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Revitalizing Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in the Digital Era: A Philosophical Reflection of Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in higher education continues to face serious challenges due to the dominance of normative-doctrinal approaches that are less adaptive to the complexities of the digital era. This study aims to formulate a transformational IRE curriculum based on the philosophy of knowledge that can address both the spiritual crisis and technological disruption. Employing a qualitative approach, the research applies an in-depth literature analysis of the works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang, contextualized within the condition of IRE



curricula in Indonesia. The findings reveal that Nasr's concept of sacred knowledge provides a transcendental framework for strengthening spirituality, while Piliang's critique of the culture of simulacra offers a critical lens to understand the impact of digitalization on education. Synthesizing these perspectives produces a transformational curriculum model that integrates religious, philosophical, and digital dimensions, while maintaining a balance between perennial values and contemporary needs. This study concludes that developing a transformational IRE curriculum is not only urgent but also strategic for enhancing the competitiveness of Islamic education in the global era. Its practical implication is that the curriculum should be directed toward integrating Islamic epistemology, digital literacy, and participatory pedagogical methods that foster both critical awareness and profound spirituality.

Keyword

Curriculum, digitalization, Islamic Religious Education, philosophy of knowledge, spirituality

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di perguruan tinggi masih menghadapi tantangan serius akibat dominasi pendekatan normatif-doktrinal yang kurang adaptif terhadap kompleksitas era digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merumuskan konsep kurikulum transformasional PAI berbasis filsafat ilmu yang mampu menjawab krisis spiritual sekaligus disrupsi teknologi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis kepustakaan mendalam terhadap karya Seyyed Hossein Nasr dan Yasraf Amir Piliang, yang kemudian dikontekstualisasikan dengan kondisi kurikulum PAI di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemikiran Nasr tentang pengetahuan sakral (sacred knowledge) menawarkan kerangka transendental bagi penguatan spiritualitas, sementara gagasan Piliang mengenai budaya simulakra memberikan lensa kritis untuk memahami dampak digitalisasi terhadap pendidikan. Sintesis keduanya menghasilkan model kurikulum transformasional yang mengintegrasikan dimensi religius, filosofis, dan digital, sekaligus menekankan keseimbangan antara nilai-nilai perennial dan kebutuhan kontemporer. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengembangan kurikulum PAI yang berorientasi pada transformasi tidak hanya mendesak, tetapi juga strategis bagi penguatan daya saing pendidikan Islam di era global. Implikasi praktisnya, kurikulum perlu diarahkan pada integrasi epistemologi Islam, literasi digital, dan metode pedagogis partisipatif yang menumbuhkan kesadaran kritis sekaligus spiritualitas mendalam

Kata Kunci

Digitalisasi, Filsafat Pengetahuan, Kurikulum, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Spiritualitas

INTRODUCTION

In the face of modernity's paradox, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1989) criticizes secular science for severing knowledge from its sacred roots. When science is detached from divine order, it produces technologies and ideologies that erode the moral-spiritual balance of life. Similarly, Yasraf Amir Piliang (2011) observes that the postmodern condition is marked by hyperreality, where signs dominate reality and blur distinctions between truth and illusion. These cultural shifts inevitably affect religious life, demanding a rethinking of Islamic education.

Islamic education cannot remain a mere transfer of doctrine. It must cultivate holistic development, enabling students to interpret reality critically while remaining grounded in spiritual wisdom (al-Attas, 1995). The curriculum should therefore integrate rational, moral, and spiritual dimensions. As Nasr (1989) reminds, education must guide learners toward transcendence, not merely vocational skills.

Yet, the curriculum often lags behind these ideals. Many institutions continue to emphasize textual transmission while neglecting contextual transformation (Azra, 2014). In reality, students face challenges shaped by globalization, secularism, and digital culture. A transformative curriculum must become a dialectical arena, negotiating between tradition and contemporary needs (Tilaar, 2004). This approach recognizes the student not only as a cognitive recipient but as a moral subject engaged in praxis.

