



A STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF ISLAMIC
STUDIES THROUGH CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AT
TWO PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS, JAKARTA,
INDONESIA

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Education (Teaching Thinking)

Institute of Education
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JANUARY 2012

ABSTRACT

This research investigated the implementation of critical pedagogy to encourage students' critical thinking in two private high schools, Jakarta, Indonesia. It examined the teachers' practice of teaching Islamic studies critically in the classroom. The major theory of this study is based on the idea of Paulo Freire on the critical pedagogy in his book, the Pedagogy of The Oppressed. The research was conducted using a self-constructed interview protocols and observation. The respondents were two teachers and ten students from two schools which are a good quality school and an average school. The finding showed that teachers who taught in the good quality school practises critical pedagogy to a certain extent. It was also found that the teacher who has a lot of experience and good academic background was good in teaching, in other word the teacher is active and enjoys classroom's activities. This study has found that students from a good school were critical and active compared to students from the average school. The implication of the study is important to educators in all fields of knowledge, more precisely in the field of Islamic studies as well as those who are concerned in the teaching thinking in education. The recommendation for the future study was suggested to examine a larger sample in national schools.

خلاصة البحث

يهدف هذا البحث إلى معرفة مدى تنفيذ طرق التدريس أو التربية الانتقادية لتشجيع الطلاب على التفكير الانتقادي في مدرستين ثانويتين خاصة، في جاكرتا، إندونيسيا. وقد بحث ممارسة المعلمين لتدريس الدراسات الإسلامية انتقاديا في الفصول الدراسية. وتستند هذه الدراسة للنظرية الرئيسية لبولوفريفيال التربية الانتقادية في كتابه تعليم المقهورين. أجري البحث باستخدام بروتوكولات المقابلة والملاحظات. وكانت العينة مدرسين اثنين وعشرة طلاب، إحداهما مدرسة ذات نوعية جيدة والمدرسة الأخرى تعد من النوع المتوسط. وأظهرت النتيجة أن المعلمين الذين يدرسون في المدرسة الجيدة يمارسون التربية الانتقادية إلى حد ما. ووجد أيضا أن المدرس الذي لديه الكثير من الخبرة والخلفية الأكاديمية الجيدة جيد في التدريس، بمعنى آخر أنه معلم نشط يتمتع بالنشاطات الصفية. وقد وجدت هذه الدراسة أن الطلاب من المدرسة الجيدة انتقاديين ونشطاء بالمقارنة مع طلاب المدرسة من المستوى المتوسط. الآثار المترتبة على هذه الدراسة تعتبر ذات أهمية للمعلمين في جميع ميادين المعرفة، وأكثر تحديدا في حقل الدراسات الإسلامية، فضلا عن أولئك الذين يهتمون في التدريس التفكيرى. توصي الدراسة لفحص عينة أكبر في المدارس الوطنية في الدراسات المستقبلية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education of Teaching Thinking.

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Suhailah Hussien
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Education of Teaching thinking.

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Siti Rafiah Abd. Hamid
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the results of own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for my other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Lissa Edwar

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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To my beloved father and mother, my lovely sisters

And to all educators

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of the Almighty Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful.

First of foremost, I owe everything to Almighty Allah for giving me endless strength, grace and wisdom in my life. To Him alone be all the glory. I wish to extend my special thanks for great support and significant intellectual contribution of many individuals to whom I am most grateful.

First and foremost, I would like to extend an honorable gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Suhailah Hussien for her support, assistance and valuable advices. Also thanks to my second reader of my thesis, Dr. Siti Rafiah Abdul Hamid for being scrupulous in reviewing my thesis.

My endless gratitude and appreciation to all lecturers of the Institute of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia, especially my lecturers; Prof. Rosnani Hashim, Prof. Yedullah Kazmi, Prof. Sidek Baba, Prof Mohamad Sahari Bin Nordin, Dr. Nik Suryani, Dr. Nor Azian Mohd Noor, Dr. Mohd Johdi Saleh, Dr. Mohyani Bin Razikin, who shared their precious knowledge and experiences during my period of study. May Allah reward them for their good deeds as teachers and educators for the *ummah*. My deep appreciation goes to my beloved friends; kak Noviana Mustapha, Farida Syifa, Meta Astriwulandani, Laila Yasin, kak dedek, kak abidah, Aishah Abdul, kak Zarina Mohammad, kak Dewi Febrian, Alfa Madika, Fatma Broma, Kak Jannah, Farihah Ahmad, Saminem, Eva noviana, kak dwita, kak nazli, kak wina, kak witri, kak Yuli, Diana, Ratih, kak liza shahnaz, kak marlina, all SLEU's officer and the administrative staff of the Institute Education International Islamic University Malaysia; kak Fajariah, kak Nor riza Arifin, kak Nor Haslinda, Meorsyahfitri, Lukman, Kak Farhanah for their help, support and assistances.

Finally, I would like to dedicate an endless gratitude to my parents, H. Edwar Bujang and Hj. Darmayeti Edwar, for their genuine love, support and constant prayers. Also to my sisters, brother in-laws and all family member for their encouragement and motivation during my study time.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Many discussions of critical pedagogy are usually related to social research. It basically transforms societal ideologies to educational ideologies by involving the teachers and the students to discuss socio-educational topics, and to be aware about the society's problems. Such a particular way of cooperation assesses critical thinking which is needed to solve many related issues.

Nowadays, many educators have recognized that the world has changed and education should neither be stagnant nor traditional. They believed that students need to be able to make independent decisions (Kincheloe, 2004). The social condition is rapidly changing and requires youth to be able to think fast, to make wise decisions and to have the ability to produce critical comments. Therefore, they are encouraged to access critical thinking learning procedures, to acquire the steps that are needed to produce critical comments against the traditional schooling. Rosnani Hashim and Suhailah Hussein (2003) stated that to be successful in today's life, students need to have the ability to think well in order to produce critical thoughts. Chaffee (1988) argued that teaching the critical skills are considered to be the most important fundamental attitude for success in academic courses. Accordingly, being a critical thinker can be assumed as the main goal of education that will enable students to have the capability to think well in order to have the ability to produce critical perspectives.

Teaching students to think critically in this research is not a discussion about the cognitive skill level of critical thinking skill that emphasized on students' higher

order thinking skills. But it is related to how teachers teach critical thinking in education to see the improvement of students' critical activity to think rationally, to have a good judgment in understanding the knowledge and in clarifying the information that has been accepted (Stratton, 1999). Stratton also identified critical thinking as a particular type of thinking to review, to evaluate and to revise the ideas that have been produced. Therefore, the discussion will be on how the students can be able to think well by their individual critical thought.

It will challenge the students to talk, to argue and to use their own thinking during reproducing and reconstructing knowledge compared to merely listening to teachers' lectures. This condition is opposite to the traditional teaching environment which is considered to be a teacher-centered dialogue, where students act as the listeners and teacher as the only source of knowledge.

Emphasizing on critical thinking in education has been popular in western schools since many years ago. There is an agreement among western educators to teach students to think critically through education (Kincheloe, 2004). Hence, they are applying it as an important goal of the learning in school until today. Apart from the western education, the Islamic education in Indonesia does not experience many changes in their teaching strategy.

Nuryatno (2008) indicates that the main critics of Islamic studies in Indonesian school are identified as normative, abstract and theoretical subject. Most of the classes are still using traditional methodological approach instead of applying the critical teaching approach. Similarly, the Indonesian education is rather based on transferring the information, memorizing the lessons without the need to use critical skills (Shaleh, 2005). