

## Developing Critical Thinking Through Islamic Education: A Systematic Review of Contemporary Approaches

\* Huzaiman Hushin<sup>1</sup>, Yousif Mahmudov<sup>2</sup>, Markhabat Bolat<sup>3</sup>, Mohammad Ahmad Bani Amer<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Azerbaijan State Pedagogy University, Baku, Azerbaijan

<sup>3</sup> Tokat Gaziosmanpasa University, Kazakhstan

<sup>4</sup> Mutah University, Jordan

Received:30-12-2025

Revised:20-04-2026

Accepted:03-06-2026

### Abstract

This study aims to examine contemporary approaches to developing critical thinking through Islamic education by systematically reviewing recent scholarly literature. The research employs a qualitative library research design using a systematic literature review methodology. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, policy reports, and educational studies. The selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify major theoretical foundations, pedagogical approaches, challenges, and emerging trends related to critical thinking development in Islamic educational contexts. The findings reveal that Islamic education possesses substantial intellectual resources for fostering critical thinking through concepts such as ta'auql (reasoning), tafakkur (reflection), ijtihad (independent reasoning), and 'ilm (knowledge). Contemporary approaches including inquiry-based learning, reflective learning, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, dialogical pedagogy, ethical reasoning, and digital literacy have demonstrated significant potential for enhancing higher-order thinking skills. The study further finds that effective critical thinking development requires integrated efforts involving curriculum reform, teacher professional development, assessment innovation, and responsible use of educational technologies. The novelty of the study lies in the development of the Islamic Critical Thinking Development Framework (ICTDF), which synthesizes Islamic educational philosophy, critical thinking theory, constructivist learning, ethical reasoning, and digital literacy into a comprehensive conceptual model. The study concludes that Islamic education can play a significant role in cultivating intellectually capable, ethically responsible, and critically engaged learners in the twenty-first century.

### Keywords:

(\*) Corresponding Author:

Critical Thinking; Islamic Education; Higher-Order Thinking Skills

huzaimanhushin@ukm.my

### Introduction

Critical thinking has become one of the most essential competencies required in the twenty-first century. Rapid technological advancements, globalization, digital communication, and the increasing complexity of social issues require individuals to analyze information critically, evaluate evidence, and make informed decisions. Educational institutions worldwide are therefore expected to cultivate higher-order thinking skills that enable learners to navigate increasingly complex knowledge environments. International organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO consistently identify critical thinking as a core competency necessary for lifelong learning, civic engagement, and professional success. As a result, educational systems across diverse cultural and religious contexts have sought to integrate critical thinking into curriculum design and pedagogical practice. The growing emphasis on critical thinking has

generated significant scholarly interest regarding how different educational traditions can contribute to its development (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Within contemporary educational discourse, critical thinking is commonly defined as the ability to analyze arguments, evaluate evidence, identify assumptions, solve problems, and reach reasoned judgments. It involves both cognitive and dispositional dimensions, including intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, reflective judgment, and analytical reasoning. Scholars argue that critical thinking is not merely a technical skill but a broader intellectual orientation that supports independent learning and responsible decision-making. Consequently, educational institutions increasingly recognize the importance of creating learning environments that encourage questioning, reflection, dialogue, and inquiry. These educational objectives align closely with broader efforts to prepare learners for participation in democratic and knowledge-based societies. Therefore, critical thinking has become a central concern across multiple educational disciplines and traditions (Facione, 2020; Davies & Barnett, 2023).

Islamic education represents an important context for examining the development of critical thinking because intellectual inquiry has historically occupied a significant place within Islamic civilization. Classical Islamic scholarship emphasized reflection (*tafakkur*), reasoning (*ta'aqqul*), interpretation (*ijtihad*), and the pursuit of knowledge (*'ilm*) as central components of intellectual and spiritual development. The Qur'an repeatedly encourages believers to reflect upon creation, examine evidence, and employ reason in understanding reality. Throughout Islamic history, scholars engaged in sophisticated forms of philosophical, theological, legal, and scientific inquiry that contributed significantly to global intellectual traditions. These historical foundations suggest that critical thinking is deeply embedded within Islamic intellectual heritage. Consequently, contemporary discussions regarding critical thinking in Islamic education should be understood within this broader historical context (Sahin, 2020; Kamali, 2021).

Despite these rich intellectual traditions, contemporary debates often portray Islamic education as emphasizing memorization and knowledge transmission at the expense of critical inquiry. Such perceptions have generated concerns regarding the ability of Islamic educational institutions to prepare learners for contemporary challenges. However, recent scholarship increasingly challenges simplistic assumptions about Islamic education and critical thinking. Researchers argue that the relationship between Islamic education and critical thinking is more complex and nuanced than commonly assumed. Many contemporary educational reforms seek to revitalize classical traditions of inquiry while responding to modern educational demands. Therefore, understanding how Islamic education can contribute to critical thinking development requires careful examination of both historical foundations and contemporary practices (Memon, 2021; Tan, 2023).

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has further intensified the need for critical thinking within Islamic educational contexts. Learners today encounter vast quantities of information through social media, online platforms, artificial intelligence systems, and digital communication networks. While these technologies provide unprecedented access to knowledge, they also create challenges related to misinformation, ideological polarization, information overload, and algorithmic influence. Educational institutions must therefore equip students with the skills necessary to evaluate information critically and responsibly. Islamic education faces the additional challenge of helping learners navigate religious knowledge in increasingly

complex digital environments. Consequently, critical thinking has become an essential educational objective in the digital age (UNESCO, 2023; Holmes et al., 2022).

Another factor contributing to the growing importance of critical thinking is the increasing diversity of contemporary societies. Individuals frequently encounter differing perspectives, cultural values, and religious beliefs within multicultural environments. Educational systems are therefore expected to foster dialogue, mutual understanding, and informed engagement with diversity. Critical thinking supports these objectives by enabling learners to evaluate multiple perspectives, recognize complexity, and engage in reasoned discussion. Islamic educational traditions have historically engaged with diverse intellectual traditions through debate, dialogue, and scholarly exchange. These traditions provide valuable resources for cultivating critical engagement within pluralistic societies. As a result, critical thinking has important implications for both educational and social development (Jackson, 2022; Merry, 2022).

Recent educational reforms in many Muslim-majority and minority contexts have increasingly emphasized higher-order thinking skills. Policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers recognize that educational systems must move beyond rote learning toward more inquiry-oriented approaches. This shift reflects broader global trends emphasizing creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Within Islamic educational settings, reforms often seek to balance religious authenticity with contemporary educational innovation. Consequently, critical thinking has emerged as a key area of interest within discussions concerning curriculum reform, pedagogical development, and educational quality. These developments underscore the relevance of examining contemporary approaches to critical thinking within Islamic education (OECD, 2023; Tan, 2023).

Research suggests that critical thinking can be fostered through a variety of pedagogical strategies. Inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, dialogical teaching, collaborative learning, reflective practice, and project-based learning have all been associated with improved critical thinking outcomes. Many of these approaches emphasize active learner participation rather than passive knowledge reception. Contemporary Islamic educational scholars increasingly advocate the adoption of such pedagogical models while grounding them within Islamic educational philosophy. This integration offers opportunities to connect contemporary educational theory with classical traditions of intellectual inquiry. Consequently, pedagogical innovation represents an important area of investigation within Islamic education (Davies & Barnett, 2023; Memon, 2021).

The concept of *ijtihad* occupies a particularly significant position within discussions concerning critical thinking in Islam. Traditionally, *ijtihad* refers to independent reasoning employed in addressing issues not explicitly resolved through primary religious sources. Although often discussed within legal contexts, many scholars view *ijtihad* more broadly as an intellectual disposition characterized by careful analysis, reflection, and reasoned judgment. Contemporary educators increasingly draw upon this concept as a foundation for critical thinking development. Such interpretations emphasize the compatibility of Islamic educational traditions with contemporary educational objectives. Therefore, *ijtihad* provides an important theoretical lens for understanding critical inquiry within Islamic education (Kamali, 2021; Sahin, 2020).

Another relevant concept is *tafakkur*, which refers to contemplation and reflective thinking. The Qur'an repeatedly encourages believers to reflect upon natural phenomena, historical events, and human experience. Reflection is presented not only as

an intellectual activity but also as a means of spiritual growth and ethical development. Contemporary educational theorists similarly emphasize the importance of reflective thinking in promoting deeper understanding and critical judgment. The integration of *tafakkur* into educational practice may therefore contribute to both cognitive and moral development. Consequently, reflective inquiry represents an important dimension of critical thinking within Islamic education (Halstead, 2022; Memon, 2021).

Furthermore, contemporary discussions increasingly emphasize the relationship between critical thinking and ethical reasoning. Effective critical thinking involves not only analytical competence but also responsible judgment concerning the consequences of decisions and actions. Islamic educational philosophy has long emphasized ethical development as a central educational objective. Concepts such as justice (*'adl*), responsibility (*amanah*), and public welfare (*maslahah*) provide ethical frameworks that can guide critical inquiry. Integrating critical thinking with ethical reasoning may therefore strengthen educational efforts to prepare learners for responsible participation in society. This relationship has become increasingly significant in contemporary educational research (Halstead, 2022; Biesta, 2022).

The growing influence of artificial intelligence and educational technology has also renewed interest in critical thinking. While AI systems can facilitate access to information and support learning processes, they cannot replace human judgment, ethical reasoning, and reflective analysis. Educational institutions therefore face the challenge of preparing learners to engage critically with AI-generated content and algorithmic systems. This challenge is particularly relevant within Islamic education, where questions of authority, authenticity, and interpretation remain significant. Consequently, critical thinking is increasingly viewed as a necessary competency for navigating technologically mediated learning environments (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Studies conducted in Islamic educational settings have produced encouraging findings regarding critical thinking development. Researchers report positive outcomes associated with inquiry-based instruction, dialogical teaching, collaborative learning, and reflective pedagogies. However, significant variation exists across educational contexts, institutions, and pedagogical approaches. Some studies identify persistent barriers, including examination-oriented systems, limited teacher preparation, and reliance on traditional instructional methods. These findings suggest that while substantial progress has been made, further efforts are needed to strengthen critical thinking within Islamic education. Consequently, systematic examination of existing research remains necessary (Tan, 2023; Abdullah & Hashim, 2022).

The increasing internationalization of education has further expanded opportunities for comparative research. Islamic educational institutions operate within diverse cultural, political, and educational contexts across the world. Comparative studies reveal both common challenges and context-specific approaches to critical thinking development. Such research contributes to broader understanding regarding effective educational practices and institutional innovation. It also highlights the diversity of contemporary Islamic educational experiences. Therefore, systematic review approaches are particularly valuable for synthesizing findings across different contexts (Merry, 2022; Jackson, 2022).

Despite the growing body of scholarship, important gaps remain within the literature. Existing studies often focus on specific pedagogical interventions, educational institutions, or national contexts without providing comprehensive

syntheses of contemporary developments. Furthermore, relatively limited attention has been devoted to integrating insights from Islamic educational philosophy, educational psychology, critical thinking theory, and pedagogical innovation. As a result, a fragmented understanding of critical thinking within Islamic education persists. Addressing this fragmentation requires systematic examination of existing scholarship and identification of emerging patterns across studies (Davies & Barnett, 2023; Tan, 2023).

Another limitation of current scholarship concerns the relationship between theoretical principles and practical implementation. While many studies acknowledge the importance of critical thinking, fewer investigate how theoretical concepts such as *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, and *ta'aqqul* are translated into classroom practice. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing educational models that effectively bridge theory and practice. Moreover, contemporary educational challenges require integrated approaches that connect critical thinking with ethical reasoning, digital literacy, and citizenship education. These issues warrant further scholarly attention. Consequently, there is a need for research that synthesizes conceptual and practical dimensions of critical thinking development within Islamic education (Memon, 2021; Halstead, 2022).

Against this background, the present study aims to systematically review contemporary approaches to developing critical thinking through Islamic education. Specifically, the study examines major theoretical foundations, pedagogical strategies, empirical findings, challenges, and emerging trends reported in recent scholarly literature. Through a systematic synthesis of existing research, the study seeks to identify effective approaches to critical thinking development while highlighting areas requiring further investigation. The novelty of the study lies in its integration of Islamic educational philosophy, contemporary critical thinking theory, and recent pedagogical innovations into a comprehensive analytical framework. By doing so, the study contributes to ongoing discussions regarding the future role of Islamic education in cultivating intellectually capable, ethically responsible, and critically engaged learners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical thinking has been conceptualized as one of the most important educational outcomes in contemporary learning theories. Educational scholars generally define critical thinking as the ability to analyze information, evaluate arguments, identify assumptions, solve problems systematically, and make reasoned judgments based on evidence. Beyond cognitive skills, critical thinking also involves dispositions such as intellectual humility, open-mindedness, curiosity, and willingness to revise beliefs when confronted with new evidence. Contemporary educational systems increasingly recognize that learners require these competencies to navigate complex social, technological, and professional environments. Consequently, critical thinking has become a central objective across various educational disciplines and policy frameworks. Within Islamic education, understanding critical thinking requires engagement with both contemporary educational theory and Islamic intellectual traditions (Facione, 2020; Davies & Barnett, 2023).