The teacher's role is therefore not limited to instruction but extends to mentorship, exemplifying wisdom and moral integrity (Hashim, 2004). At the same time, education should foster ecological and spiritual awareness, reconnecting humans with nature and the divine (Nasr, 2008). This ecological spirituality is urgent in an age where technological mastery often coincides with ecological degradation.

Nonetheless, several obstacles persist: fragmented knowledge, utilitarian educational models, and weak institutional vision (Abdullah, 2006). Overcoming these barriers requires integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary insights, thereby producing learners capable of balancing faith, morality, and critical reason.

This study seeks to examine the dynamics of Islamic education curriculum as a site of transformation. By analyzing its philosophical and practical dimensions, it highlights the potential of curriculum to mediate between sacred knowledge and contemporary challenges, ensuring Islamic education remains relevant while rooted in spiritual foundations.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive-interpretive approach, aimed at exploring the underlying structures of meaning in the formulation of a transformative Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum in response to the challenges of the digital era. The philosophical reflections of Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang serve as the reflective foundation of this framework. This approach is deliberately chosen because it views social, cultural, and spiritual realities as multilayered texts that require hermeneutical interpretation, rather than as objects reducible to quantification (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Data were collected primarily through intensive and structured library research. The main sources consist of the works of Nasr and Piliang, supported by secondary literature on Islamic curriculum studies and digital culture. This process is conceived not merely as a review of literature, but as a dialogical and critical engagement that connects theoretical perspectives with contemporary socio-cultural contexts (George, 2008). To strengthen contextual grounding, selected IRE curricula from several state universities were also examined as empirical data sources. These documents are treated as ideological and discursive texts that need to be critically deconstructed (Fairclough, 2003).

The analysis employs the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In data reduction, relevant information from literature and curricula is extracted and organized according to conceptual categories informed by Nasr and Piliang. Data display is then developed in the form of reflective narratives and thematic categorizations, enabling a transdisciplinary understanding of religious education under digital pressures. Verification is conducted iteratively until theoretical saturation is reached, ensuring coherence between theory, data, and context (Miles et al., 2014).

Research validity is ensured through theoretical triangulation and reflective confirmation. Findings are compared across multiple sources of literature and assessed in relation to contextual data, thereby enhancing intertextual credibility. The researcher's role is not limited to collecting data but extends to actively interpreting meaning and reconstructing narratives through a critical and spiritual lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This interpretive stance positions the research as a transformative effort, capable of offering new pathways for revitalizing Islamic religious education in the digital age.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Crisis of Spirituality and the Hegemony of Hyperreality in the Digital Age

The crisis of spirituality in the digital era is not merely a phenomenon of losing the sacred dimension in modern life, but rather a profound ontological shift in which humanity is no longer rooted in transcendent reality, but instead ensnared within the vortex of images, simulacra, and representations that masquerade as reality itself (Baudrillard, 1994). Contemporary human existence is no longer lived as a spiritual odyssey in search of meaning, but as consumption of signs, symbols, and visualities framed by digital machinery. Within this framework, spirituality is displaced by the aesthetics of imagery; the sacred is reduced to mere visualization, and religious experience is uprooted from its ontological depth (Piliang, 2018).

Sayyed Hossein Nasr has long warned of the danger of reducing human existence through the loss of its sacred axis, brought about by the expansion of modernity constructed upon Cartesian dualism and positivistic materialism (Nasr, 2006). For Nasr, the contemporary crisis of spirituality originates from the rupture between humanity and the metaphysical principle of transcendence, which in Islamic intellectual tradition is known as *al-Haqq*, the Absolute Truth that serves as the axis of all existence. The digital era, rather than mediating human consciousness toward the Divine, exacerbates this rupture by presenting the world as a constellation of hollow representations that refer to nothing but themselves (Nasr, 1994).

Jean Baudrillard (1994) describes this condition as the dominance of hyperreality, a state in which simulation becomes more real than reality itself, and reality no longer matters. Within the atmosphere of hyperreality, humanity no longer encounters God ontologically and existentially, but through digital narratives framed by algorithms and social media. Even the representation of God becomes part of content trending topics, aestheticized fragments to be liked or shared yet devoid of the trembling spiritual depth. Here lies the paradox of our age: spirituality becomes commodified, and piety becomes performative (Piliang, 2011).

