

Dialectical Reasoning in Recontextualizing Masalahah: A Methodological Critique of Islamic Educational Epistemology

Ditha Alvira

Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam (STEBI), Lampung, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic Religious Education (IRE) frequently remains trapped in a passive, dogmatic-scholastic approach, rendering it less responsive to the complexities of modern social dynamics. This study aims to critique the methodological limitations of conventional IRE epistemology and propose an epistemological reconstruction grounded in dialectical reasoning through the contextualization of the masalahah (public interest) concept. As a non-field qualitative inquiry, this study focuses on textual sources covering Islamic epistemological thought, dialectical theory, and the doctrine of masalahah spanning classical to contemporary scholars, purposively selected for their conceptual relevance. Utilizing a philosophical-hermeneutic approach, data were gathered via document analysis and subjected to critical-constructive content analysis to synthesize text, reason, and social reality. The findings demonstrate that the divide between normative IRE doctrines and social realities can be bridged by transforming masalahah from a mere legal product into a dialectical, methodological-pedagogical principle. The study concludes that reconstructing IRE epistemology through the dialectics of masalahah harmoniously integrates bayani (textual), burhani (rational-demonstrative), and irfani (gnostic-intuitive) approaches. Consequently, this study highlights the necessity of shifting the IRE curriculum and pedagogical paradigms from rigid rote transmission toward a transformative, humanistic, and practical critical education capable of responding to contemporary challenges.

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Corresponding Author:

Ditha Alvira

Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam (STEBI), Lampung, Indonesia

Email: dithaalvira22@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is confronted with rapid socio-cultural transformations and the intricate, fast-evolving complexities of modern society [1]. However, classroom practice in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) frequently remains trapped in a dogmatic and normative-textual approach [2]. Religious instruction tends to treat doctrines as static rules that are transmitted unidirectionally, often without any critical analysis of the sociological contexts in which the students grow up. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) becomes less responsive and increasingly alienated from socio-cultural dynamics as well as pressing, real-world human issues [3].

This critical issue highlights an urgent need to rethink and modernize the foundational framework of Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Rather than treating religious knowledge as a fixed set of historical answers, IRE must evolve into a dynamic learning process that bridges sacred texts with the lived realities of students. By adopting a more contextual, responsive, and transformative framework, religious instruction can go beyond rote learning to foster critical thinking, moral agency, and social awareness. Ultimately, such an overhaul is essential to ensure that Islamic education remains deeply meaningful, morally grounding, and intellectually equipping for students as they navigate the complexities of an ever-changing modern world.

Previous studies in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) have predominantly focused on the practical-methodological dimensions of classroom instruction and didactic aspects, such as the development of teaching strategies, digital media integration, and learning evaluation models [4]. On the other hand, Islamic legal literature has extensively explored the flexibility of the *maslahah* doctrine in responding to legal shifts and societal transformations [5].

However, a fundamental research gap persists in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) literature, where studies addressing the epistemological level the foundational root of IRE knowledge grounded in the dialectics of public interest (*maslahah*) remain remarkably scarce [6]. This study offers novelty by integrating dialectical reasoning, specifically a critical-dialogical interaction among revealed texts, scientific reason, and sociological reality, into the concept of *maslahah* to evaluate and reformulate the epistemological structure of Islamic Religious Education (IRE).

The primary objective of this research is to analyze and formulate an epistemological reconstruction of IRE grounded in the dialectics of *maslahah*. To achieve this, the study addresses three central research questions: how conventional IRE epistemology falls short in responding to social change; how dialectical reasoning can be formulated to contextualize the concept of *maslahah*; and what forms critical-methodological critiques and epistemological reconciliations take when built upon this dialectical *maslahah* framework. Ultimately, the implications of this study are expected to offer theoretical contributions to the enrichment of Islamic educational philosophy while providing a solid philosophical foundation for reorienting IRE curricula and pedagogy to become more inclusive, critical, and oriented toward public welfare.

2. METHOD

This study is a non-empirical qualitative research project grounded in library research and theoretical-philosophical analysis, utilizing epistemological and philosophical hermeneutic approaches [7]. Primary data sources encompass key works in Islamic epistemology, dialectical theory, and *maslahah* concepts from classic to contemporary scholars, including the works of Al-Ghazali, Asy-Syatibi, Najmuddin At-Tufi, M. Amin Abdullah, and Jasser Auda [5]. Secondary data sources were gathered from academic journals, books, and scholarly articles addressing Islamic Religious Education (IRE) epistemology and paradigmatic shifts in Islamic education [8].

