



## Integrating Paulo Freire's Thought and Islamic Values in Vocational Education

Deden Syarif Hidayatullo<sup>1✉</sup>, Fuad Hilmi<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Falikh Rifqi Maulana<sup>3</sup>,  
Muhammad Irfansyah Maulana<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Telkom Unviversity, Bandung, Indonesia, <sup>2,3</sup>Islamic States University Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama Special Branch Office (PCINU) South Korea, Daejeon, Republic of Korea<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Education in Indonesia continues to face challenges, particularly the mismatch between graduates' skills and labor market demands, alongside increasing social and moral issues. This study seeks to integrate Paulo Freire's principles of conscientization, humanization, and dialogue with Islamic values of social justice, drawing on the hadith concerning the liberation of Badr War prisoners as a conceptual basis. Using a qualitative approach, the research applies content analysis of Freire's works and classical hadith sources, supported by field studies at SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya. Findings show that the application of this transformative model in vocational schools encourages active student participation through critical discussions, social reflection, and contextual learning relevant to daily realities, including skills that strengthen family economies. Teachers report that the model assists in adapting lessons to students' needs, particularly for those who lag behind, though challenges remain in administrative burdens and structural limitations. Students generally respond positively, describing the approach as more interactive, engaging, and socially relevant. This study concludes that integrating Islamic values with Freire's critical pedagogy provides a strong foundation for vocational education grounded in social justice. Policy implications include strengthening teacher training, making curricula more flexible, and adopting evaluation methods that emphasize social contribution.

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## ABSTRAK

Pendidikan di Indonesia menghadapi tantangan serius berupa kesenjangan antara lulusan lembaga pendidikan dan kebutuhan nyata dunia kerja, disertai meningkatnya persoalan moral dan sosial. Penelitian ini berupaya mengintegrasikan pemikiran pendidikan kritis Paulo Freire (khususnya prinsip conscientization, humanisasi, dan dialog) dengan nilai-nilai keadilan sosial dalam Islam, dengan menjadikan hadis pembebasan tawanan Perang Badar sebagai dasar konseptual. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui analisis konten terhadap karya Freire dan sumber hadis klasik, serta didukung studi lapangan di SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi awal model transformatif di sekolah vokasi ini mendorong keterlibatan siswa secara lebih aktif melalui diskusi kritis, refleksi pengalaman sosial, dan pembelajaran kontekstual yang terkait dengan realitas hidup mereka, termasuk keterampilan praktis untuk mendukung ekonomi keluarga. Guru menilai model ini membantu menyederhanakan pembelajaran sesuai kebutuhan siswa yang tertinggal, meski menghadapi tantangan berupa beban administrasi dan keterbatasan dukungan struktural. Secara umum, siswa merespons positif karena pembelajaran lebih interaktif, menyenangkan, dan relevan dengan konteks sosial mereka. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dan prinsip pendidikan kritis Freire relevan untuk membangun model pendidikan vokasi berbasis keadilan sosial. Implikasinya mencakup penguatan pelatihan guru, penyesuaian kurikulum agar lebih fleksibel, dan evaluasi berbasis kontribusi sosial. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menawarkan kontribusi signifikan bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam yang humanis, transformatif, dan aplikatif di era modern.

## KATA KUNCI

Pendidikan Vokasi,  
Pedagogi Islam,  
Pendidikan Kritis,  
Pemberdayaan Sosial.

## Introduction

Education in Indonesia has undergone significant changes since the reform era, particularly with the implementation of decentralization policies. However, decentralization has not automatically guaranteed the creation of quality education. Today, education is closely linked to the Business World, the Industrial World, and the World of Work (DUDIKA). Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in February 2024 shows that the labor force reached 153.05 million people, with an open unemployment rate of 4.76% (around 7.28 million people). This highlights the serious gap between educational outcomes and the demands of the labor market. In addition, moral and social challenges within education are also intensifying, necessitating an approach that goes beyond knowledge transfer to cultivate social and moral awareness (Jati & Bachtiar, 2024).

Another persistent problem is educational inequality, including within Muslim communities. Disparities are evident across race, gender, social class, language, and disability. For example, women's participation in higher education remains low in some regions, demonstrating that the education system does not fully embody the values of social justice (Abdullah, 2020). Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critiques such unjust systems, noting that "an unjust social order is the permanent fount of false generosity, nourished by death, despair, and poverty." In this sense, education must function not only as a means to address inequality but also as a tool to dismantle unjust social structures.