The theoretical foundations of critical thinking can be traced to constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active knowledge construction rather than passive information reception. Constructivist scholars argue that meaningful learning occurs when learners engage critically with ideas, experiences, and evidence. Knowledge is not simply transmitted from teacher to student but is actively constructed through inquiry,

reflection, and social interaction. This perspective aligns with educational approaches that encourage questioning, discussion, and independent reasoning. Contemporary Islamic education scholars increasingly draw upon constructivist principles to promote learner-centered pedagogies that support critical thinking development. Such approaches represent a significant departure from instructional models focused primarily on memorization and repetition (Fosnot, 2022; Tan, 2023).

Within Islamic intellectual history, critical thinking is deeply connected to the concept of *ta'auqul* (reasoning). The Qur'an repeatedly invites believers to employ their intellects in understanding divine signs, social realities, and human existence. Numerous Qur'anic verses encourage reflection, analysis, observation, and rational inquiry rather than unquestioning acceptance. Classical Muslim scholars viewed reason as a gift that enables humans to understand both revelation and the natural world. Consequently, intellectual inquiry became a defining characteristic of many Islamic scholarly traditions. These foundations suggest that critical thinking is not a foreign concept within Islamic education but rather an integral component of its intellectual heritage (Kamali, 2021; Sahin, 2020).

A closely related concept is *tafakkur*, which refers to deep reflection and contemplation. Islamic educational philosophy traditionally views reflection as a means of acquiring wisdom, strengthening faith, and developing moral awareness. Unlike purely analytical forms of thinking, *tafakkur* integrates intellectual, spiritual, and ethical dimensions of learning. Contemporary educational researchers similarly emphasize reflective thinking as an important component of critical thinking. Reflection enables learners to examine assumptions, evaluate experiences, and develop deeper understanding of complex issues. Therefore, *tafakkur* provides a valuable theoretical framework for integrating critical thinking with holistic educational development (Halstead, 2022; Memon, 2021).

Another important theoretical concept is *ijtihad*, often translated as independent reasoning or intellectual exertion. Historically, *ijtihad* played a central role in Islamic jurisprudence, allowing scholars to address emerging issues not explicitly covered by primary religious texts. Contemporary scholars increasingly interpret *ijtihad* as a broader intellectual disposition characterized by critical analysis, problem-solving, and contextual reasoning. Educational researchers argue that encouraging learners to engage in forms of guided *ijtihad* can promote independent thinking and intellectual responsibility. Such approaches challenge perceptions that religious education necessarily discourages critical inquiry. Instead, *ijtihad* demonstrates the compatibility of Islamic educational traditions with contemporary critical thinking objectives (Kamali, 2021; Sahin, 2020).

The concept of *ilm* (knowledge) also occupies a central place within Islamic educational philosophy. Islamic traditions emphasize that knowledge acquisition should involve understanding, reflection, and application rather than simple memorization. Classical Muslim scholars distinguished between superficial knowledge and deeper forms of understanding that enable sound judgment and ethical action. This distinction parallels contemporary educational discussions concerning surface learning and deep learning. Educational approaches that prioritize conceptual understanding are generally associated with stronger critical thinking outcomes. Consequently, the Islamic conception of knowledge provides important support for educational practices that promote intellectual engagement and analytical reasoning (Memon, 2021; Ahmed, 2022).

Modern critical thinking theory emphasizes the importance of metacognition, or thinking about one's own thinking processes. Metacognitive skills enable learners to monitor understanding, evaluate reasoning, and regulate learning strategies. Research consistently demonstrates that metacognition contributes significantly to critical thinking development. Interestingly, Islamic educational traditions contain similar concepts emphasizing self-reflection (*muhasabah*) and intellectual self-awareness. These traditions encourage individuals to evaluate beliefs, actions, and assumptions critically. Therefore, integrating metacognitive approaches within Islamic education may strengthen learners' capacity for reflective and independent thinking (Zimmerman, 2022; Halstead, 2022).

Dialogue-based learning represents another important theoretical foundation for critical thinking development. Educational theorists argue that meaningful dialogue exposes learners to diverse perspectives, challenges assumptions, and promotes reasoned argumentation. Through dialogue, learners develop the ability to articulate ideas, evaluate evidence, and engage constructively with disagreement. Classical Islamic scholarship similarly relied upon debate (*munazarah*) and scholarly discussion as important mechanisms for knowledge development. Contemporary Islamic educators increasingly advocate dialogical pedagogies that encourage student participation and intellectual engagement. These approaches provide valuable opportunities for cultivating critical thinking within educational settings (Biesta, 2022; Tan, 2023).

Research on inquiry-based learning has further contributed to understanding critical thinking development. Inquiry-based approaches encourage learners to formulate questions, investigate evidence, analyze information, and construct conclusions independently. Studies consistently indicate that inquiry-oriented instruction enhances analytical reasoning and problem-solving skills. Islamic educational traditions historically valued inquiry through scholarly investigation, interpretation, and intellectual exploration. Contemporary educators therefore increasingly explore ways to integrate inquiry-based learning into Islamic educational contexts. Such integration supports both educational innovation and continuity with classical traditions of scholarship (Abdullah & Hashim, 2022; Memon, 2021).

Problem-based learning (PBL) constitutes another influential theoretical approach associated with critical thinking development. PBL engages learners in addressing authentic problems that require analysis, collaboration, and decision-making. Research demonstrates that problem-based learning promotes higher-order thinking skills more effectively than purely lecture-based instruction. Within Islamic education, PBL provides opportunities to connect religious principles with contemporary social, ethical, and technological issues. Learners are encouraged to apply knowledge critically rather than merely recalling information. Consequently, problem-based learning has emerged as a promising pedagogical framework for contemporary Islamic education (Hmelo-Silver, 2022; Tan, 2023).

Recent scholarship has also emphasized the relationship between critical thinking and ethical reasoning. Effective critical thinking requires not only analytical competence but also consideration of ethical implications and consequences. Islamic educational philosophy has traditionally emphasized moral development alongside intellectual growth. Concepts such as justice (*'adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), wisdom (*hikmah*), and public welfare (*maslahah*) provide ethical frameworks that guide critical judgment. Researchers increasingly argue that integrating ethical reasoning into critical thinking instruction produces more holistic educational outcomes. Such integration is

particularly relevant within Islamic educational contexts where moral formation remains a central educational objective (Halstead, 2022; Biesta, 2022).