Piliang (2018) incisively dissects that the digital age has birthed a “non-place” reality, characterized by acceleration, decentralization of meaning, and the derealization of existence. The digital sphere is not merely a space for communication, but a domain of meaning-production that is entirely artificial. Within this context, religious identity itself undergoes distortion; reconstructed by virtual narratives that prioritize appearance and impression over substance. Spirituality ceases to be an existential relation with the Absolute, instead becoming a form of branding identity crafted to generate particular public impressions (Turkle, 2011).

This condition demonstrates that spirituality within digital society is undergoing essential erosion. Humanity loses inner depth as it is perpetually inundated by data, imagery, and visual disturbances that produce existential noise. As Han (2017) explains, in the “society of fatigue” (*Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*), human beings lose the silent space necessary for contemplation and self-awareness, such that religion becomes nothing more than a noisy ornament of social life, bereft of authentic *dhikr*.

Nasr (2006) argues that the recovery of spirituality must begin with the reconstruction of a worldview grounded in perennial metaphysical principles. Only by reestablishing the connection between humanity and the Transcendent through education and authentic spiritual experience can modern man rediscover the axis of his existence. In this regard, Islamic religious education bears a tremendous responsibility: not merely to transmit formal knowledge, but to rekindle the spiritual flame nearly extinguished under the hegemony of algorithms.

The hegemony of hyperreality also precipitates a deconstruction of religious symbols. Scriptures, *hadiths*, and even rituals of worship are represented through memes, short video clips, and narratives packaged into bite-sized formats for rapid consumption by digital generations. This transformation raises profound questions regarding the true meaning of *tafaqquh fi al-din*: is it still possible in a digital culture that is shallow and hyper-accelerated? (Postman, 1985). The answer necessitates a paradigmatic shift in religious education from a cognitive-informative approach to a transformative-contemplative one.

Nasr’s critique of materialistic modernity converges with Yasraf Amir Piliang’s diagnosis that in digital culture, the spiritual domain mutates into a space of simulation. In this simulated realm, the presence of God becomes merely one sign among other signs, reduced within an informational vortex stripped of transcendental power (Piliang, 2018). Thus, the need for spirituality is not merely a religious necessity, but also an epistemological imperative to reconstruct humanity’s perception of reality and of itself.

The gravest danger of hyperreality’s hegemony is not merely the loss of spiritual meaning, but the erosion of humanity’s very capacity to yearn for the sacred. In Nasr’s (2006) view, the spiritual human is one who longs to return to his divine origin. When even this longing is reduced to digital illusion, humanity finds itself at the most critical point of its existential history. It is here that religious education must reemerge as an *ars memoriae* a space wherein consciousness of the Transcendent is revived in ways attuned to the age, yet not drowned within its currents.

Islamic education in this era must serve as the final bulwark against the spiritual decay wrought by hyper-digitalization. It cannot remain confined to normative transmission

of juridical injunctions (*fiqh*), but must become a fertile ground for cultivating *insan kamil* a complete human being attuned to his connection with the cosmos, with God, and with fellow humanity (Al-Attas, 1995). Such education must generate ecological awareness, social spirituality, and inner silence as antithesis to the cacophony of the digital world.

In this spirit, the curriculum of Islamic education must be designed not to produce mere formal compliance, but to nurture existential awareness and interior sacrality. It must facilitate encounters between text and context, between revelation and lived experience, between *dhikr* and *fikr*, as inherited from the holistic and integrative tradition of classical Islamic scholarship (Nasr, 1994). Within hyperreality, piety cannot simply be displayed; it must be inwardly lived. And such lived experience is only possible if education is directed toward spiritual transformation.

The great challenge today is to transform religious education from legalistic to spiritual, from normative to existential, and from dogmatic to dialogical. Such transformation requires a robust epistemic foundation, as envisioned by Nasr through the principles of perennial wisdom, and reread in the light of Piliang's cultural critique of the illusory digital world.

