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Critical Pedagogy in Islamic History Education: Applying Henry Giroux's Framework

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to explore how Henry Giroux's theory of critical pedagogy can be applied to Islamic history education to enhance critical thinking, social awareness, and transformative learning. The study adopts Giroux's theoretical framework, which includes ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions, emphasizing student agency, dialogical learning, and ethical engagement. Using a qualitative literature study as the research method, this paper analyzes scholarly works on critical pedagogy and Islamic education to construct a contextual learning model for undergraduate Islamic history courses. The results demonstrate that traditional approaches to Islamic history often emphasize memorization over critical engagement, thereby limiting students' ability to relate historical narratives to contemporary social realities. By applying Giroux's critical pedagogy, the study proposes a learning design that includes material and strategy innovations, diverse media tools, and formative assessments focused on critical dialogue and social relevance. The implications of this research suggest that adopting critical pedagogy in Islamic history education can contribute to the development of socially conscious, ethically responsible, and critically aware learners. The originality of this work lies in bridging Western critical pedagogy with Islamic educational objectives, offering a novel curriculum design that aligns with both transformative learning principles and the moral mission of Islamic education

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy; Islamic History Education; Henry Giroux; Curriculum Design; Educational Theory.

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Introduction

Islamic education, especially in the area of historical studies, often relies on traditional pedagogical models centered on memorization and textual transmission. These methods, while preserving knowledge, tend to isolate historical content from contemporary relevance and fail to cultivate critical thinking skills. This research stems from the need to reimagine Islamic history instruction by introducing alternative pedagogical approaches that foster critical engagement and social consciousness.

The research problem centers on how Henry Giroux's theory of critical pedagogy—which promotes dialogical learning, ethical reflection, and transformative education—can be applied to Islamic history education to address existing pedagogical limitations. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to explore the theoretical foundations of Giroux's educational philosophy, assess its relevance to Islamic education, and design a learning model that reflects these critical principles. Although no formal hypothesis is tested, the underlying assumption is that integrating critical pedagogy will enhance students' ability to think critically about history and apply historical insights to real-world social challenges [1],[2],[3],[4],[5],[6],[7].

This research is important because it contributes to the development of a more holistic and empowering Islamic educational model. By linking Islamic history to contemporary ethical and social contexts, the proposed approach aligns with both modern pedagogical trends and classical Islamic values of justice, inquiry, and moral responsibility [8],[9],[10].

The literature review draws on key works by Giroux (1983, 1988, 2003), Freire (1970), and contemporary Islamic education scholars such as Al-Attas (1991) and Hashim (2004), who highlight the need for education that is both intellectually and morally grounded. These sources provide the theoretical foundation for the critical pedagogical model proposed in this study.

The research method employed is a qualitative literature study. Academic books, peer-reviewed articles, and online resources were analyzed to construct a conceptual framework for critical Islamic history education [11],[12],[13].

The scope of this study is limited to the application of Giroux's critical pedagogy to undergraduate-level Islamic history instruction, with a focus on integrating historical knowledge, critical analysis, and social relevance into a cohesive learning design.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative literature review methodology aimed at developing a conceptual framework for critical Islamic history education based on Henry Giroux's pedagogical principles. Data were sourced from a comprehensive range of academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, theoretical texts, and digital academic databases. The literature selected focused on critical pedagogy, curriculum theory, and Islamic education, particularly about the intersection of ethical instruction and historical consciousness [14],[15],[16],[17],[18].

The research process involved thematic analysis of the selected texts to identify core elements of Giroux's educational theory –namely his ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives—and their pedagogical implications [19],[20],[21],[22]. These themes were then synthesized with existing approaches in Islamic education to propose a new learning model for undergraduate Islamic history instruction. The findings were organized into a structured design that includes learning materials, strategies, media, evaluation methods, and expected outcomes. This method allows for a deep conceptual exploration that is interpretive and reflective, making it appropriate for studies aimed at theory-building and educational model development [23],[24],[25],[26],[27].