To ensure analytical rigor and replicability, data analysis was executed through three systematic stages [9]. First, textual data were categorized and mapped into core thematic clusters, specifically traditional IRE epistemological frameworks, dialectical methods, and *maslahah* principles. Second, a critical-philosophical and hermeneutic evaluation was applied to uncover systemic limitations, epistemological gaps, and contextual tensions between normative texts and contemporary social realities. Finally, a constructive-synthetic method was utilized to reconcile *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* approaches, ultimately formulating a reconstructed IRE epistemological framework grounded in the dialectics of *maslahah*.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical and theoretical findings derived from the analysis of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) paradigms, followed by an in-depth discussion on their broader implications for educational transformation. The findings are structured into key thematic dimensions, beginning with a critical diagnosis of traditional instructional patterns and progressing toward a reconstructed, context-sensitive pedagogical model. By evaluating both structural barriers

and practical reformations, this discussion aims to map out a clear framework for advancing IRE within modern educational contexts.

3.1. Conventional Epistemological Problems of Islamic Religious Education

The results of the analysis indicate that the primary crisis in conventional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) stems from a fundamental epistemological problem, namely the dominance of scholastic textualism, which creates a rift between theological doctrine and social reality. This limitation manifests in two interconnected core problems within school and madrasah environments.

To date, conventional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) epistemology has been heavily anchored in the *bayānī* paradigm, wherein religious validity is determined almost exclusively through literal interpretations and textual legitimacy derived from classical literature *turāth*. [10] When operationalized rigidly and in isolation, this *bayānī* orientation leads school and madrasah curricula into scholastic dogmatism. Religious pedagogy is thereby reduced to a rote transmission of doctrinal tenets, a fiqh centric focus, and formalistic ritual compliance, leaving little room for critical inquiry [11]. Consequently, the religious principles imparted to students become static and passive, lacking the methodological agility needed to address hermeneutical diversity and dynamic contemporary social realities.

The dominance of the *bayānī* paradigm directly widens the dichotomous divide between the ideal-normative theology of IRE and the actual needs of modern society and humanity. Religious doctrines are frequently framed as abstract, eschatological norms divorced from the sociological contexts in which students live [12]. Conventional IRE curricula remain predominantly centered on individual-formalistic piety, yet struggle to engage effectively with tangible human issues such as technological disruption, ecological crises, socio-economic disparities, and cultural pluralism [13]. This disconnect deprives IRE of its responsiveness and practical relevance, rendering it difficult for students to translate religious teachings into actionable public ethics. Consequently, core Islamic principles like justice (*ʿadl*) and compassion (*rahmah*) remain abstract ideals rather than practical solutions for contemporary societal challenges, ultimately limiting the role of religious education in fostering active, context-aware civil engagement.

3.2. Dialectical Reason Construction in the Contextualization of Maslahah

Epistemological synthesis in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) necessitates a paradigm shift from rigid doctrinal readings toward an adaptive, problem-solving framework. By reconstructing dialectical reasoning, the concept of *maslahah* (public interest) is transformed from a static legal instrument into a dynamic methodological-pedagogical pillar, bridging foundational Islamic teachings with evolving contemporary realities. This transformation enables learners to systematically interface text with context, ensuring religious knowledge remains ethically grounded yet responsive to modern societal needs.

Contextualizing *maslahah* within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is no longer understood as a static, case-by-case application typical of conventional Islamic jurisprudence. Instead, it is constructed through a triadic dialectic interconnecting revealed Text, scientific Reason, and social Reality [14]. Within this dialectical interplay, the revealed text (*bayānī*) provides foundational ethical-normative orientation, scientific reason (*burhānī*) supplies instruments for objective and critical analysis, and social reality functions as the empirical testing ground and context of implementation [13]. This integrative approach ensures that religious pedagogy transcends abstract dogmatism, constantly validating normative ideals against lived human experiences and empirical insights.

This triadic dialectic prevents two epistemological extremes: rigid scripturalism, which disregards temporal dynamics, and secular rationalism, which detaches from faith-based roots. Through this continuous interaction among Text, Reason, and Social Reality, religious values of *maslahah* undergo creative, ongoing reinterpretation to address evolving societal challenges while safeguarding their core normative identity [15].