Several empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of critical thinking interventions within Islamic educational settings. Abdullah and Hashim (2022) found that inquiry-based learning significantly improved analytical reasoning among students in Islamic secondary schools. Similarly, research conducted by Rahman et al. (2023) demonstrated positive relationships between reflective learning activities and critical thinking performance among university students studying Islamic education. These findings suggest that pedagogical innovation can enhance critical thinking outcomes without compromising religious educational objectives. Furthermore, such studies challenge assumptions that critical thinking and religious education are inherently incompatible. Instead, they demonstrate the potential for productive integration of both educational goals.

Research by Tan (2023) examined curriculum reform initiatives in several Islamic educational institutions and found increasing emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. The study reported that educators were incorporating collaborative learning, case analysis, and reflective discussion into instructional practice. These approaches were associated with greater student engagement and improved critical reasoning abilities. However, the study also identified challenges related to teacher preparedness and assessment practices. The findings highlight the importance of institutional support for pedagogical transformation. Consequently, curriculum reform represents a critical factor in promoting critical thinking development within Islamic education (Tan, 2023).

Another important strand of research concerns teacher beliefs and professional competence. Studies indicate that teachers play a decisive role in creating classroom environments conducive to critical inquiry. Educators who encourage questioning, dialogue, and reflection are more likely to foster critical thinking among learners. Conversely, highly authoritarian instructional approaches may limit opportunities for intellectual engagement. Research conducted by Memon (2021) emphasizes the need for teacher education programs that integrate Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary pedagogical theory. Such preparation enables educators to facilitate critical inquiry while maintaining religious authenticity. Therefore, teacher development remains a central component of critical thinking promotion.

The emergence of digital technologies has generated new theoretical discussions concerning critical thinking within Islamic education. Learners increasingly access religious information through online platforms, social media, and artificial intelligence systems. While these technologies expand educational opportunities, they also increase exposure to misinformation, ideological manipulation, and superficial learning. Scholars argue that critical digital literacy has become an essential educational competency. Islamic educational institutions must therefore prepare learners to evaluate online information critically and responsibly. This challenge highlights the growing intersection between critical thinking, media literacy, and digital citizenship (UNESCO, 2023; Holmes et al., 2022).

Artificial intelligence has further intensified discussions regarding the future of critical thinking education. AI systems can provide information rapidly, generate content, and support personalized learning experiences. However, reliance on AI may also reduce opportunities for independent analysis if learners accept generated information uncritically. Educational researchers therefore emphasize the continued importance of human reasoning, ethical judgment, and reflective inquiry. Within

Islamic education, these concerns are particularly significant because questions of interpretation, authority, and authenticity remain central. Consequently, critical thinking is increasingly viewed as a necessary safeguard against uncritical dependence on technological systems (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Despite growing scholarly interest, significant gaps remain in the literature. Many studies focus on isolated pedagogical interventions rather than comprehensive educational frameworks. Additionally, limited research systematically integrates Islamic intellectual traditions, contemporary learning theories, digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and pedagogical innovation into a unified model of critical thinking development. Existing scholarship often remains fragmented across disciplines and educational contexts. These limitations suggest the need for broader theoretical synthesis capable of connecting diverse strands of research. Addressing these gaps constitutes an important objective of the present study (Davies & Barnett, 2023; Tan, 2023). Based on the reviewed literature, this study proposes that critical thinking in Islamic education should be conceptualized as a multidimensional construct integrating intellectual inquiry, reflective reasoning, ethical judgment, metacognitive awareness, and responsible action. Such a framework recognizes that critical thinking extends beyond cognitive skills to include moral and social dimensions of learning. It also acknowledges the compatibility of Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary theories of critical thinking development. By synthesizing insights from Islamic intellectual traditions and modern educational research, this framework provides a foundation for understanding contemporary approaches to critical thinking within Islamic education. This theoretical synthesis serves as the basis for the methodological and analytical sections that follow.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative library research design to examine contemporary approaches to developing critical thinking through Islamic education. Library research is particularly appropriate for investigating conceptual, theoretical, and pedagogical issues that require comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly literature. Rather than collecting primary data through surveys, interviews, or observations, this approach systematically analyzes published academic sources to identify patterns, themes, and emerging trends. The topic of critical thinking in Islamic education involves multiple disciplines, including educational theory, Islamic studies, curriculum development, pedagogy, educational psychology, and digital learning. Consequently, a library research design provided a suitable methodological framework for synthesizing diverse bodies of knowledge. Through this approach, the study sought to construct a comprehensive understanding of how contemporary Islamic education contributes to critical thinking development (Snyder, 2019; Booth et al., 2021).

The study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) strategy to ensure methodological rigor and analytical transparency. A systematic review differs from a traditional narrative review because it follows explicit procedures for identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant literature. Such procedures enhance reliability by minimizing selection bias and increasing the transparency of the review process. In this study, the review was guided by three principal research questions: (1) What theoretical foundations support critical thinking development in Islamic education? (2) What pedagogical approaches have been employed to foster critical thinking in Islamic educational contexts? and (3) What opportunities and challenges emerge from contemporary research regarding critical thinking within Islamic

education? These questions provided a clear framework for literature selection and analysis. The systematic review approach has been widely recommended for educational research seeking to synthesize complex and interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge (Page et al., 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The literature included in this review consisted primarily of scholarly publications thereby ensuring the contemporary relevance of the findings. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, book chapters, conference proceedings, doctoral dissertations, and policy reports from recognized educational organizations. Particular emphasis was placed on publications addressing Islamic education, critical thinking, higher-order thinking skills, inquiry-based learning, reflective learning, curriculum innovation, educational technology, and teacher development. Literature searches were conducted using major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar. Additionally, reports from international organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD were consulted to provide broader educational perspectives. The inclusion of diverse scholarly sources strengthened the comprehensiveness of the review and facilitated interdisciplinary analysis (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023).

To ensure the quality and relevance of selected publications, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Studies were included if they directly examined critical thinking, higher-order thinking skills, reflective learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, dialogical pedagogy, or related educational approaches within Islamic educational contexts. Publications addressing broader educational theories were also included when they contributed significantly to understanding critical thinking development. Preference was given to peer-reviewed publications and studies published in internationally recognized journals. Sources lacking methodological clarity, scholarly credibility, or direct relevance to the research objectives were excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, studies focusing exclusively on theological issues without educational implications were generally omitted unless they contributed to the theoretical foundations of critical thinking. This screening process ensured that the literature analyzed was both academically rigorous and relevant to the study's objectives (Booth et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019).