Islamic tradition itself has long emphasized education as an instrument of empowerment. A prominent example is found in the hadith of the Badr War, where prisoners were granted freedom by teaching literacy to the children of the Ansar. As narrated by Imam al-Baihaqi, this practice demonstrates education as a form of social justice, transforming knowledge into a tool for equality (Shaleh et al., 2023). This aligns with Freire's principles of conscientization, humanization, and dialogue, which highlight education as a process of critically engaging and transforming social realities. In Islam, this resonates with the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil), affirming education's role as a catalyst for building both spiritual and social awareness (Al-Razi et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have approached Islamic education from this perspective. Baharudin (2021) proposed a liberative Islamic education model that emphasizes respect for human dignity, though still largely conceptual. Helmawati et al. (2024) highlighted the role of religious moderation in higher education as a means of cultivating tolerance among students. Beyond Indonesia, Mehta & Pandya (2015) demonstrated how critical pedagogy can counter pseudo-democracy and authoritarianism in Indian education, while Budnyk et al. (2023) emphasized its potential for rural schools in addressing discrimination and marginalization. These works strengthen the argument that integrating Freire's critical pedagogy with Islamic values holds significant potential for developing transformative, contextual, and justice-oriented education.

This study seeks to address this gap by developing a transformative educational model grounded in both Islamic values and Freirean principles, with the hadith of the Badr War prisoners as its conceptual basis. Using SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya as a case study, the research aims not only to enrich theoretical discourse but also to offer practical contributions in designing inclusive, contextual, and socially responsive models of vocational education. Ultimately, the study aspires to support the formulation of Islamic education policies that can address inequality and marginalization in the global era, strengthening education's role as a transformative force in contemporary Muslim society.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the integration of Paulo Freire's thought and Islamic values in developing social justice-oriented educational models (Mappasere & Suyuti, 2019). A case study design was chosen because it enables in-depth exploration within a specific context, namely the implementation of a transformative model at SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya. This approach is considered appropriate since the Islamic vocational school faces distinctive challenges, including social disparities, limited learning resources, and the urgent need for a curriculum

grounded in social realities—conditions that resonate with Freire’s principles of conscientization and critical dialogue.

The research subjects consisted of two teachers (Biology and History) and 83 eleventh-grade students from two majors: Computer and Network Engineering, and Motorcycle Engineering and Business. Teachers were selected for their involvement in curriculum development, while students represented direct experiences of the model’s implementation. The researcher engaged in participatory observation, contributing to curriculum discussions, model dissemination, and teacher training, thus enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the educational practices under study.

Data collection methods included: (1) a literature review of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and classical hadith texts, particularly *Sunan al-Kubra* by Imam al-Baihaqi, analyzed using the *tahlili syarah* method to examine linguistic meaning, textual structure, and historical context; (2) participatory observation of classroom learning activities; (3) semi-structured interviews with teachers and students to capture perceptions and experiences; and (4) documentation such as photographs and meeting notes. The use of digital resources like *Maktabah Syamilah* facilitated hadith retrieval, while mobile devices supported visual documentation (Ummah, 2019; Wasman et al., 2023).

Content analysis was applied to bridge classical Islamic texts with contemporary critical education theories. This method allowed the identification of Islamic values parallel to Freirean principles and their operationalization in vocational education practices. Data analysis proceeded through three stages: reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by thematic interpretation to connect Freire’s framework, Islamic teachings, and practical learning contexts. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (teachers, students, and documentation) and member checking, whereby interpretations were verified with informants (Razali & Asrul, 2024). With this design, the study not only demonstrates the theoretical relevance of integrating Freire’s pedagogy with Islamic values but also offers an applicable model that can be adapted in other Islamic educational institutions, such as *madrasah* or *pesantren*, in accordance with local contexts.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

#### Paulo Freire's Social Justice Education Theory

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher known as one of the leading thinkers in the field of critical education. He was born on September 19, 1921 in Recife, Brazil, to a middle-class family that experienced poverty during the Great Depression. His difficult life experiences influenced his view of social injustice and the importance of education as a tool for the transformation of society. From a young age, Freire showed an interest in language and education, which would become central to his work (Junaedi, 2018).

Freire is best known for his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in 1968. This book offers an educational approach centered on dialogue, critical awareness (conscientization), and respect for students’ life experiences. Freire opposed the traditional educational model he called “*bank-style education*,” in which teachers are considered to be the givers of knowledge while students are only passive recipients

(Roberts, 2007). Instead, he advocates an educational model that empowers students to become agents of social change through critical reflection and concrete action.

Freire's career includes a variety of important positions, including as Director of Adult Education in Pernambuco, Brazil. In this role, he developed innovative literacy methods, which allowed the poor and illiterate to read and write in a short period of time while being aware of their political and social rights. However, his progressive political views led to Freire being imprisoned after the 1964 military coup in Brazil, and he then spent decades in exile in countries such as Chile, the United States, and Switzerland. During his exile, Freire continued to fight for education as a tool to liberate the oppressed. He has worked in various international organizations, including UNESCO and the World Council of Churches, where he has helped implement educational programs in various developing countries (Idris, 2009). His work and ideas have inspired social movements around the world, especially in the areas of education, human rights, and community empowerment.

During his exile, Freire wrote a number of works that explored the concept of education as a tool of liberation. In his book *Educacao Como Prática Da Liberdade*, Freire developed the idea that education should involve dialogue and active participation of students. He emphasized that education is not just a process of knowledge transfer, but must be a means to awaken critical awareness (*conscientization*) and encourage social action. This book is the foundation for progressive educational approaches in various parts of the world, especially in the context of oppressed societies (Freire, 2014).