Therefore, our task is not merely to reformulate the content of Islamic education, but to reconceptualize the very paradigm of religiosity itself. Education must serve as a medium of recovery, a space for the restoration of meaning, a site where learners not only comprehend God as a concept, but encounter Him as a living, liberating reality. This is both an intellectual and a spiritual endeavor one that demands the courage to plunge into inner silence amid the deafening noise of the virtual world.

It is within this domain that the relevance of Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang converge and mutually reinforce one another. Despite their differing intellectual lineages, both offer incisive critiques of the loss of spirituality amidst the tides of modernity and digitalization. Thus, revisiting their thought is not merely an academic exercise, but an existential undertaking to rebuild the spiritual foundations of humanity foundations now on the verge of collapse beneath the deluge of images and hyperreality.

Issues in the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Amid Digital Disruption

The problematics of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum amid digital disruption represent a paradigmatic crisis of both structural and epistemological dimensions. The current IRE curriculum continues to operate on the tracks of normative-doctrinal convention, while the social realities and cognitive landscapes of students have been radically transformed by the advent of digital technologies that engender new modes of thinking fragmentary, instantaneous, and visual (Prensky, 2001). Within this condition, religious education remains confined within the closed boundaries of the classroom, whereas students have already ventured into an open-ended world propelled by algorithms and data (Selwyn, 2012). Consequently, an epistemic conflict between the conventional curriculum and digital rationality becomes an inescapable inevitability.

Sayyed Hossein Nasr (2006) critiques modern education for severing humanity from its spiritual essence, reducing knowledge into the mere accumulation of data detached from the ultimate source of truth. Within the digital context, this condition is exacerbated, for

religious education is not only estranged from its sacred dimension but also subverted by the massive and uncured influx of information. The IRE curriculum thus becomes stagnant—unable to adapt to the swiftly changing tempo of the age, while simultaneously losing its spiritual vitality due to its failure to anchor itself in the perennial wisdom that should have been its foundation (Nasr, 1994).

Moreover, digital disruption has engendered a hyperactive logic that diverts students' attention away from contemplative reflection toward the accelerated consumption of information. Yasraf Amir Piliang (2018) interprets this phenomenon as an implication of an information culture that is both deconstructive and decentralizing, where meaning is commodified into fluid and illusory visual signs. Accordingly, the IRE curriculum faces a serious epistemological dilemma: how can universal and transcendent teachings be conveyed within a world constructed by unstable networks of representation?

In this regard, Miles and Huberman (1994) underscore the importance of curricular flexibility as a response to rapid social transformation. Yet IRE remains confined within rigid structural forms, entrapped in the religio-legalistic paradigm. Repetitive, memorization-centered modes of teaching become counterproductive in the digital context, which demands interactivity and creativity. This disparity renders students unable to experience the relevance of religious teachings within their digitally simulated lives (Baudrillard, 1994).

Furthermore, the IRE curriculum has scarcely addressed the domain of digital ethics, despite the fact that in this disruptive era, the moral challenges of virtuality are profoundly urgent. Phenomena such as hoaxes, cyberbullying, digital pornography, and consumerism constitute real threats to students' character ironically, threats that have yet to receive adequate pedagogical responses from educational institutions (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Ideally, Islamic religious education should stand at the vanguard of cultivating digital moral literacy. Yet in practice, the curriculum remains absorbed in ritualistic teachings divorced from contemporary sociocultural contexts (Zuhdi, 2015).

The shortcomings of the IRE curriculum are also evident in its incapacity to integrate digital technology as a transformative instrument. Technology is more often regarded merely as a tool for presentation rather than as a dialectical space to be infused with religious values. Yet Paulo Freire (2008) has long emphasized the significance of liberatory education fostered through critical awareness of social structures, including technological media. Hence, religious education should not be confined to the transmission of dogma; it must cultivate a critical spiritual consciousness toward the digital power structures that hegemonize today's public sphere.