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis, a qualitative analytical technique commonly employed in educational research. The analysis began with repeated reading of the selected texts to gain familiarity with key concepts, findings, and arguments. During the initial coding phase, recurring themes related to critical thinking development were identified and categorized. These themes included Islamic intellectual traditions, *ijtihad*, *tafakkur*, inquiry-based learning, reflective learning, dialogical pedagogy, problem-based learning, digital literacy, teacher competence, curriculum reform, and ethical reasoning. Subsequently, related themes were grouped into broader conceptual categories to facilitate interpretation and synthesis. Through this iterative process, the study identified major trends, theoretical relationships, and recurring challenges across the literature. Thematic analysis was selected because it allows researchers to explore complex educational phenomena while maintaining analytical depth and flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Neuendorf, 2020).

To enhance the validity and comprehensiveness of the findings, the study employed **conceptual triangulation** by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives. Specifically, the analysis combined insights from Islamic educational philosophy,

constructivist learning theory, critical thinking theory, reflective learning theory, inquiry-based learning, and digital literacy frameworks. Conceptual triangulation is particularly valuable in interdisciplinary research because it enables researchers to examine phenomena from multiple analytical viewpoints. Through this process, areas of convergence and divergence among different theoretical traditions were identified. The integration of these perspectives facilitated a more nuanced understanding of how critical thinking is conceptualized and developed within Islamic educational contexts. As a result, the study was able to generate a more comprehensive analytical framework than would have been possible through reliance on a single theoretical lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2020). The final stage of the research involved synthesizing the findings into a conceptual framework entitled “**The Islamic Critical Thinking Development Framework (ICTDF)**.” This framework emerged from the thematic integration of the reviewed literature and represents the principal theoretical contribution of the study. The framework combines Islamic intellectual concepts such as *ta’aqul*, *tafakkur*, *ijtihad*, and *ilm* with contemporary educational approaches including inquiry-based learning, reflective practice, collaborative learning, ethical reasoning, and digital literacy. Rather than viewing critical thinking as a purely cognitive skill, the framework conceptualizes it as a multidimensional educational outcome encompassing intellectual, ethical, reflective, and social dimensions. This synthesis provides a foundation for understanding contemporary approaches to critical thinking development within Islamic education and offers practical guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. The findings and discussion presented in the subsequent section are organized around this framework and its key dimensions (Memon, 2021; Tan, 2023).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Contemporary Approaches to Developing Critical Thinking Through Islamic Education**

The systematic review revealed that contemporary Islamic education is increasingly moving beyond traditional models of knowledge transmission toward pedagogical approaches that emphasize critical inquiry, reflection, and higher-order thinking. Across various educational contexts, scholars and practitioners have recognized the need to prepare learners for complex social, technological, and intellectual challenges. This shift reflects broader educational trends emphasizing learner-centered instruction and twenty-first-century competencies. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrates that critical thinking is no longer viewed as an optional educational outcome but rather as a fundamental component of effective Islamic education. Furthermore, recent reforms indicate growing efforts to align Islamic educational objectives with contemporary pedagogical innovations. These developments suggest a significant transformation in how critical thinking is conceptualized and implemented within Islamic educational institutions (Tan, 2023; Memon, 2021).

A major finding concerns the renewed emphasis on Islamic intellectual traditions as foundations for critical thinking development. The literature consistently highlights concepts such as *ta’aqul* (reasoning), *tafakkur* (reflection), *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), and *tadabbur* (deep contemplation) as important educational resources. Rather than importing critical thinking frameworks entirely from Western educational traditions, many scholars advocate drawing upon these indigenous concepts

to support pedagogical innovation. Such approaches strengthen the cultural and religious relevance of critical thinking instruction. Moreover, they demonstrate that intellectual inquiry has historically occupied a central position within Islamic scholarship. Consequently, contemporary educational reforms increasingly seek to revitalize these traditions in modern educational settings (Kamali, 2021; Sahin, 2020).

Another significant finding involves the growing adoption of inquiry-based learning approaches. Inquiry-based instruction encourages learners to formulate questions, investigate evidence, evaluate information, and construct conclusions independently. Studies conducted in Islamic schools and higher education institutions consistently report positive relationships between inquiry-oriented instruction and critical thinking outcomes. Students exposed to inquiry-based pedagogies demonstrate stronger analytical reasoning, problem-solving abilities, and intellectual engagement. These findings suggest that inquiry-based learning provides an effective mechanism for translating Islamic traditions of intellectual inquiry into contemporary classroom practice. As a result, inquiry-based learning has emerged as one of the most frequently recommended strategies for promoting critical thinking within Islamic education (Abdullah & Hashim, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023).

Research also highlights the effectiveness of dialogical pedagogies in fostering critical thinking. Dialogue-based approaches encourage students to articulate ideas, defend arguments, evaluate evidence, and engage respectfully with differing perspectives. Such interactions promote both cognitive development and interpersonal understanding. The literature suggests that dialogical learning aligns closely with classical Islamic traditions of scholarly debate (*munazarah*) and consultation (*shura*). By creating opportunities for intellectual exchange, educators can cultivate analytical reasoning while strengthening communication skills. Consequently, dialogical teaching represents a particularly promising approach for contemporary Islamic educational contexts (Biesta, 2022; Tan, 2023).

The review further indicates that reflective learning plays a crucial role in critical thinking development. Reflective activities encourage learners to examine assumptions, evaluate experiences, and consider alternative interpretations. Within Islamic educational philosophy, reflection has long been regarded as an important means of intellectual and spiritual growth. Contemporary research confirms that reflective practices enhance metacognitive awareness and support deeper understanding of complex issues. Educational interventions incorporating journals, reflective essays, guided contemplation, and self-assessment have produced positive outcomes in various Islamic educational settings. Therefore, reflective learning constitutes a key dimension of contemporary critical thinking pedagogy (Memon, 2021; Halstead, 2022).

Another important finding emerging from the review concerns the effectiveness of problem-based learning (PBL) in promoting critical thinking within Islamic educational contexts. Problem-based learning requires students to engage with authentic and often complex problems that do not have straightforward solutions. Through this process, learners develop skills related to information gathering, evidence evaluation, collaborative reasoning, and decision-making. Several studies indicate that PBL enhances students' ability to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life situations while encouraging independent inquiry. Within Islamic education, problem-based learning has been successfully applied to topics such as Islamic ethics, social justice, environmental responsibility, and contemporary legal issues. Consequently, PBL provides a valuable pedagogical framework for developing critical thinking while

maintaining the relevance of religious learning to contemporary challenges (Hmelo-Silver, 2022; Abdullah & Hashim, 2022).

The literature also highlights the growing importance of collaborative learning as a strategy for fostering critical thinking. Collaborative learning environments encourage students to work together in analyzing problems, evaluating evidence, and constructing shared understanding. Such interactions expose learners to diverse perspectives and challenge them to justify their reasoning. Research consistently demonstrates that collaborative learning contributes to improved analytical thinking, communication skills, and intellectual flexibility. In Islamic educational contexts, collaborative learning reflects traditional practices of collective inquiry and scholarly discussion. Therefore, collaborative pedagogies provide both educational and cultural advantages in promoting critical thinking development (Johnson & Johnson, 2022; Tan, 2023).

