

Critical Thinking Education in Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Thought and its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education

Widia. W^{1*}
¹Islamic Religious Education Study Program State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Widia. W E-mail: widyaamandasari3@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRAK
Volume: 4 ISSN: 2963-5489 KEYWORDS CriticalThinking; Jamaluddin Al-Afghani; Islamic Education; Educational Reform; Taqlid; Active Learning; Islamic Rationality	This research examines the concept of critical thinking in Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's (1838-1897) educational thought and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Al-Afghani criticized the traditional educational system that only emphasized memorization without understanding and the attitude of taqlid that caused intellectual stagnation among Muslims. The research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. The findings indicate that Al-Afghani's concept of critical thinking encompasses: (1) rejection of taqlid and passive learning, (2) development of rational analytical abilities, (3) integration of reason with revelation, (4) application of knowledge in solving real problems, and (5) critical attitude toward modern science. This concept is relevant to 21st-century education that demands Higher Order Thinking Skills, serves as a solution to the critical literacy crisis, and addresses the challenges of disinformation in the digital era. The implication is the necessity for transformation of learning methods from teacher-centered to student-centered approaches that encourage inquiry, critical discussion, and problem-based learning in contemporary Islamic education.

1. Introduction

The decline of Islamic civilization in the 19th century was marked by intellectual stagnation, colonialism, and a stagnant educational system. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897) emerged as a reformist figure who diagnosed the root causes of Muslim decline: fatalistic attitudes, blind taqlid, and an educational system that only emphasized memorization without critical understanding.

Al-Afghani called upon Muslims to return to the pure teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, oppose colonization, and study modern sciences without losing Islamic identity. However, most fundamental was his call to develop critical thinking abilities as a prerequisite for the revival of the ummah (Hawi, 2017, p. 11).

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, which still faces the dominance of memorization methods and passive learning, Al-Afghani's concept of critical thinking becomes highly relevant. Twenty-first-century education demands higher-order thinking skills to face global complexity, disinformation challenges, and rapid technological development (Ofiani, 2024, p. 15).

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This research aims to examine in depth the concept of critical thinking in Jamaluddin Al- Afghani's educational thought and analyze its relevance to the development of contemporary Islamic education that is responsive to the demands of the times.

2. Literature review

Hawi (2017, pp. 9-23) examines Al-Afghani's thought as a pioneer of the modern Islamic reform movement, emphasizing his role in awakening the critical consciousness of the ummah. Sirait (2020, p. 170) analyzes how Al-Afghani's intellectual journey from Afghanistan, India, Egypt, to Turkey shaped his critical perspective on traditional educational systems.

Anugrah (2023, p. 240) studies Islamic educational reform according to Al-Afghani with a focus on the rejection of taqlid and the importance of developing rational thinking abilities. Ofiani (2024, pp. 15-19) analyzes the relevance of Al-Afghani's educational thought in the contemporary context, particularly regarding the integration of critical thinking abilities with Islamic spiritual values.

Bistara (2021, pp. 73-75) discusses Al-Afghani's critique of materialism in his work "Al-Raad ala ad-Dahriyyin," demonstrating how he used rational argumentation to defend Islam. Ismail (2019, p. 172) emphasizes Al-Afghani's rhetorical ability in mobilizing masses through substantive logic and strong argumentation.

These studies have not specifically focused on Al-Afghani's concept of critical thinking as the core of his educational thought. This research attempts to fill that gap by comprehensively analyzing the dimensions of critical thinking in Al-Afghani's thought and its implications for contemporary Islamic education.

3. Methodology

This research employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. Data were collected through documentary study of primary and secondary sources on Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's educational thought. The analysis technique uses content analysis with stages: (1) data collection from various literature, (2) classification based on critical thinking themes, (3) in-depth analysis of critical thinking concepts, and (4) synthesis of its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing various literature from different perspectives.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Historical Context: The Intellectual Decline of Muslims

Al-Afghani observed that the decline of Muslims was caused by misunderstanding of the teachings of qada and qadar, which transformed into fatalism, making the ummah passive and non- proactive. The Islamic educational system at that time was dominated by methods of memorizing classical texts without developing understanding and thinking abilities. Blind taqlid toward the opinions of previous scholars without understanding their context and methodology caused intellectual stagnation (Anugrah, 2023, p. 240).

Al-Afghani argued that Islamic teachings inherently encourage the use of reason and are not in conflict with science. He believed that the renewal of the educational system was key to the revival of Muslims, with primary focus on developing critical thinking abilities as the foundation of learning.

4.2 Five Dimensions of Critical Thinking in Al-Afghani's Thought

a. Rejection of Taqlid and Passive Learning

Al-Afghani firmly rejected taqlid (blind following without understanding) and an educational system that only emphasized memorization. According to him, education that focuses on memorization without understanding would not help the younger generation face the challenges of their times. True education must train thinking abilities and practical skills so that students can understand material deeply and apply it in real life (Ofiani, 2024, p. 17).