This epistemological reorientation directly reshapes the understanding of *maqāṣid ash-sharīʿah* and *maṣlaḥah* within religious education. Rather than being narrowly confined to passive products of derivative jurisprudence (*furuʿiyyah*), *maṣlaḥah* and *maqāṣid ash-sharīʿah* are

reinterpreted as core methodological and pedagogical principles designed to transform the overarching value structure and curriculum of Islamic Religious Education [16]. This shift elevates *maqāṣid* from a mere legal tool into an active educational philosophy, ensuring that learning outcomes consistently cultivate critical awareness, moral agency, and real-world relevance. As a methodological-pedagogical principle, *maṣlaḥah* equips educators and learners with a critical worldview. Learning within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) moves beyond mere rote memorization of texts and superficial ritual compliance; instead, it trains students to decipher the underlying objectives (*maqāṣid*) behind religious teachings namely, promoting the public good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-‘āmmah*) and safeguarding human dignity [17]. This critical engagement transforms religious pedagogy into an active process of moral reflection and social responsibility, enabling learners to systematically connect normative principles with lived human experiences.

This critical perspective grounded in *maṣlaḥah* is deeply intertwined with the concepts of humanistic and multicultural education. When religious interpretation is guided by public interest and the preservation of human dignity, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) naturally shifts from an exclusive posture toward a pedagogical praxis that humanizes the learner and celebrates diversity. The humanistic principle positions students as empowered agents, while the multicultural dimension asserts that true *maṣlaḥah* can only materialize within a pluralistic shared space. Consequently, this integration requires educators to cultivate inclusive and dialogical learning environments. Religious texts are no longer studied to assert group superiority, but rather to uncover foundational values of equality, justice, and social solidarity. Ultimately, an orientation toward *maṣlaḥah* enables students to view identity differences as rich civilizational assets to be respected, while sharpening their sensitivity to all forms of injustice and discrimination [18].

Ultimately, this critical consciousness enriched by humanistic and multicultural values serves as the cornerstone of the new Islamic Religious Education (IRE) paradigm. Religious instruction no longer merely yields spiritually devout and intellectually capable individuals, but fosters inclusive, empathetic global citizens committed to sustaining harmony within a diverse society. Consequently, this reinterpretation shifts the core character of IRE from a transmissive-dogmatic framework into a transformative, inclusive, and humanistic curriculum one that empowers learners to actively embody their faith as an ethical force for societal well-being and universal justice.

3.3. Methodological Critique of Islamic Religious Education Epistemology

Methodological critique of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) epistemology entails dismantling hierarchical power relations within religious instruction and overcoming the epistemic fragmentation that has historically separated revelation, reason, and ethical intuition. Through the lens of the dialectic of *maṣlaḥah*, both the deconstruction of pedagogical paradigms and the triadic integration of epistemology become essential prerequisites for realizing a transformative IRE.

The primary critique of conventional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) epistemology targets its reliance on a unidirectional model of doctrinal transmission, characteristic of the "banking concept of education" [17]. Within this rigid framework, educators are positioned as the sole custodians of dogmatic authority, while students are treated as passive vessels who merely receive and memorize religious norms [11]. This pedagogical approach ultimately diminishes students' critical thinking and stifles their social empathy toward the surrounding reality, reducing living religious values to abstract dogmas detached from contemporary moral challenges.

Through the dialectical reasoning of *maṣlaḥah*, this paradigm undergoes a fundamental deconstruction. The positions of both educator and learner shift qualitatively: the educator transforms into a dialogical facilitator and agent of social change, while the learner is elevated to an active subject and co-creator of values of public interest [4]. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction is no longer understood as a passive process of dogmatic habituation, but rather as a dialogical space where educators and students collaboratively analyze religious texts, interrogate social reality, and construct concrete actions that serve the public good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-‘āmmah*). This collaborative dynamic fosters an active learning environment where moral agency and critical inquiry systematically inform one another.

Epistemic fragmentation in conventional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) frequently leads to methodological imbalance: the dominance of textualism (*bayānī*) breeds dogmatism, the isolated application of rationalism (*burhānī*) risks triggering secularism, while an overemphasis on gnosticism (*ʿirfānī*) lacking a rational-textual foundation can devolve into esoteric mysticism [19]. Methodological critique demands the deployment of dialectical reasoning to synthesize these three approaches into a unified, holistic cognitive framework. By harmonizing textual revelation, empirical rationality, and intuitive ethics, IRE can cultivate a balanced paradigm where faith remains intellectually rigorous, spiritually profound, and socially relevant.