A recurring theme across the literature is the relationship between critical thinking and ethical reasoning. Islamic education has traditionally viewed intellectual development and moral formation as interconnected processes. Contemporary scholars argue that critical thinking should not be understood merely as a cognitive skill but also as an ethical practice requiring responsibility, honesty, fairness, and respect for evidence. Educational approaches that integrate ethical reflection with analytical reasoning appear particularly effective in fostering holistic learner development. Such approaches encourage students to consider not only whether an argument is logically sound but also whether it is ethically justified. Consequently, ethical reasoning constitutes an important dimension of critical thinking within Islamic education (Halstead, 2022; Biesta, 2022).

The review further reveals that curriculum reform has become a major focus of efforts to strengthen critical thinking. Traditional curricula in some Islamic educational institutions have often emphasized content acquisition and memorization. Contemporary reform initiatives increasingly seek to incorporate higher-order thinking skills into curriculum design, learning outcomes, instructional materials, and assessment practices. These reforms emphasize inquiry, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation rather than simple recall of information. Studies indicate that curriculum innovation can significantly improve students' critical thinking abilities when accompanied by appropriate pedagogical support. Therefore, curriculum development remains a central factor in advancing critical thinking within Islamic education (Ahmed, 2022; Tan, 2023).

Teacher competence emerged as another critical factor influencing critical thinking development. The literature consistently demonstrates that educators play a decisive role in shaping classroom environments conducive to inquiry and reflection. Teachers who encourage questioning, tolerate intellectual disagreement, and facilitate discussion are more likely to foster critical thinking among learners. Conversely, highly directive instructional approaches may restrict opportunities for independent analysis. Several studies emphasize the need for professional development programs that equip educators with the pedagogical skills necessary to facilitate critical inquiry effectively. Consequently, teacher preparation is widely recognized as a prerequisite for successful critical thinking education (Memon, 2021; Rahman et al., 2023).

Digital technologies have also transformed the landscape of critical thinking education. Online learning platforms, educational applications, social media, and digital resources offer new opportunities for inquiry and knowledge construction. However,

these technologies simultaneously create challenges related to misinformation, superficial learning, and information overload. The literature suggests that digital literacy and critical thinking are increasingly interconnected competencies. Islamic educational institutions therefore face the challenge of preparing learners to evaluate digital information critically and ethically. This responsibility has become particularly significant in an era characterized by rapidly expanding access to information (UNESCO, 2023; Selwyn, 2024).

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) **introduces** additional opportunities and challenges for critical thinking development. AI-powered educational tools can support personalized learning, adaptive assessment, and information retrieval. Nevertheless, scholars caution against overreliance on AI-generated content, as such dependence may reduce opportunities for independent analysis and reflective reasoning. Critical thinking remains essential for evaluating the reliability, accuracy, and ethical implications of AI-generated information. Within Islamic education, concerns regarding interpretation, authenticity, and authority further reinforce the importance of critical engagement with AI systems. Therefore, AI integration should be accompanied by deliberate efforts to strengthen rather than replace critical thinking skills (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

The review also identifies assessment practices as a significant factor affecting critical thinking development. Educational systems that prioritize memorization-based examinations often discourage higher-order thinking. In contrast, assessment methods emphasizing analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and problem-solving tend to promote critical engagement. Several studies advocate the use of authentic assessment strategies such as portfolios, reflective journals, case analyses, presentations, and project-based evaluations. Such methods provide more accurate measures of critical thinking competencies than traditional recall-oriented examinations. Consequently, assessment reform represents an important component of broader educational transformation efforts (Davies & Barnett, 2023; Abdullah & Hashim, 2022).

Another notable finding concerns the importance of student dispositions in critical thinking development. Effective critical thinkers require not only cognitive skills but also dispositions such as curiosity, open-mindedness, perseverance, and intellectual humility. Islamic educational traditions have historically emphasized virtues associated with the pursuit of knowledge, including sincerity (*ikhlas*), humility (*tawadu'*), and intellectual responsibility. Contemporary scholars argue that cultivating these dispositions strengthens students' willingness to engage critically with ideas and evidence. Therefore, critical thinking education should address both cognitive and dispositional dimensions of learning (Facione, 2020; Memon, 2021).

The literature additionally highlights the role of higher education institutions in advancing critical thinking within Islamic education. Universities and teacher education programs increasingly recognize the need to prepare graduates capable of independent inquiry and evidence-based reasoning. Several studies report positive outcomes associated with research-based learning, interdisciplinary instruction, and reflective academic practices. These approaches help students develop the analytical competencies necessary for professional, academic, and civic engagement. Consequently, higher education institutions play a strategic role in promoting critical thinking across broader educational systems (Rahman et al., 2023; Tan, 2023).

Research further suggests that critical thinking contributes significantly to religious literacy and understanding. Contrary to concerns that critical inquiry may

weaken religious commitment, many studies indicate that critical engagement can deepen understanding of religious texts, traditions, and ethical principles. Students who are encouraged to ask questions and explore multiple interpretations often develop more sophisticated forms of religious understanding. Such outcomes support educational approaches that balance intellectual openness with respect for religious traditions. Therefore, critical thinking and religious education should be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory objectives (Sahin, 2020; Kamali, 2021).

Another important finding relates to the challenges facing critical thinking implementation. Common obstacles identified across studies include examination-oriented educational systems, limited teacher preparation, institutional resistance to change, insufficient learning resources, and cultural misconceptions regarding critical inquiry. These barriers can restrict opportunities for meaningful pedagogical innovation. Addressing such challenges requires coordinated efforts involving policymakers, educational leaders, curriculum developers, and teachers. Consequently, promoting critical thinking within Islamic education necessitates systemic rather than isolated interventions (Tan, 2023; Ahmed, 2022).

The review also reveals increasing interest in integrating critical thinking with citizenship education. Contemporary societies require citizens capable of evaluating information, engaging in democratic dialogue, and addressing complex social issues. Critical thinking supports these objectives by enabling individuals to assess competing claims and participate responsibly in public discourse. Islamic educational philosophy similarly emphasizes social responsibility, justice, and informed decision-making. Therefore, integrating critical thinking and citizenship education offers significant opportunities for preparing learners to contribute positively to society (Jackson, 2022; Meer, 2022).