Referring to *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Freire broadened his views on the importance of culture in the educational process. He emphasized that education cannot be separated from the cultural context, because culture reflects the identity and struggle of society. Freire argued that cultural action is an effective tool to counter oppression and involve society in the process of social transformation. This book provides a framework for educators to understand the relationship between culture, awareness, and social change (Freire, 2000).

Freire's most famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, offers a radical approach to education. In this book, Freire criticizes the traditional education system that he calls "*bank-style education*," in which students are treated as empty containers filled with knowledge from teachers. Instead, he proposed a dialogical educational model that allows students and teachers to learn collectively through reflection and action. This book emphasizes the importance of understanding social reality as a first step to creating change, making it a highly relevant work for social movements and education in a variety of contexts (Freire, 2020).

Freire's works highlight his commitment to education as a tool to empower society and fight for social justice. His views have been an inspiration for educators, activists, and leaders around the world to transform education into a space of liberation and transformation. Paulo Freire returned to Brazil in 1980 after 16 years in exile. He continued his activities as an educator and intellectual until his death on May 2, 1997. To this day, Freire's ideas remain relevant and continue to influence educational theories and social movements around the world. His work has become a valuable legacy in the struggle for social justice and humane education.

Paulo Freire, in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, critiques the "*banking*" style of education, where students passively receive and repeat information from teachers who act as sole authorities, stifling creativity, critical thinking, and connection to social

realities. Instead, Freire advocates for praxis, the integration of action and reflection, through dynamic and dialogical interactions that empower individuals to understand and transform their reality (Susanto, 2016). This humanizing approach positions education as a tool for liberation, fostering critical awareness (*conscientization*) and enabling students to become active agents of change through reflective and transformative learning.

Through the *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, Paulo Freire provides ten main concepts of social justice education as follows:

**Table 1.** The Main and Core Principles of Paulo Freire's Concept of Conscientization

No	Key Principles	The Core Idea
1	<b>Humanization</b>	Education should be humane, not paternalistic in nature.
2	<b>Bank Style Rejection</b>	Reject the passive model; Students must be active and critical, not just recipients.
3	<b>Critical Awareness</b>	Teacher-student relations must be equal and encourage social awareness.
4	<b>Dialog</b>	True dialogue is the foundation of meaningful and liberating education.
5	<b>Praxis</b>	Integration of reflection and action to transform social reality.
6	<b>Social Transformation</b>	Education shapes human beings as agents of historical change.
7	<b>Collective Process</b>	Liberation occurs through the participation of the oppressed.
8	<b>Teachers as Facilitators</b>	Teachers learn with students, not a single authority.
9	<b>Contextual Relevance</b>	Education must be rooted in the social reality of students.
10	<b>Elimination of Dualism of Oppression</b>	Education helps students release the oppressed and empowered mentality.

As summarized in Table 1, Paulo Freire proposes ten main principles in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed that place education as a tool of liberation. These principles include humanization, rejection of bank-style educational models, critical consciousness, dialogue, praxis, and social transformation. Freire emphasized that education must be based on an equal relationship between teachers and students, where the learning process becomes a dialogical space that allows reflection and action. The concept of education that is contextual and relevant to real life is the key to forming agents of change that are able to challenge the structures of oppression. Thus, education not only avoids dehumanization, but also builds collective awareness to create a more just and transformative society (Boontinand & Forstenzer, 2024; Ellison, 2024).

## Hadith on the Release of Prisoners of War in Badr

The results of the search for the hadith of the release of prisoners of the Badr War were found through the Book of *Sunan Al-Kubro*, written by Imam Al-Baihaqi in *Fashal Al-Ilmiah*. Here is the editorial:

11680 – أَخْبَرَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ رَجَاءِ الْأَدِيبِ، ثنا أَبُو مُحَمَّدٍ يَحْيَى بْنُ مَنْصُورِ الْقَاصِي، ثنا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مُوسَى الْخُلَوَائِيُّ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ، ثنا مُوسَى بْنُ حَاقَانَ، وَفَضْلُ بْنُ عِمْرَانَ الْأَعْرَجُ، قَالَا: ثنا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَاصِمٍ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنِي دَاوُدُ بْنُ أَبِي هِنْدٍ، عَنْ عِكْرِمَةَ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: " لَمْ يَكُنْ لِأَنْصَارٍ مِنْ أُسَارَى بَدْرٍ فِدَاءٌ، فَجَعَلَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِدَاءَهُمْ أَنْ يُعَلِّمُوا أَوْلَادَ الْأَنْصَارِ الْكِتَابَةَ، قَالَ: فَجَاءَ غُلَامٌ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ يَبْكِي يَوْمًا إِلَى أَبِيهِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ أَبُوهُ: مَا شَأْنُكَ؟ قَالَ: صَرَبَنِي مُعَلِّمِي، قَالَ: الْحَبِيبُ يَطْلُبُ بِدَخْلِ بَدْرٍ، وَاللَّهِ لَا تَأْتِيهِ أَبَدًا"