Creswell (2014) reminds us that effective educational approaches in the contemporary era necessitate contextual understanding of students as subjects embedded in a dynamic world. However, IRE curricula often remain institutionalized within teacher-centered models that emphasize absolute authority of the instructor while neglecting students' personal dynamics. This stands as a major obstacle to nurturing an authentic and reflective religious consciousness among learners.

At a deeper level, the fundamental problem of today's IRE curriculum lies in its estrangement from the principle of knowledge integration. Al-Attas (1995) identifies this as the failure of *ta'dīb*: the inability of education to form human beings who are harmonious in

intellect, spirit, and action. An IRE curriculum that prioritizes cognitive aspects while neglecting affective and spiritual dimensions produces individuals who are symbolically religious yet spiritually fragile. In the digital age where religious symbols can be endlessly replicated and manipulated such fragility becomes increasingly acute.

The disjunction between the IRE curriculum and digital realities also results in the fragmentation of spirituality. Students experience a tension between normative religious teachings and digital lifestyles that lean toward permissiveness and liberalism. In such circumstances, religious education is no longer perceived as a holistic guide to life but rather as an irrelevant curricular burden. This condition is further exacerbated by the absence of pedagogical innovations capable of bridging Islamic values with the challenges of an ever-evolving digital world (Azra, 2012).

Rather than liberating, the IRE curriculum risks becoming an instrument of spiritual domestication if it fails to respond to the dynamics of the age. Education degenerates into mechanistic routine devoid of spirit, while students become victims of a system incapable of grasping their existential condition. In Nasr's (2006) terminology, this represents another form of *spiritual alienation* an estrangement of the soul arising from an educational system severed from its authentic divine dimension.

One of the most evident consequences of the IRE curriculum's failure to confront digital disruption is the emergence of a religiously ambivalent generation students who appear religious on the surface yet are spiritually hollow within. This phenomenon corroborates Piliang's (2018) critique of a culture entrapped in *simulacra*, where piety becomes a mere external performance devoid of inner resonance. Religious education, in this light, must urgently undergo a radical correction in its approach.

The pressing need of the present moment is to formulate a transformative IRE curriculum one that not only transmits religious content but also fosters resilient spiritual consciousness amid the digital storm. Such consciousness is not cultivated through repetitive information, but through existential encounters with transcendent values contextualized and dialogically presented (Palmer, 1998). Religious education ought to be a space for spiritual growth, not merely a conduit of dogma.

In this context, the integration of Sayyed Hossein Nasr's and Yasraf Amir Piliang's thought becomes profoundly relevant. Nasr, through his traditionalist lens, emphasizes the necessity of continuity with perennial wisdom, while Piliang, through his postmodern critique, alerts us to the dangers of a world reduced to images. When woven together within a curricular framework, these perspectives can provide the foundation for constructing an Islamic religious education that is both spiritually grounded and critically attuned to contemporary digital structures.

The transformation of the IRE curriculum amid digital disruption is not optional but inevitable. Without transformation, religious education risks degenerating into a museum of obsolete doctrines, incapable of addressing the existential struggles of today's students. Conversely, through epistemological, pedagogical, and spiritual transformation, Islamic religious education can serve as a steadfast anchor for students' spiritual identities amid the destructive tides of global digitalization.

The Concept of Religious Character in the Perspectives of Nasr and Piliang

The notion of religious character in the perspectives of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang represents a dialectic between perennial spirituality and a critical engagement with the hyperreal condition of contemporary reality. For Nasr, religious character is not merely an expression of ethical conduct or ritual performance; rather, it is an ontological state in which human beings experience an intimate connectedness with God as the Absolute Source of all reality (Nasr, 1994). Within this framework, religious character is cultivated through authentic self-knowledge, for to know oneself is to know God, as articulated in the classical metaphysical dictum of Islamic tradition: *man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu* ("he who knows himself knows his Lord").

In contrast, Piliang approaches the notion of religious character through his critical reading of the fragmentation of meaning in postmodern society. For him, religious character today is threatened by the implosion of meaning the dissolution of spiritual depth under the weight of endlessly recycled symbolic representations devoid of transcendental grounding (Piliang, 2003). In a society constituted by images and simulations, piety becomes performative and frequently loses its authentic ethical and spiritual substance. Thus, religious character cannot be understood merely as normative compliance; it must instead be grasped as an epistemological resistance against the domination of artificial reality.