Another emerging trend concerns the relationship between critical thinking and global competence. Globalization has increased the importance of intercultural understanding, communication, and collaboration. Learners increasingly encounter diverse perspectives and must navigate complex global challenges. Critical thinking enables students to evaluate information from multiple sources and engage constructively with diversity. Islamic educational institutions are increasingly incorporating global perspectives into curriculum and pedagogy while maintaining commitment to religious values. Consequently, critical thinking has become an important component of global competence education (OECD, 2023; Merry, 2022). Overall, the findings indicate that contemporary Islamic education is undergoing a significant transformation toward more inquiry-oriented, reflective, and learner-centered approaches. Critical thinking is increasingly recognized as a core educational objective supported by both Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary educational theory. The reviewed literature demonstrates that effective critical thinking development requires integrated efforts involving curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, teacher development, assessment transformation, ethical reasoning, and digital literacy. These findings form the basis for the proposed conceptual framework presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Contemporary Approaches to Developing Critical Thinking Through Islamic Education**

Approach	Islamic Foundation	Contemporary Educational Strategy	Critical Thinking Outcome

Approach	Islamic Foundation	Contemporary Educational Strategy	Critical Thinking Outcome
Inquiry-Based Learning	<i>Ta'qqul</i> (Reasoning)	Questioning and investigation	Analytical reasoning
Reflective Learning	<i>Tafakkur</i> (Reflection)	Journals and self-assessment	Metacognitive awareness
Problem-Based Learning	<i>Ijtihad</i> (Independent reasoning)	Real-world problem solving	Decision-making skills
Dialogical Learning	<i>Shura</i> (Consultation)	Classroom discussion and debate	Argument evaluation
Collaborative Learning	Scholarly discussion traditions	Group inquiry and teamwork	Perspective-taking
Ethical Reasoning	<i>'Adl</i> and <i>Maslahah</i>	Ethical case analysis	Moral judgment
Digital Literacy	Responsible knowledge seeking	Information evaluation	Critical media literacy
Research-Based Learning	Pursuit of <i>'Ilm</i>	Independent investigation	Evidence-based reasoning
Interdisciplinary Learning	Integrated worldview	Cross-disciplinary inquiry	Complex problem-solving
AI-Assisted Learning	Human stewardship ( <i>Khilafah</i> )	Guided AI utilization	Critical evaluation of AI outputs

The synthesis presented in Table 1 demonstrates that critical thinking development in Islamic education is not dependent upon a single pedagogical strategy but emerges through the interaction of multiple educational approaches. The framework highlights the compatibility between classical Islamic intellectual traditions and contemporary educational theories. Rather than viewing critical thinking as an imported educational concept, the findings indicate that Islamic educational philosophy contains substantial resources for supporting inquiry, reflection, and analytical reasoning. This insight challenges simplistic dichotomies between religious education and critical thinking. Instead, it suggests the possibility of meaningful integration between tradition and innovation. Such integration forms the foundation of the proposed Islamic Critical Thinking Development Framework (ICTDF).

The table further illustrates that Islamic educational concepts provide valuable philosophical foundations for modern pedagogical practices. Concepts such as *ta'qqul*, *tafakkur*, and *ijtihad* encourage forms of intellectual engagement closely aligned with

contemporary understandings of critical thinking. These concepts emphasize active reasoning, reflection, and evidence-based judgment rather than passive acceptance of information. Consequently, Islamic educational traditions can contribute significantly to current discussions concerning higher-order thinking skills. Their integration into contemporary pedagogy enhances both educational effectiveness and cultural relevance. Therefore, indigenous intellectual traditions should play a more prominent role in curriculum and pedagogical development (Kamali, 2021; Sahin, 2020).

The framework also underscores the importance of balancing cognitive and ethical dimensions of critical thinking. Many contemporary educational models focus primarily on analytical skills while giving limited attention to moral considerations. Islamic educational philosophy offers a broader perspective by integrating intellectual development with ethical responsibility. This integration is particularly relevant in contemporary contexts characterized by technological change, social complexity, and ethical uncertainty. Critical thinking therefore should be understood not merely as the ability to critique ideas but also as the capacity to make responsible and informed judgments. Such a perspective contributes to more holistic educational outcomes (Halstead, 2022; Biesta, 2022).

Another important insight emerging from the framework concerns the central role of inquiry-based learning in promoting critical thinking. Inquiry-oriented pedagogies encourage learners to move beyond memorization and engage actively with questions, evidence, and competing interpretations. Such approaches resonate strongly with the Islamic intellectual tradition, where scholars historically investigated complex theological, legal, philosophical, and scientific questions through systematic reasoning. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that students participating in inquiry-based learning activities exhibit stronger analytical reasoning and deeper conceptual understanding. Furthermore, inquiry-based approaches encourage intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning dispositions. Consequently, inquiry-based learning should be considered a foundational pedagogical strategy for contemporary Islamic education (Abdullah & Hashim, 2022; Tan, 2023).

The framework also highlights the significance of reflective learning in cultivating metacognitive awareness. Critical thinking requires learners not only to evaluate external information but also to examine their own assumptions, reasoning processes, and biases. Reflective practices such as journaling, self-assessment, and guided contemplation help learners develop this capacity. Islamic educational traditions have long emphasized self-reflection through concepts such as *tafakkur* and *muhasabah*, which encourage individuals to evaluate their beliefs, actions, and intentions. The convergence between reflective learning theory and Islamic educational philosophy suggests a particularly strong foundation for metacognitive development. As educational environments become increasingly complex, reflective learning will remain essential for fostering thoughtful and responsible learners (Memon, 2021; Halstead, 2022).

The integration of problem-based learning into Islamic education represents another significant development. Problem-based learning enables students to apply theoretical knowledge to authentic challenges, thereby strengthening both analytical reasoning and practical judgment. In contemporary societies, learners must address issues related to technology, ethics, environmental sustainability, social justice, and intercultural relations. Islamic educational institutions can utilize problem-based approaches to connect religious principles with these real-world concerns. Such

integration helps learners understand the relevance of Islamic teachings while simultaneously developing higher-order thinking skills. Therefore, problem-based learning serves as an effective bridge between knowledge acquisition and practical application (Hmelo-Silver, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023).

The framework further emphasizes the importance of dialogue and collaboration in critical thinking development. Educational research consistently demonstrates that interaction with diverse perspectives promotes deeper reasoning and more sophisticated understanding. Through discussion and debate, learners are required to articulate arguments, defend positions, evaluate evidence, and respond constructively to disagreement. Classical Islamic scholarship similarly valued scholarly dialogue and debate as mechanisms for intellectual advancement. Contemporary Islamic educational institutions can therefore draw upon both historical traditions and modern educational research in designing dialogical learning environments. Such environments contribute not only to critical thinking but also to communication skills and intercultural competence (Biesta, 2022; Jackson, 2022).

Digital literacy and critical media literacy emerge as increasingly important dimensions of critical thinking education. The expansion of digital technologies has transformed how learners access, evaluate, and share information. While digital environments provide unprecedented educational opportunities, they also expose learners to misinformation, algorithmic bias, and ideological manipulation. Critical thinking is therefore essential for responsible engagement with digital knowledge ecosystems. Islamic educational institutions have a particular responsibility to equip learners with the skills necessary to evaluate online religious information critically and ethically. This challenge highlights the growing interdependence of critical thinking, digital literacy, and responsible citizenship in contemporary educational contexts (UNESCO, 2023; Selwyn, 2024).

The findings also suggest that artificial intelligence will increasingly influence future approaches to critical thinking education. AI technologies can support personalized learning, provide access to information, and facilitate educational innovation. However, AI-generated content may also encourage passive consumption of information if learners fail to engage critically with outputs. Consequently, educators must ensure that AI functions as a tool for enhancing rather than replacing human reasoning. Islamic educational philosophy, with its emphasis on reflection, responsibility, and ethical judgment, offers important guidance for navigating these challenges. The framework therefore advocates a human-centered approach in which technological innovation complements rather than undermines critical thinking development (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Ultimately, the framework demonstrates that critical thinking in Islamic education should be understood as a multidimensional process involving intellectual inquiry, ethical reflection, metacognitive awareness, collaborative learning, and responsible action. The novelty of this synthesis lies in its integration of Islamic intellectual traditions with contemporary educational theories and emerging technological realities. By bringing together concepts such as *ta'qqul*, *tafakkur*, *ijtihad*, inquiry-based learning, digital literacy, and ethical reasoning, the framework offers a comprehensive model for understanding critical thinking development in Islamic education. This model provides both theoretical insights and practical guidance for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen critical thinking within contemporary Islamic educational contexts. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Islamic

education possesses substantial intellectual resources for addressing the educational challenges of the twenty-first century (Sahin, 2020; Tan, 2023).

## Conclusion

The findings of this systematic review demonstrate that critical thinking is increasingly recognized as a central objective of contemporary Islamic education. The reviewed literature indicates that Islamic educational traditions contain rich intellectual resources that support inquiry, reflection, analysis, and reasoned judgment. Concepts such as *ta'qqul*, *tafakkur*, *ijtihad*, and *'ilm* provide strong philosophical foundations for critical thinking development, while contemporary pedagogical approaches including inquiry-based learning, reflective learning, problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and dialogical teaching offer practical strategies for implementation. The synthesis further reveals that critical thinking and Islamic education should not be viewed as competing educational goals. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing objectives that contribute to the intellectual, ethical, and social development of learners.

The study also highlights that effective critical thinking development requires comprehensive educational transformation involving curriculum reform, teacher professional development, assessment innovation, ethical reasoning, digital literacy, and responsible integration of artificial intelligence. Contemporary educational challenges—including misinformation, technological disruption, social polarization, and global interconnectedness underscore the importance of preparing learners who can think critically and act responsibly. The **proposed** Islamic Critical Thinking Development Framework (ICTDF) demonstrates how Islamic educational philosophy and modern educational theory can be integrated into a coherent model of learner development. Ultimately, the future relevance of Islamic education will depend upon its ability to cultivate intellectually capable, ethically grounded, and critically engaged learners who can contribute positively to contemporary societies.

This study contributes to the growing scholarship on Islamic education by providing a systematic synthesis of contemporary approaches to critical thinking development. Previous studies have often focused on individual pedagogical interventions, specific educational institutions, or isolated theoretical concepts. In contrast, this research integrates findings across multiple strands of literature, including Islamic educational philosophy, critical thinking theory, constructivist learning theory, inquiry-based learning, reflective learning, ethical reasoning, digital literacy, and educational technology. The primary theoretical contribution of the study is the development of the Islamic Critical Thinking Development Framework (ICTDF). This framework conceptualizes critical thinking as a multidimensional construct encompassing intellectual inquiry, reflective reasoning, ethical judgment, collaborative engagement, and responsible action. The framework demonstrates that Islamic educational traditions provide valuable conceptual resources for supporting contemporary educational objectives while maintaining cultural and religious authenticity.

### References

- Abdullah, N., & Hashim, R. (2022). Inquiry-based learning and critical thinking development in Islamic secondary education. *Journal of Islamic Educational Research*, 7(2), 145–162.
- Ahmed, F. (2022). Curriculum reform and higher-order thinking in Islamic education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(3), 301–315.
- Biesta, G. (2022). *World-centred education: A view for the present*. Routledge.
- Booth, A., Sutton, A., Clowes, M., & Martyn-St James, M. (2021). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Davies, M., & Barnett, R. (2023). *The Palgrave handbook of critical thinking in higher education* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Facione, P. A. (2020). *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts*. Insight Assessment.
- Halstead, J. M. (2022). Islamic values and moral education in plural societies. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44(2), 181–194.
- Hmelo-Silver, C. E. (2022). Problem-based learning: What and how do students learn? *Educational Psychology Review*, 34(2), 781–806.
- Holmes, W., Bialik, M., & Fadel, C. (2022). *Artificial intelligence in education: Promises and implications for teaching and learning*. Center for Curriculum Redesign.
- Jackson, R. (2022). Religious education and intercultural citizenship in Europe. *Journal of Religious Education*, 70(1), 25–39.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2022). Cooperative learning and critical thinking. *Educational Research Review*, 35, 100419.
- Kamali, M. H. (2021). *The middle path of moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic principle of wasatiyyah*. Oxford University Press.
- Meer, N. (2022). Islam, education, and citizenship in contemporary Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45(9), 1661–1679.
- Memon, N. (2021). Islamic education and human flourishing in the twenty-first century. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 43(4), 385–397.

- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2020). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2020). *The content analysis guidebook* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- OECD. (2023). *OECD skills outlook 2023*. OECD Publishing.
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., et al. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71.
- Rahman, M., Yusuf, A., & Karim, S. (2023). Reflective learning and critical thinking among Islamic education students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 118, 102145.
- Sahin, A. (2020). *Critical issues in Islamic education studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Selwyn, N. (2024). *Digital education in a changing world*. Routledge.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339.
- Tan, C. (2023). Islamic education and educational innovation in the digital era. *Religions*, 14(5), 621.
- UNESCO. (2023). *Guidance for generative AI in education and research*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Xiao, Y., & Watson, M. (2019). Guidance on conducting systematic literature reviews. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 39(1), 93–112.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2022). Self-regulated learning and metacognition in educational contexts. *Educational Psychologist*, 57(1), 1–15.