Meaning: *Ibn Abbas said: "Some of the prisoners of the Battle of Badr did not have a ransom (treasure to free themselves). So the Messenger of Allah (saw) made their ransom to teach writing to the children of the Ansars. One day, a son of Ansar came to cry to his father. His father asked him, 'What happened to you?' The boy replied, 'My teacher hit me.' The father said, 'The bad guy (the teacher) demanded revenge for the defeat in Badr. By Allah, you will not go to him again forever.'"* (H.R. Al-Baihaqi)

**Table 1.** Analysis of the *Sanad* of the Hadith on the Release of Prisoners of War in Badr

No.	Name	<i>Sanad</i> Description
1	Ibnu Abbas	<i>Shahabah</i>
2	Ikrimah	<i>Fiihi Ikhtilaf</i>
3	Dawud bin Abi Hind	<i>Tsiqah</i>
4	Ali bin Asim	<i>Fiihi Ikhtilaf</i>
5	Fadl bin Imran al-A'raj	<i>Tsiqah</i>
6	Musa bin Khakan	<i>Majhul</i>
7	Muhammad bin Musa al-Hulwani Abu Ja'far	<i>Tsiqah</i>
8	Abu Muhammad Yahya bin Mansur al-Qadhi	<i>Tsiqah</i>
9	Abu Bakar Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Raja' al-Adib	<i>Majhul</i>

Based on Table 1 regarding the analysis of the hadith *sanad*, most of the narrators in this *sanad* have various credibility. Some scholars, such as Dawud bin Abi Hind and Ibn Abbas, were considered *tsiqah* (trusted) by the majority of scholars, while Ali bin 'Asim was criticized for his weakness in memorization. In addition, there are some narrators whose status is unclear or complete information about the year of their birth and death is not found, such as Musa bin Khakan, which makes it difficult to make a comprehensive assessment of the connection of the *sanad*. Therefore, although the *sanad* of this hadith as a whole seems to be connected, the weakness of some narrators and the absence of information about others make this hadith *dhaif* (weak). However, the meaning of this hadith can still be considered if it is supported by *sanad* or other stronger narration.

The hadith studied emphasizes the significance of key terms that reflect Islamic social, cultural, and value contexts, such as أُسَارَى (prisoner) and فِدَاءٌ (ransom), which illustrate the humane and just handling of captives through contributions like literacy education,

highlighting knowledge as a tool for liberation. The word يُعَلِّمُوا (to teach) underscores active knowledge transfer, emphasizing education as a transformative force for individuals and society, with literacy, symbolized by الْكِتَابَةَ (writing), identified as a cornerstone of Islamic civilization. By linking literacy to societal progress and resolving conflicts through noble values, the hadith illustrates how education fosters physical, social, and spiritual liberation.

Asbabul wurud from this hadith is explained in the book Nihayah Al-Ijaz Fi Sirah Sakin Al-Hijaz by Imam Rifa'ah Al-Tahtawi. After the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (saw) brought about 70 prisoners of war from the infidels of the Quraish. Among them was Ibn Abbas, who at that time had not embraced Islam. However, he was not subject to ransom, which later sparked debate among the companions because it was considered unfair, considering that other captives were obliged to pay a ransom of 40 uqiyah. For prisoners who were unable to redeem themselves with wealth, the Prophet (saw) established an alternative policy in the form of educational contributions, namely teaching reading and writing skills to the children of the Ansar companions. This policy reflects the Prophet's attention to education as well as providing solutions for prisoners who cannot afford to pay the ransom financially.

Information about prisoners during the Battle of Badr is also explained in the Qur'an Surah Al-Anfal which reads:

مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيِّ أَنْ يُكُونَ لَهُ أُسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُفْجِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ تُرِيدُونَ عَرَصَ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

It means: "*It is not appropriate for a Prophet to have captives before he can incapacitate his enemies on earth. You want worldly possessions while Allah wants the hereafter (for you). And Allah is the Mighty and the Wise.*" (Q.S. Al-Anfal: []: 67)

The verse affirms the principle that decisions regarding prisoners of war should be oriented towards the establishment of religion and the benefits of the hereafter, not just the pursuit of worldly gains. This verse criticizes worldly motivations in taking the ransom of property, while the hadith shows how the Prophet (saw) implemented a wise and humanist policy, namely making education a form of ransom for the prisoners of the Badr War. By teaching writing to the children of Anshar, the Prophet (saw) prioritized the long-term benefits of building a Muslim community through education, in line with the wise and strategic principles that were emphasized.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir on QS. Al-Anfal: 67 provides an important perspective in understanding the Prophet's policy towards prisoners of the Badr War, especially regarding choices and policies in the management of prisoners of war. This verse confirms that a Prophet should not take prisoners before completely incapacitating the enemy on the battlefield (Syakir, 2012). The criticism in this verse is directed at the tendency of the Companions to prioritize worldly gains, such as taking the ransom of wealth, while Allah wants the benefits of the hereafter in the form of the establishment of the Islamic religion firmly.

According to Ibn Katsir, the policy of taking ransoms from the prisoners of Badr was based on a pre-existing divine provision in Umm al-Kitab (Lauh Mahfuzh). Ibn Abbas explained that if there was no such provision, the companions who took the ransom would be severely punished. However, Allah legalized ghanimah (spoils of war) and ransom as a form of mercy to this people, different from the previous people. The Prophet (PBUH), in

some narrations as quoted from Imam Abu Dawud, made the ransom amount as 400 dirhams per prisoner, or other forms of contribution such as teaching literacy to the children of the Ansar.

In addition, Ibn Katsir emphasized that the law against prisoners of war gives flexibility to Muslim leaders. Leaders can choose to kill, demand material ransoms, exchange for Muslim captives, or enslave captives. In the context of the Badr War, the Prophet (saw) chose a wise approach by integrating education as a form of ransom, as reflected in the hadith you attach (Aras& Solihin, 2022). The Prophet (saw) took the teaching of reading and writing as a ransom to show an effort to not only meet the practical needs of the ummah but also to build a more civilized society. This approach is not only strategic but also aligned with Islam's mission in fighting for social justice and education. Ibn Katsir said that the legalization of ghanimah and the flexibility of captive management are a form of privilege of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) that was not given to the previous people. The Prophet (saw) took advantage of this privilege while still considering the long-term benefits, namely the moral and intellectual development of the people.

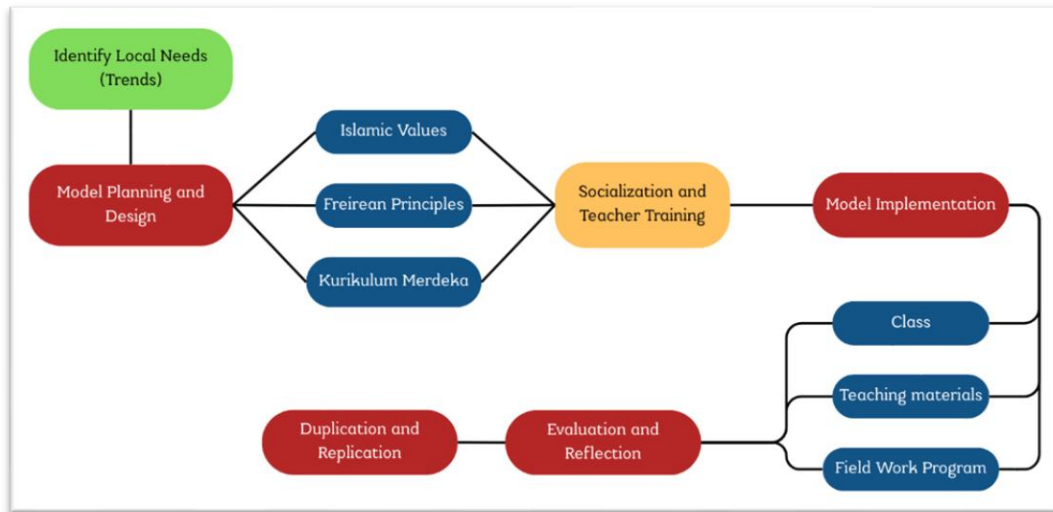
The conditions for the release of prisoners of the Battle of Badr, where captives unable to pay a ransom could instead teach literacy to the children of the Ansar, highlight the Prophet's (saw) emphasis on education as a tool for empowerment and building a just society. While previous studies broadly explored Islamic education as a means of liberation, this research bridges Freire's principles of conscientization and dialogue with Islamic values, contextualizing the hadith as a transformative educational model that fills theoretical gaps with a practical approach (Baharudin, 2021b). By integrating education into social justice, the policy underscores that every individual, including prisoners of war, can contribute to society in meaningful ways, reinforcing the moral priority of intellectual and societal advancement over material gains, as reflected in QS. Al-Anfal: 67 (Arum, 2018).

### **Initial Application of the Model: Case Study at SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya**

SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya is a vocational education institution that is oriented towards preparing students to be ready to enter the world of work and social life directly. The background of the selection of this school as the location of the research is based on the typical characteristics of vocational schools which have a strong connection with the social and industrial context. Therefore, the application of a transformative educational model based on Islamic values and Paulo Freire's principles is very relevant to be developed in this school, since education in vocational schools includes not only technical mastery, but also the formation of social awareness and reflective abilities of students (Pribadi, 2019).

The program developed in this study consists of three main components: curriculum development, teaching methods, and teaching materials. All three are designed to be contextual, adaptive to local needs, and reflect Freirean principles of conscientization, dialogue, and humanization combined with Islamic values such as justice, trust, and social responsibility.

The development process begins with the identification of local needs, both in terms of students, the surrounding community, and the demands of the industrial world. The findings from this stage are then used to develop responsive learning methods and teaching materials. Islamic values and Freirean principles are the main framework for designing a more participatory and reflective approach.



**Figure 1.** Transformative Education Program Planning Preparation Chart

Based on Figure 1, the main strength of this learning model lies in its conformity with the basic principles of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes differentiated learning, real-context based projects, and freedom of learning. The preparation of teaching materials in this model is carried out flexibly, allowing teachers to adapt the content and learning methods to the characteristics, abilities, and backgrounds of the students. Thus, this approach not only serves as a means of knowledge transfer, but also encourages students' active participation as critical, reflective learning subjects and is directly connected to their social reality.

This model is applied through a collaborative approach between teachers and students. Teachers are encouraged to act as facilitators, while students are actively involved in the learning process through discussions, exploration of local phenomena, and reflection on their personal and social experiences. Responses from teachers showed significant initial impact. A Biology teacher said that this model helped her simplify teaching materials to suit the needs of students who were left behind in lessons:

*"I sometimes feel sorry for students who are left behind in their learning materials. This model at least helps me to arrange teaching materials to be tailored to the learning needs of students."*

However, some challenges also arise. A History teacher revealed that even though students are becoming more interactive, a high administrative burden can be an obstacle to the continuity of this model:

*"When teaching in class, students are more interactive than lecture methods. But the burden of teacher administration will certainly be an obstacle. I am afraid that this program cannot be continued due to administrative demands."*

From the student side, the response was very positive. They find learning to be more enjoyable and relevant to their lives. A student with the initials S said:

*"Learning is exciting, we are invited to give our opinions about the surrounding phenomena. Teachers are also open if asked about material outside of books, for example, I asked about how to help manage a parent's stall to the Mathematics teacher, and he gave a very helpful response."*

The initial implementation of this model at SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya shows great potential to develop religious education that is not only spiritual but also transformative and responsive to students' social realities. With a contextual and value-based approach, this program shows how vocational education can also be a space for the formation of critical awareness and social empowerment, as emphasized by Paulo Freire and Islamic values.

The findings of this study enrich the theory of Islamic education by showing that the principles of social justice and empowerment contained in the hadith can be operationalized through Freire's critical education approach. Theoretically, these results reinforce Baharudin (2021) idea of Islamic education that liberates, but goes beyond the conceptual framework by presenting real implementation in vocational schools. This research is also in line with Helmawati et al. (2024) who emphasize the importance of religious moderation, but adds a practical dimension in the form of a dialogical curriculum that increases tolerance as well as social awareness. In terms of praxis aspects, the results of this study support the findings of Mehta & Pandya (2015) that transformative education is effective in increasing student active participation and learning relevance, and confirms Budnyk et al. (2023) notion of the role of religious education in the formation of social responsibility. Thus, the novelty of this research lies in the applicative integration between critical education theory and Islamic values in the context of vocational education, which not only strengthens the theoretical foundation, but also offers a concrete model for answering the challenges of social justice in the modern era.

## Discussion

### The Integration of Paulo Freire's Thought and Islamic Values in the Development of Transformative Education

#### The Harmony of Freire and Islamic Values

##### a. Conscientization and *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*

In Paulo Freire's theory of critical education, the concept of conscientization is a key element. He emphasized the importance of forming individuals who are aware of structural injustices and are able to reflect on their social reality to then take action for change. This concept bears a deep resemblance to the principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in Islam, which also aims to build moral and social awareness to uphold goodness and reject injustice (Darnela, 2021).

In the context of the hadith of the liberation of prisoners of the Badr War, this practice is not just an act of compassion, but a tangible manifestation of the awareness that every individual, even a prisoner, has the potential for social contribution. The Prophet (saw) placed education as a condition of their liberation, giving them an active role in the development of society. This policy reflects that Islam encourages a collective awareness of justice and common good, which is in line with Freire's vision of education as a tool of liberation and social change.

##### b. Principles of Dialogue and Wisdom

Freire places dialogue at the heart of the liberating educational process, in which the relationship between teacher and pupil is not hierarchical, but equal. This process involves the exchange of ideas, understanding the social context, and the collective creation of meaning. In Islam, this concept is in line with the values of deliberation (deliberative discussion) and wisdom (wisdom in delivery).

The policy of the Prophet (saw) in making education a ransom for prisoners reflects the spirit of this dialogue. Although his form of teaching may not have been perfectly dialogical, his decision to appoint captives as teachers shows a recognition of their potential as subjects, rather than passive objects. In practice, the interaction between students and teachers at that time began to show a critical awareness, as shown by the protests of Anshar children against teacher violence. It is the seeds of dialogue and resistance to authoritarian relations that Freire emphasizes (Fakhrudin& Awang, 2020).