Result and Discussion

Theoretical Basis: Giroux's Educational Philosophy

Henry Giroux's educational philosophy is grounded in a critical pedagogical framework that challenges conventional, authoritarian models of instruction and emphasizes the emancipatory role of education. His theory is structured around three key philosophical dimensions:

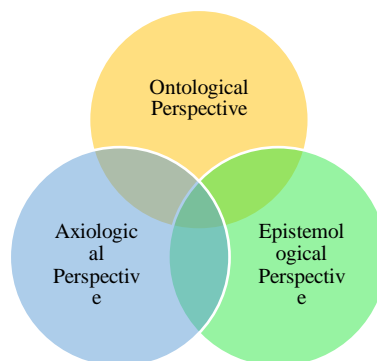


Figure 1. Three key of philosophical dimensions

- **Ontological Perspective:** Giroux contends that students must be viewed as active agents in the learning process, not as passive recipients of knowledge. He critiques the traditional "banking model" of education, coined by Paulo Freire, which positions students as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. Giroux advances this critique by insisting that learners must be encouraged to critically engage with content and take ownership of their learning [28],[29].
- **Epistemological Perspective:** In Giroux's view, knowledge is not an objective truth handed down from authority figures but a product of social dialogue and critical reflection. He advocates for a dialogical classroom environment in which both teachers and students co-construct meaning through discussion and mutual inquiry (Giroux, 1988). This process cultivates what Freire called *conscientização* – a critical awareness of one's reality [30].
- **Axiological Perspective:** Giroux emphasizes the moral and political dimensions of education. For him, teaching is not a neutral act; rather, it is inherently value-laden. Education must empower students to question dominant ideologies, confront injustices, and participate in democratic social transformation. By embedding ethical engagement into pedagogy, learners are encouraged to become socially responsible citizens [31],[32].

Relevance to Islamic History Education

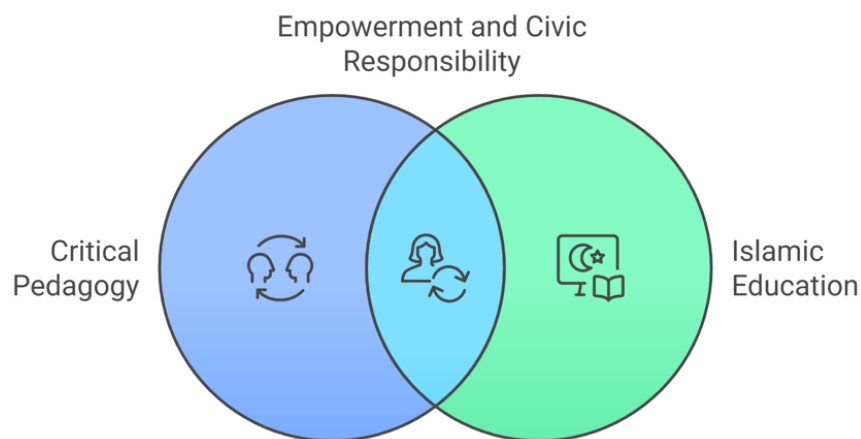


Figure 2. Bridging History and Ethics

Traditional approaches to Islamic history education often emphasize the memorization of dates, names, and isolated events, frequently presented without sufficient connection to their broader social, political, and ethical contexts. While this method helps preserve historical facts, it tends to marginalize critical engagement and overlook the relevance of history to present-day realities [33]. As a result, students may acquire factual knowledge but lack the ability to interpret history in ways that are meaningful for contemporary social issues.

Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy offers a compelling framework to address this gap. His emphasis on dialogical learning, critical reflection, and social transformation encourages educators to reframe Islamic history not as a static narrative, but as a dynamic discourse that invites interrogation and reinterpretation [34]. Through this approach, students are encouraged to examine historical events about power, justice, and identity – key themes that are deeply rooted in Islamic intellectual traditions.

Furthermore, Giroux's pedagogy aligns closely with the objectives of Islamic education, which aims to cultivate ethically conscious individuals capable of contributing to societal betterment (*islah*). By applying critical pedagogy to Islamic history, learners are empowered to connect the past with the present, evaluate historical narratives from multiple perspectives, and engage in civic responsibility as part of their educational journey [35].

Learning Design

To implement Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy within Islamic history education, the learning design must emphasize student agency, critical engagement, and social relevance. The proposed design consists of four key components:

Material Design

Learning materials are curated to encourage analytical thinking and contextual exploration:

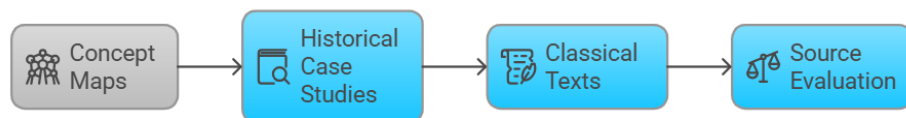


Figure 3. Educational Strategies for Understanding Islamic Historiography

- Concept Maps are employed to visually represent relationships between historical events, themes, and figures, aiding comprehension and critical association.

- Historical Case Studies provide real-world scenarios for learners to explore causality, bias, and interpretation.
- Classical Texts from Islamic historiography serve as primary materials for critique, comparison, and contextual application.
- Emphasis is placed on source evaluation, helping students distinguish between primary and secondary sources and analyze them for credibility, bias, and perspective.

Strategy Design

Pedagogical strategies align with dialogical and participatory learning, promoting deeper engagement:

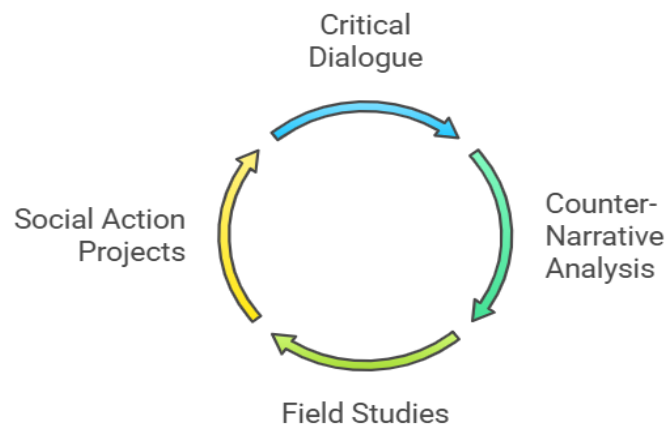


Figure 4. Cycle of Islamic Historical Engagement

- Critical Dialogue sessions allow students to interrogate dominant narratives and discuss ethical implications of historical events.
- Counter-Narrative Analysis encourages exploration of marginalized voices within Islamic history.
- Field Studies and Media Literacy help students examine how Islamic history is represented in contemporary media and public discourse.
- Social Action Projects integrate history with civic engagement, allowing learners to apply historical insights to community development initiatives.

Media Design

Educational media is diversified to enhance accessibility, interaction, and relevance:

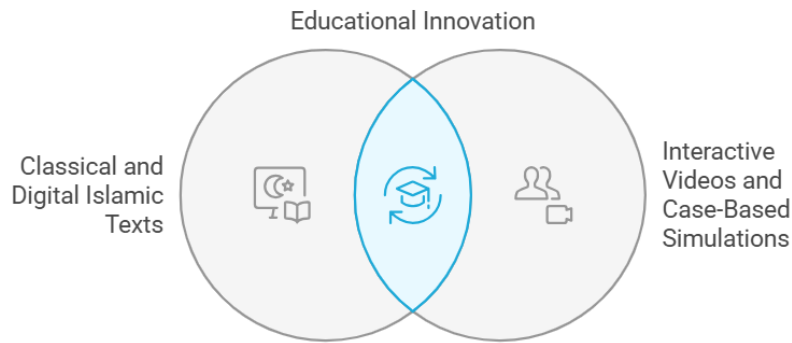


Figure 5. Bridging Theory and Practice in Islamic Education

- Classical and Digital Islamic Texts provide layered perspectives on historical development.
- Interactive Videos and Case-Based Simulations are used to illustrate historiographical methods and debates.
- Community-Based Learning Tools, such as interviews with local historians and elders, bridge classroom learning with lived experience.

Evaluation Design

Assessment methods are designed to be formative, reflective, and performance-based:

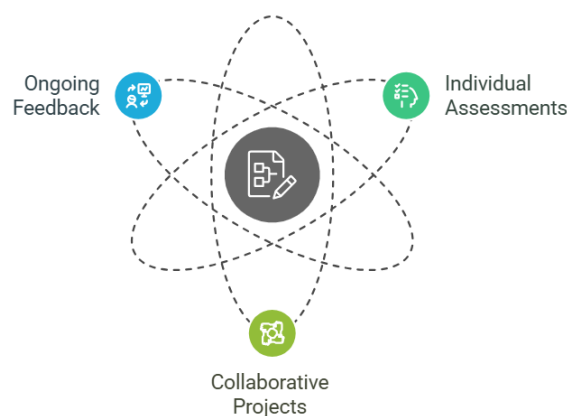


Figure 6. Comprehensive Evaluation Strategy

- Individual Assessments include critical essays, reflective journals, and source analysis exercises to measure personal understanding and critical thinking.
- Collaborative Projects, such as group presentations and social action initiatives, foster teamwork and real-world application.
- Ongoing Feedback ensures that evaluation supports learning and encourages continuous improvement.

Learning Outcomes

The implementation of Giroux's critical pedagogy within Islamic history education aims to achieve the following learner outcomes:

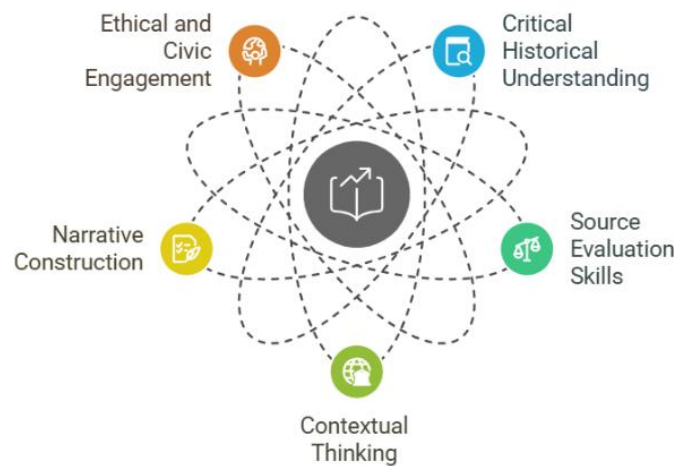


Figure 7. Enhancing Islamic History Education

- **Critical Historical Understanding:** Students will develop the ability to question, analyze, and interpret historical narratives through a critical lens.
- **Source Evaluation Skills:** Learners will identify and assess primary and secondary sources, evaluating their origin, reliability, and purpose.
- **Contextual Thinking:** Students will relate historical events to modern-day societal, cultural, and political contexts.
- **Narrative Construction:** Learners will create alternative narratives that incorporate diverse and marginalized perspectives within Islamic history.

- **Ethical and Civic Engagement:** Students will apply historical insights to promote justice, equity, and transformation in their communities.

Conclusion

Henry Giroux's critical pedagogy provides a transformative lens through which Islamic history education can be revitalized to better serve both intellectual and ethical development. Moving beyond traditional memorization-focused models, this approach foregrounds critical inquiry, dialogical learning, and contextual understanding. The learning design proposed in this study emphasizes student agency, critical analysis of historical narratives, and the application of historical lessons to contemporary societal issues. By aligning the principles of critical pedagogy with the moral and educational aims of Islamic education, this framework positions learners not merely as recipients of knowledge but as active participants in shaping their understanding of the past and its relevance to the present. The outcomes support the development of socially conscious, reflective, and ethically grounded individuals. This reimagined curriculum underscores the potential of Islamic history education as a vehicle for cultivating justice-oriented citizenship and meaningful social transformation.

Author Contributions

Alwy Ahmed Mohamed: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Zaki Afifi:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. **Mahmudulhassan:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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