Within Nasr's paradigm, the formation of authentic religious character begins with the education of the soul through *ta'dib*: the purification of the heart and the cultivation of *adab* (spiritual courtesy) as the mirror of knowledge sourced in divine revelation (Nasr, 2006). Education, therefore, is not the mechanical transfer of information, but the restoration of humanity to its primordial spiritual nature, long obscured by the fog of modern materialism. Religious character, in Nasr's view, is not a cultural construct but a reflection of awareness of the sacred cosmic order.

Conversely, Piliang contends that awareness of such sacredness has disintegrated in the digital age. Hyperreality engenders a condition in which religious symbols are consumed without spiritual consciousness, even commodified into visual artifacts stripped of their transcendent aura (Piliang, 2011). In such circumstances, the cultivation of religious character must begin with the deconstruction of false piety that lingers at the symbolic surface, devoid of essential substance. Piliang's critique opens a space for the re-actualization of spirituality that is reflective and critical, rather than dogmatic and passive.

For Nasr, religious character is formed by a cosmic consciousness that envisions humanity as *khalifah*—custodians who preserve the harmony of creation rather than as mere ritualistic beings. Spirituality, thus, is intimately bound to ecological and cosmological responsibility. Consequently, religious character entails not only piety toward God, but also a profound love for the cosmos as the manifestation of His presence (Nasr, 1997). Religious character education, therefore, must integrate environmental values, spiritual aesthetics, and an awareness of the cosmic order.

Unlike Nasr, who grounds religious character in metaphysical foundations and classical Islamic mysticism, Piliang foregrounds a critical awareness of spiritual alienation produced by systems of media and technology. In a space saturated with images and simulations, humanity loses its existential center. Hence, for Piliang, religious character in the

digital era must be forged through resistance against the alienation from authentic meanings through rediscovery of the inner realm, a silent space beyond the cacophony of representation (Piliang, 2018).

When these two perspectives are dialectically intertwined, they yield a comprehensive framework for cultivating religious character: one that integrates the essential-spiritual (Nasr) with the critical-contextual (Piliang). Both reject the shallow moralistic approach in religious education and instead advocate a model of character formation rooted in reflective, profound, and transformative spirituality. In this vision, religious education ceases to be a domain of repetitive dogma and becomes a crucible for forging souls capable of standing firm amid a rapidly changing world.

Nasr emphasizes the perennial wisdom (*al-hikmah al-khālidah*) as the core of spiritual education: an eternal wisdom transcending temporal boundaries, rooted in divine revelation that never decays with time (Nasr, 1989). In this sense, religious character is not a mere set of norms but the fruit of inner illumination that places God as the axis of all action. Education, therefore, must facilitate a spiritual encounter between the learner and the transcendent source of truth, rather than merely instilling formalistic obedience.

Piliang, by contrast, interrogates the social and technological structures that generate pseudo-piety through media mechanisms. In the digital society, he argues, even religion risks being reduced to content absorbed into the algorithm, stripped of its spiritual gravitas (Piliang, 2010). Thus, religious character education must also function as an epistemological detoxification: restoring human consciousness from the captivity of simulation culture toward personal, silent, and authentic religious experience.

Both thinkers converge on the primacy of *consciousness* as the essence of religious character. For Nasr, this consciousness is *dhikr* the ceaseless remembrance of God in every breath of life. For Piliang, religious consciousness is resistance against symbolic structures that oppress and suffocate the autonomy of meaning. Both, therefore, demand a spiritual awakening that transcends ritualism, engaging intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions alike.

In the realm of education, the insights of Nasr and Piliang call for a religious curriculum that is simultaneously transcendent and responsive to contemporary realities. Religious education must become a field of meaning-making, not a rigid classical chamber ossified by repetition. The envisioned religious character is not merely that of a ritualistic devotee, but of a morally resilient, spiritually intelligent, and socially-ecologically sensitive individual. Such a model can only emerge from a synthesis that combines wisdom with critique, *adab* with deconstruction, Sufism with poststructuralism.