### **Liberation-Based Education Model in an Islamic Perspective**

#### **a. Hadith on the Liberation of Badr Prisoners of War as the Foundation of Educational Justice**

The hadith about the liberation of prisoners of the Badr War contains strong humanizing values. The Prophet (saw) replaced material ransom with educational contributions by assigning literacy teaching to the children of the Anshar. This policy shows that Islam not only humanizes the oppressed, but also opens up space for them to actively contribute (Ahmad& Wan Abdullah, 2023). In the tradition of war at that time, captives were often treated as objects or commodities. However, in Islam, they are given the opportunity to play a role in the development of society through education, strengthening Islam's position as a religion that sides with the values of social justice and empowerment.

This is in line with the Freirean value that education should be a means of humanization—fostering dignity, responsibility, and equality. The Prophet (saw) not only emphasized the importance of knowledge, but also that education is a shared right and responsibility.

#### **b. Education as a Means of Empowerment and Humanization**

Although the teaching process of captives at that time still tended to be banking education style, with a focus on memorization and teacher domination, there were interesting dynamics that indicated a transformation process. For example, an Ansar child's protest against captive violence illustrates the emergence of critical awareness, an indication of conscientization. This indicates that even within a limited socio-historical structure, education can still be a space of resistance to inhumane practices (Burman, 2024; Junohet al., 2023).

Furthermore, the actions of captives who teach literacy demonstrate Freire's praxis practice: a combination of reflection and action. Captives who were previously a symbol of powerlessness are instead empowered through the role of educators. The literacy they teach is an important foundation for building a civilized Muslim society that is ready to face the challenges of the times (Asmendriet al., 2024).

The views of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun also reinforce the findings of this research. Al-Ghazali emphasized that the goal of education is not to pursue material position or gain, but to get closer to Allah and maintain the purity of the student's nature (Al-Ghazali, 2020). This orientation is aligned with a transformative model that places learning as a means of shaping students' moral and social awareness. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun emphasized the importance of teaching methods that are gradual, according to students' abilities, and reject harsh and authoritarian approaches that actually damage the soul and weaken learning motivation (Khaldun, 2001). This is in line with the findings at SMK Syahida, where teachers play the role of facilitators who support students' active participation through dialogue and reflection. Thus, this study shows the continuity between Freire's theory of critical education and the treasures of classical Islamic thought, in particular Al-Ghazali's idea of the purpose of spiritual education and Ibn Khaldun's idea of humanist and contextual teaching methods (Yugo et al., 2024).

Thus, the integration of Islamic values and Freire's thought resulted in a liberation-based educational model that not only targeted the transfer of knowledge, but also social transformation. Education in Islam is not just a cognitive activity, but a means to create justice, empower the weak, and form a dignified society (Lee, 2024).

## **The Relevance of Transformative Education in the Context of Contemporary Islamic Education Policy**

### **Global Challenges and Educational Inequality**

Globalization has had a significant impact on the education system in various countries, including Indonesia. Although access to information and technology is increasingly open, inequality in education is increasingly visible, especially in suburban areas and vocational schools such as vocational schools. In underdeveloped areas, geographical challenges, limited infrastructure, and shortage of educators are still serious obstacles in realizing equitable and quality education.

This condition underscores the need for an educational model that is responsive to local social contexts and values, rather than just imitating urban or international education standards. In this case, the synthesis between the concept of humanization in the hadith of the Badr War prisoners and the theory of Paulo Freire offers an alternative approach: education as a tool of empowerment rooted in local realities, and not just a process of knowledge transfer (Downey, 2023). This model encourages active participation of students to recognize and respond to challenges in their environment.

For example, the Prophet's policy of replacing material ransom with educational contributions shows that education must be inclusive and based on the individual's ability to contribute socially (Azhar et al., 2017). In the current context, a similar approach can be applied through a community contribution-based scholarship model, in which students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds participate in social service as part of the educational process (McIntosh et al., 2022; Talbani, 1996).

### **Conformity with National and Islamic Education Policies**

The social justice-based education model developed in this study has a strong compatibility with Indonesia's national education policy, especially the principles of Merdeka Belajar and the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The curriculum emphasizes flexibility, project-based learning, and character development, which is in line with the Freirean spirit of encouraging students to be active and reflective subjects in the educational process.

The principles of dialogue and participation in this model also support the Religious Moderation program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which emphasizes the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and justice in religious education practices. In addition, this approach can be combined with Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP) by incentivizing recipient students to contribute to meaningful social activities, such as teaching literacy in communities or training basic skills in informal schools (Suprpto & Sumarni, 2022; Syahrir et al., 2024).

This model is also relevant to the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Culture in encouraging character education and the development of local potential. By emphasizing Islamic values such as justice and social responsibility, this approach can be used as a guideline in the development of religious curricula in madrasas, vocational schools, and religious universities.

### **The Role of Islamic Education as Social Transformation**

Islamic religious education not only serves to transfer spiritual or dogmatic values, but also has great potential as a force for social transformation. By using the hadith of the captive prisoners of the Battle of Badr as a conceptual basis, it is clear that education in Islam places the values of humanization, dialogue, and empowerment as the main pillars (Ainissyifa et al., 2024).