Al-Afghani's criticism of taqlid does not mean rejecting the intellectual heritage of Islam, but rather encouraging the ummah to understand the methodology and context of previous scholars' thinking, then develop new thoughts appropriate to the contemporary context without abandoning the basic principles of Islam.

b. Development of Rational Analytical Abilities

Al-Afghani emphasized the importance of developing critical and rational thinking. Education must help individuals understand and apply knowledge appropriately, so they can make wise decisions in daily life (Anugrah, 2023, p. 240). This includes the ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, distinguish fact from opinion, and draw conclusions based on rational evidence.

This concept demands the transformation of the teacher's role from merely a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator who encourages students to question, analyze, and construct their own understanding. Education must not stop at the level of knowing, but must reach the levels of understanding and applying.

c. Integration of Reason with Revelation in Learning

Al-Afghani's important contribution is the concept of harmony between reason and revelation. He rejected the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge, emphasizing that Islam encourages the use of reason to understand religious teachings. The Qur'an contains many verses that invite humans to think (tafakkur), reflect (tadabbur), and use reason (ta'aqqul). Authentic Islamic education must develop critical thinking abilities as an implementation of religious commands themselves (Ofiani, 2024, p. 15).

This integration creates a distinctive Islamic education model: critical thinking does not mean questioning the truth of revelation, but rather using reason to understand revelation more deeply and apply it in the appropriate context.

d. Application of Knowledge in Solving Real Problems

Al-Afghani did not only emphasize the theoretical aspects of critical thinking, but also its practical dimensions. Education must produce graduates who can make real contributions to societal development. Critical thinking abilities must be trained through solving concrete problems, not just theoretical discussions (Ofiani, 2024, p. 17).

This approach is very similar to contemporary problem-based learning methods. Students are confronted with situations that challenge them to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions based on mature consideration. Learning must be contextual and relevant to the real issues faced by the ummah.

e. Critical Attitude Toward Modern Science

Al-Afghani encouraged Muslims to study modern science, especially Western science and technology. However, he emphasized that this learning must be done with a critical attitude, not accepting everything from the West uncritically. Muslims must be able to discern what is compatible with Islamic values and what contradicts them (Anugrah, 2023, p. 240).

Education must train students to critique and evaluate scientific theories from an Islamic perspective, and develop knowledge that does not contradict Islamic values. This requires high-level critical thinking abilities to avoid being trapped in extreme attitudes: totally rejecting modern science or accepting it wholesale without filtering.

4.3 Relevance of Al-Afghani's Critical Thinking Concept to Contemporary Islamic Education

a. Addressing 21st Century Skills Demands

Al-Afghani's emphasis on critical thinking is highly compatible with 21st-century skills demands that emphasize Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). In the context of the 4Cs (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication), Al-Afghani's concept of critical thinking becomes fundamental. The ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make decisions based on rational considerations are essential competencies for contemporary Islamic education graduates (Ofiani, 2024, p. 15).

b. Solution to the Critical Literacy Crisis in Islamic Education

Islamic educational systems still face the dominance of memorization methods and passive learning. Al-Afghani's criticism of the memorization system is relevant to current conditions that tend to be teacher-centered and emphasize memorization of classical texts without developing analysis. The concept of critical thinking can transform learning from passive-receptive to active-constructive (Ofiani, 2024, p. 17).

c. Response to Disinformation Challenges in the Digital Era

In the digital era, critical thinking abilities are crucial for filtering information and distinguishing facts from hoaxes. Al-Afghani's concept regarding the importance of developing information analysis and evaluation abilities is highly relevant. His emphasis on a critical attitude toward all information teaches that Islamic education must train students to verify information before accepting or disseminating it, in accordance with the teaching of tabayyun in the Qur'an.

d. Development of Contemporary Ijtihad

Al-Afghani's rejection of taqlid has important implications for the development of contemporary ijtihad. Muslims need scholars and intellectuals capable of performing ijtihad to address contemporary issues. Critical thinking abilities become an important prerequisite for developing contemporary fiqh that is responsive to the times' developments without abandoning the basic principles of Islam.

4.4 Implementation in Islamic Educational Practice

Implementation of Al-Afghani's critical thinking concept in contemporary Islamic education requires: (1) Teacher training in inquiry-based learning methods, problem-based learning, and critical discussion; (2) Curriculum development that reduces the burden of memorization and increases in-depth analytical activities; (3) Evaluation systems that measure higher-order thinking abilities, not just memory capacity; (4) Creation of an academic culture that values critical questioning and intellectual ijtihad; (5) Use of technology to support interactive and collaborative learning (Ofiani, 2024, p. 19).

5. Conclusion

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's concept of critical thinking constitutes the core of Islamic educational reform thought, encompassing five dimensions: rejection of taqlid and passive learning, development of rational analytical abilities, integration of reason with revelation, application of knowledge in solving real problems, and critical attitude toward modern science. This concept is highly relevant to contemporary Islamic education in addressing 21st-century skills demands, overcoming the critical literacy crisis, responding to disinformation challenges, and developing contemporary ijtihad.

Implementation of this concept requires fundamental transformation: from teacher-centered to student-centered, from memorization to critical understanding, from passive to active-constructive learning. Thus, Islamic education can produce

a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also possesses critical, analytical, and creative thinking abilities to face the complexities of modern life while remaining firmly grounded in Islamic values.

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