The integrative scheme of the *bayānī* approach provides textual legitimacy and the ethical-normative compass of revelation; the *burhānī* approach contributes rational-empirical analysis, scientific data, and critical methodologies to comprehend social contexts; while the *ʿirfānī* approach sharpens spiritual sensitivity, inner conscience, and ethical-humanitarian commitment [13]. The dialectical integration of these three structures of knowledge ensures that the religious values taught in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) are not only grounded in solid textual roots (*bayānī*) and defensible through scientific-rational inquiry (*burhānī*), but also culminate in inner enlightenment and impactful social piety (*ʿirfānī*).

The triadic integration of *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *ʿirfānī* finds its most strategic domain of realization through the leverage of technology and educational innovation. Without technological integration, this epistemological framework risks remaining at the level of abstract philosophical discourse. Appropriate technology adoption acts as an accelerator, interlinking all three approaches into a tangible, interactive, and socially impactful learning experience. Operationally, technology simultaneously strengthens all three dimensions. The *bayānī* dimension is reinforced by the digitization of manuscripts and religious databases, simplifying the validation of textual authenticity. The *burhānī* dimension is enlivened through data analytics tools and project-based learning to dissect social issues rationally and empirically. Meanwhile, the *ʿirfānī* dimension is actualized via reflective media and digital social-action platforms that cultivate empathy and humanitarian concern among students. This evolution underscores the transformation of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher's role into that of an ethical digital learning experience designer. Educators are called to master the integration of technology and Islamic pedagogy to design learning frameworks that are doctrinally authentic, scientifically rational, and spiritually meaningful. Ultimately, this technology-driven educational innovation completes the transformative IRE paradigm, ensuring that religious values emerge as concrete solutions for the dynamics of modern civilization [20].

3.4. Constructive Implications for Contemporary Islamic Religious Education Instruction

The epistemological reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) grounded in the dialectical reasoning of *maṣlaḥah* yields tangible paradigmatic implications for educational praxis across schools and higher education institutions. These constructive implications center on two primary pillars of educational reform: the reconstruction of curriculum structures and instructional materials, alongside the transformation of classroom pedagogical approaches.

The first implication manifests in the reorientation of curriculum design and the development of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instructional materials. Conventional IRE curricula, historically oriented toward the rote memorization of doctrinal content (content-heavy curriculum), are reconstructed into curricula that emphasize critical literacy and social problem-solving (problem-based curriculum) [6]. Religious texts are no longer presented as static dogmas, but are instead positioned as an ethical-normative framework brought into dynamic dialectics with contemporary issues.

Instructional materials for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) are developed inclusively by integrating the values of humanism, social justice, environmental sustainability, and religious tolerance grounded in the framework of *maṣlaḥah* [5]. Within this context, students are not merely taught formal ritual rules (*ʿubūdiyyah*), but are guided to comprehend the *maqāṣid* (overarching objectives) underlying religious teachings to respond directly to concrete social problems, such as poverty, corruption, intolerance, and ecological crisis. Consequently, the IRE curriculum transforms from a mere transmission of religious knowledge into an instrument of humanistic social empowerment focused on the public good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-ʿāmmah*). The second implication is a

fundamental shift in classroom instructional praxis, marking a transition from a pedagogy of transmission (memorization-based instruction) to a pedagogy of liberation (critical thinking instruction). Conventional learning models that position students as passive recipients (banking education) are replaced by a critical-dialectical pedagogy grounded in dialogue and social reflection [21].

Through critical-dialectical pedagogy, the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classroom is transformed into a thinking laboratory where educators and students collaboratively discuss societal challenges, examine empirical facts (*burhānī*), analyze religious texts (*bayānī*), and formulate ethical-spiritual commitments (*‘irfānī*) to render religious values actionable solutions. The educator serves as a facilitator who fosters critical consciousness, enabling students to move beyond cognitive understanding toward developing ethical leadership and transformative social empathy in community life.

Tabel 1. Matrix of the Epistemological Reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Based on the Dialectic of *Maṣlaḥah*