Within this framework, students are not only prepared to become ritually obedient individuals, but also social justice agents who are aware of inequality in their environment and have the capacity to provide solutions. Such religious education becomes more relevant to the needs of the times and opens up space for active, progressive, and liberating religiosity.

Freire calls this process conscientization, a form of critical awareness that encourages individuals to recognize and address inequality. If applied in Islamic education, religious learning is no longer just normative, but becomes a tool for social and cultural reconstruction, creating a generation of Muslims who think critically, solutively, and are oriented towards the common good (Ha-DiMuzio et al., 2025). In line with this, Budnyk et al. (2023) show how Freire's critical pedagogy has proven relevant in the context of modern rural schools, particularly in addressing discrimination, bullying, and educational access gaps. The research confirms that critical literacy-based approaches and participatory dialogue can strengthen equal rights, inclusion, and social empowerment. These findings reinforce the argument that Islamic education, when oriented towards transformative values, can be an important instrument in building social equality and justice in society, especially in areas vulnerable to marginalization (Demirel Ucan & Wright, 2019).

### **Recommendations for Model Implementation in Formal Religious Education**

In order for this model to be adopted more widely, implementation recommendations in formal religious education institutions need to be considered strategically. First, this model has high potential to be replicated in madrasas and Islamic boarding schools, especially those that have begun to adopt a project-based curriculum approach or community service. The integration of Islamic values and the principles of social transformation is very suitable to be applied in this context.

Second, the success of this model is highly dependent on the capacity of teachers as facilitators of dialogical learning. Therefore, teacher training based on transformative values is urgently needed. This training not only focuses on teaching methodology, but also on the formation of teachers' perspectives on students as independent, aware, and able to contribute.

Third, in terms of policy, curriculum support and evaluation systems based on social context need to be strengthened. The curriculum should open up space for flexibility for contextual approaches and social projects, while evaluations focus not only on cognitive, but also on character growth, social awareness, and student community contributions. In this context, Mehta & Pandya (2015) findings on the practice of pseudo-democracy in the Indian education system are of note: although education policies often carry democratic jargon, authoritarian practices remain predominant, thus hindering true participation. The same can also be found in the education system in Indonesia, especially in formal institutions that are still burdened with administrative demands. Therefore, the implementation of transformative models based on Islamic values and critical pedagogy needs to be accompanied by policy reforms that emphasize substantive democracy in education, not just symbolic (Falaqi et al., 2025).

The synthesis between Islamic values in hadith and Freire's critical education approach offers a model of social justice-based education that is not only conceptual, but also applicable in the Indonesian context (Memon, 2021; Saifuddin, 2023). This model not only responds to the challenges of global educational inequality, but is also relevant to national policies and the transformative spirit of Islamic education. With the support of teacher training, adaptive policies, and a focus on social empowerment, this model has the potential to create a more equitable, inclusive, and humane education.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that Paulo Freire's educational principles, particularly conscientization, humanization, and dialogue, demonstrate strong conceptual and practical relevance to the values of social justice in Islam, as reflected in the Prophet's policy regarding the prisoners of the Battle of Badr. This integration provides a robust theoretical foundation for developing a transformative and contextual model of Islamic education. The research specifically fulfils its primary objective of exploring the integration between critical pedagogy and Islamic values through an applicative approach in formal education.

The findings reinforce existing scholarship that identifies Islamic education as a tool of liberation (Baharudin, 2021), while also contributing new insights through a concrete case study at SMK Syahida Tasikmalaya. Initial implementation of the model showed promising results: students became more academically engaged and actively participated in neighborhood literacy programs, social entrepreneurship, and community service initiatives benefiting marginalized groups. These outcomes align with Mehta & Pandya (2015), who highlight the urgency of critical pedagogy in countering authoritarian tendencies, as well as Budnyk et al. (2023), who emphasize its role in empowering rural schools and vulnerable communities.

Looking forward, this study opens pathways for further empirical research, particularly through broader implementation and evaluation of the model's impact on students' critical consciousness and civic participation. Policy implications include embedding project-based religious education in madrasas, vocational schools, and pesantren; strengthening teacher training rooted in critical pedagogy; and establishing scholarship schemes tied to social contributions. Such measures are especially relevant for Islamic contexts and marginalized communities, where inclusive and justice-oriented educational policies are urgently needed. Nevertheless, the study has notable limitations. Its reliance on theoretical and qualitative approaches limits the ability to measure long-term or quantitative impacts of the model. Additionally, local socio-cultural and policy dynamics that may affect implementation have not been examined in depth. Future studies should therefore investigate the feasibility, sustainability, and adaptability of this integrative framework across diverse institutional and cultural settings.

Overall, this research offers a significant contribution to both Islamic education and critical pedagogy by presenting an integrative framework that remains underexplored. By bridging Islamic values with Freire's principles, the study not only expands the discourse on social justice education but also enriches the global conversation on humanistic, transformative, and inclusive education in the modern era.

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