From Nasr's perspective, religious character education is the path of purifying the soul and returning humanity to its divine axis, lost amidst the profane modernity. In Piliang's framework, it is a struggle to recover meaning in a world governed by illusion and disinformation. The convergence of these frameworks produces a generation not only of faith, but also of consciousness free from the entanglement of misleading symbolic hegemonies.

Thus, the discourse on religious character in the perspectives of Nasr and Piliang cannot be understood in isolation. It must be appreciated as a synthesis between the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of modern spirituality. In a world adrift, both thinkers invite us to return: one to God, the fountain of authentic meaning, and the other to critical consciousness that dismantles the tyranny of symbols. To cultivate religious character today, then, is to cultivate the whole human being anchored in the silence of divine presence, and courageous amid the tumult of worldly noise.

The Formulation of a Transformative Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

The formulation of a transformative curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in the digital age demands a radical reorientation that transcends the mere drafting of normative syllabi, advancing instead toward the construction of an epistemic system capable of awakening both the spiritual and intellectual consciousness of learners. Within this framework, the curriculum is no longer to be understood as an administrative instrument, but rather as a dialectical arena wherein transcendent values engage dynamically with the fluid and complex realities of the contemporary world (Tyler, 1949). Religious education, therefore, cannot be reduced to the rote memorization of doctrines; it must cultivate a reflective awareness that holistically shapes religious character, encompassing the cognitive, affective, and conative domains (Bloom, 1956).

A transformative curriculum in the context of IRE presupposes openness to the dynamism of the age without relinquishing its metaphysical orientation. Accordingly, this formulation must be rooted in a reconstructive paradigm as envisioned by Paulo Freire, where education functions as a praxis of liberation a synthesis of critical reflection and transformative action (Freire, 2005). Within this frame, IRE ought to emerge not as an instrument of ideological domestication, but as a spiritual dialogical space bridging the revealed text with the social context, and reconciling celestial values with earthly voices.

Sayyed Hossein Nasr, with his vision concerning the crisis of modern human spirituality, calls for education to be restored to its sacred roots namely, as a pathway toward knowledge that ennobles existence and reconnects humanity with transcendent reality (Nasr, 1989). The transformative formulation of IRE must respond to this call by integrating dimensions of Sufism, Islamic cosmology, and the principle of *tawhīd* into every curricular component. The curriculum must no longer serve merely as a vehicle for transmitting arid jurisprudential rulings, but rather as a torrential current guiding the soul in its search for existential meaning amid the cacophony of digital noise.

Conversely, Yasraf Amir Piliang critiques educational systems ensnared in the banality of hyperreality. He argues that institutions of learning often become trapped in the production of simulacra, where knowledge ceases to liberate and instead ensnares individuals within the illusion of images (Piliang, 2011). In this regard, the formulation of a transformative curriculum must embody a deconstructive spirit toward formalistic dogmas that restrict spirituality to external symbols. IRE must instead be taught through hermeneutical approaches that open space for the contestation of meaning, critical reflection, and self-awareness.

A transformative curriculum further requires an ontological shift in perceiving learners not as passive recipients of information, but as active and authentic subjects of

learning, as articulated by Vygotsky in his theory of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, the IRE curriculum should not only teach what is true, but also how truth can be recognized, embodied, and internalized contextually. Dialogical, contemplative, and aesthetic spaces must therefore be facilitated to enable students to encounter religious values through existential experience.

The formulation of a transformative IRE curriculum is inseparable from the integral epistemology of Islam, which bridges revelation, reason, intuition, and lived experience as sources of knowledge. This integrative model stands in sharp contrast to the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences inherited from epistemological colonialism. Hence, curricular construction must strive to embed spiritual values across all domains of life from social ethics and ecological consciousness to the sophistication of digital technologies (Al-Attas, 1993). The curriculum thus becomes a locus of reconciliation between the sacred and the profane, between tradition and innovation.

Transformative religious education must also dare to challenge pedagogical approaches that are exclusivist and textualist. As Mezirow asserts, transformative learning does not occur through one-way lectures but through disorienting experiences that provoke critical consciousness and paradigm reconstruction (Mezirow, 1991). Consequently, the pedagogical orientation of the IRE curriculum must emphasize spiritual experience-based learning, critical inquiry into social realities, and interfaith dialogue as expressions of inclusive religiosity.

Moreover, within the digital context, the formulation of an IRE curriculum must address media literacy and digital ethics. Religious education can no longer remain blind to algorithms, viral content, and disinformation that shape collective consciousness. The IRE curriculum must therefore become a space of spiritual literacy, equipping students with the capacity to read the digital reality critically and ethically, enabling them to navigate meaning in the ocean of hyperreality without losing their spiritual compass (Piliang, 2018).

It must also be emphasized that a transformative curriculum requires a praxis dimension. Religious values taught cannot remain confined to the cognitive domain but must be translated into tangible social action. Religious education must internalize the prophetic spirit that drives social consciousness, justice advocacy, and solidarity with the oppressed. A curriculum that cultivates genuine religious character is one that awakens empathy, moral commitment, and transformative action (Abdullah, 2006).

Such a curriculum likewise demands the involvement of all stakeholders educators, students, policymakers, and the wider community in its design. This principle of participatory curriculum development ensures that every stakeholder contributes to defining the aims, content, strategies, and evaluations of learning. Such a model generates collective ownership and responsibility for the religious values the curriculum seeks to embody (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017).

Within the architecture of this transformative curriculum, an interdisciplinary approach becomes indispensable. IRE must not be taught in isolation but must engage with philosophy, sociology, anthropology, as well as media and technology studies. Through this approach, students will not only comprehend Islam as a set of doctrines but also as a dialogical worldview open to the dynamism of the age (Nasr, 1994).

Evaluation in a transformative curriculum must likewise transcend mere cognitive measurement. The assessment of religious character ought to be formative, reflective, and holistic, touching the spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions of learners. Authentic assessments, spiritual portfolios, and reflective journals are therefore more representative methods than conventional written examinations (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Thus, the formulation of a transformative Islamic Religious Education curriculum constitutes both an epistemological and practical struggle to cultivate a generation that not only understands religious teachings but also embodies them within the ever-shifting landscapes of reality. This curriculum resists stagnation, instead sowing the seeds of a spiritual consciousness that is critical, reflective, and contextual.

Ultimately, such a formulation can only materialize effectively if there exists both the political and spiritual will among policymakers, educators, and the wider society to collectively shift the paradigm of education from indoctrination to liberation, from repetition to the pursuit of meaning, and from artificial piety to authentic religiosity. Through this approach, Islamic Religious Education may become a luminous beacon amid the darkness of an age afflicted by existential emptiness and crises of identity.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how Islamic Religious Education (IRE) can respond to the crisis of spirituality in the digital age by drawing on the critiques of Sayyed Hossein Nasr and Yasraf Amir Piliang. The analysis shows that digital hyperreality reduces spirituality to mere symbols and performative expressions, while modern educational paradigms often fail to nurture transcendental awareness. As a result, IRE risks producing learners who are religiously symbolic but spiritually shallow. The findings highlight that current IRE curricula remain trapped in normative and doctrinal repetition, insufficiently engaging with the socio-cultural realities of digital learners. By synthesizing Nasr's call to restore sacred metaphysical knowledge and Piliang's critique of the simulacra, this study proposes a transformative curriculum that integrates perennial wisdom with critical digital literacy. Such an approach emphasizes not only cognitive understanding but also existential awareness, ethical resilience, and ecological responsibility. In conclusion, Islamic Religious Education must be reoriented as a transformative practice that bridges tradition and modernity. It should empower learners to navigate digital culture critically without losing their spiritual compass, enabling them to embody religion not merely as ritual or representation but as an authentic, lived, and liberating reality. This reorientation is both an academic contribution and an existential necessity in guiding the digital generation toward genuine religiosity.

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