limitation relates to the scope of the context: this research was conducted in a specific formal educational setting, so the findings on the dynamics of critical pedagogy and social practices of faith may not be fully applicable to non-formal educational contexts or Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), which have fundamentally different pedagogical logics and institutional structures. (Aziza, 2025) in his study of the transformative pedagogical model of Islamic boarding schools emphasized that variations in institutional contexts produce significant differences in the mechanisms and trajectories of transformation, so caution is needed in generalizing across contexts. Second, this research focuses on the subjective experiences of students and educators as constructed through interviews and observations, so interpretations of the occurrence of critical faith transformation are still inferential and have not been validated through rigorous longitudinal measurement. This limitation opens up methodological opportunities for further research.

The third limitation concerns differential variables that have not been adequately explored. This study has not systematically analyzed how gender, socioeconomic background, educational level, and regional context moderate the transformation process in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Given that Islam in Indonesia is expressed in diverse cultural and institutional traditions, from *Nahdlatul Ulama* to *Muhammadiyah*, from traditional Islamic boarding schools to modern *madrasas*, these differences in context have the potential to produce significant variations in transformation patterns. Fourth, the construct of Critical Awareness-Faith proposed in this study is still in its early stages of formulation and has not been validated using standardized psychometric instruments. Therefore, its operationalization in quantitative research requires further development. These limitations do not diminish the internal validity of the study, but rather define the boundaries of claims that can be responsibly made.

Based on the identified findings, novelties, and limitations, this study formulates several strategic recommendations for the research agenda, theory development, and field implementation. At the research level, a multi-site comparative study encompassing various educational levels, Islamic institutional traditions, and regional contexts in Indonesia is highly recommended to test the transferability of the TPAIT and KKK constructs across diverse settings. Furthermore, a longitudinal research design that tracks the trajectory of students' transformation from primary education to adulthood would provide a richer understanding of how Islamic Religious Education shapes critical faith awareness across the lifespan. Interdisciplinary research involving Islamic education experts, sociologists of religion, developmental psychologists, and critical pedagogy experts is also recommended to produce a more comprehensive, transformative Islamic Religious Education theory that is responsive to empirical complexity.

Then, at the level of theory development, further research needs to explore in more depth the relationship between the concept of *maqashid al-syariah* as the *telos* of Islamic education and Freire's theory of liberation, and test whether the integration of the two frameworks can produce a genuinely post-colonial pedagogical theory, one that does not simply adapt Western theory to the Islamic context, but builds a pedagogical theory rooted in Islamic epistemology

itself. At the practical-policy level, this research recommends that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Islamic educational institutions make the transformative, critical, and social dimensions an explicit component of the Islamic Religious Education teacher competency standards, the training curriculum for prospective educators, and the evaluation instruments for Islamic Religious Education learning. This requires a paradigmatic shift in how Islamic Religious Education is conceptualized from merely a normative subject to a pedagogical space intentionally designed to produce citizens who are critical, reflective, and committed to social transformation based on faith values.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, this study concludes that IRE, when framed as a transformative praxis, plays a significant role in shaping students' moral character, spiritual development, and social responsibility. This is implemented through learning activities that utilize Learning Management Systems (LMS), Virtual Reality (VR), flipped classroom models, and dialogic-reflective methods. From the perspective of IRE as a praxis of critical pedagogy, learning does not merely emphasize memorization, but also fosters the development of critical and reflective thinking, as well as students' social awareness. This is carried out through approaches such as problem-based learning (PBL), the "power of two" and "make a match" strategies, and deliberative (musyawarah) learning practices. Meanwhile, when understood as a social praxis of faith, IRE moves beyond doctrinal instruction that is detached from social realities. Instead, it is internalized in students' attitudes, behaviors, and social practices in everyday life through the application of experiential learning, service learning, collaborative learning strategies, the role of teachers as exemplars, and the implementation of a holistic-integrative curriculum. Strengthening teachers' competencies particularly in digital literacy integrated with humanistic and religious values is essential to ensure the effectiveness and meaningfulness of IRE implementation in a sustainable manner, as well as to achieve educational goals optimally. Overall, IRE as a learning praxis grounded in these three approaches demonstrates coherence with the framework of transformative learning proposed by Jack Mezirow and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, both of which emphasize the integration of reflection, dialogue, and action within the educational process.

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