Analytical Dimension	Conventional Epistemology of IRE (Problem)	Reconstruction of the Dialectic of <i>Maṣlaḥah</i> (Solution)	Pedagogical Implications & Relevance
Epistemology & Primary Approach	Monolithic Dominance of <i>Bayānī</i> Exclusive reliance on textual-scholastic, dogmatic, and jurisprudence-centric (<i>fiqh</i> -centric) frameworks.	Triadic Integration Harmonization of <i>Bayānī</i> (revealed norms), <i>Burhānī</i> (rational-empirical inquiry), and <i>‘Irfānī</i> (ethical-spiritual intuition).	Holistic Validity Religious knowledge possesses textual legitimacy, holds up to scientific rigor, and culminates in human empathy.
Relation between Text, Reason, & Reality	Rigid Dichotomy Normative doctrine is strictly separated from sociological dynamics and students' lived reality.	Three-Way Dialectic (Text–Reason–Reality) Text functions as an ethical compass tested against empirical reality.	Contextual Responsiveness Islamic Religious Education (IRE) directly engages contemporary issues (technological disruption, ecological crises, inequality, and pluralism).
Position of <i>Maṣlaḥah</i> & <i>Maqāṣid</i>	Static & Case-Specific <i>Maṣlaḥah</i> is viewed passively as a mere byproduct of legal rulings (<i>fiqh furū‘iyyah</i>).	Transformatival Paradigm Reinterpretation of <i>maṣlaḥah</i> and <i>maqāṣid</i> as dynamic methodological and pedagogical principles.	Focus on Public Good Instruction prioritizes the overarching objectives of religion (<i>maqāṣid</i>), specifically realizing the public interest (<i>al-maṣlaḥah al-‘āmmah</i>).
Roles of Educator & Student	Unidirectional Transmission (<i>Banking Concept</i>) Educator holds sole dogmatic authority; student acts as a passive recipient.	Deconstruction of Relational Power Educator serves as a dialogical facilitator; student acts as a <i>co-creator</i> of public values.	Active Agency Fosters critical thinking, argumentative courage, and active student involvement in constructing religious understanding.
Curriculum & Material Design	Content-Heavy Curriculum Oriented toward rote memorization of doctrinal material and formal ritual piety (<i>‘ubūdiyyah</i>).	Problem-Based Curriculum Emphasizes critical literacy, social problem-solving, humanism, and religious tolerance.	Empowerment Instrument Curriculum evolves from mere knowledge transfer into an inclusive, solution-oriented instrument of social empowerment.
Classroom Pedagogical Praxis	Pedagogy of Transmission Primary focus on rote memorization and dogmatic compliance.	Pedagogy of Liberation / Critical Thinking Grounded in open dialogue, empirical	Critical Consciousness The classroom transforms into a thinking laboratory that develops critical consciousness

investigation, and ethical
reflection.

(*conscientization*) and ethical
leadership.

A fundamental transformation shifts Islamic Religious Education (IRE) from a passive, textualist, and dogmatic approach centered on doctrinal transmission toward a critical, dialectical, and transformative framework focused on human empowerment [22]. Within this evolving paradigm, IRE educators play a pivotal role by abandoning authoritarian instructional styles in favor of liberating pedagogical practices. Stepping down as the exclusive source of truth, educators move away from demands for blind obedience or mechanical memorization to foster interactive dialogue that stimulates critical inquiry, treating religion not as a rigid set of dogmas but as a reflective space for deep spiritual understanding. Furthermore, as contextual interpreters, they bridge sacred texts with contemporary social reality by examining scriptural sources through historical contexts and modern dynamics, guiding students to utilize religious values as analytical tools to address real-world societal issues. As catalysts for emancipatory consciousness, educators direct instruction beyond personal ritual piety (*'ubūdiyyah*) to cultivate active social piety, where faith is measured by the growth of empathy, the rejection of discrimination, and concrete social action. Ultimately, the metric of success in Islamic Religious Education shifts from how passively students memorize doctrine to how effectively they utilize religion as an inspiring force to humanize humanity (*memanusiakan manusia*).

4. CONCLUSION

The epistemological reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) grounded in the dialectical reasoning of *maṣlaḥah* successfully resolves the methodological crisis and dogmatic rigidity of conventional IRE by establishing a cognitive framework that brings revelation, scientific rationality, and sociological reality into dynamic dialectic. This study offers conceptual novelty by repositing *maṣlaḥah* from a static product of legal jurisprudence (*fiqh*) into a dynamic methodological-pedagogical pillar and epistemological paradigm. Through the harmonious integration of the *bayānī*, *burhānī*, and *'irfānī* approaches, supported by technology-driven educational innovation, IRE instruction is transformed from a passive model of doctrinal memorization (pedagogy of transmission) into a liberating, critical-dialogical framework (pedagogy of liberation). The fundamental real-world implication of these findings is a shift in societal IRE praxis: moving from an education focused solely on formalistic ritual piety toward an inclusive, humanistic orientation that yields students with critical consciousness, high tolerance, and the capacity to generate ethical, public-good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah*) solutions for contemporary social dynamics and humanitarian challenges.

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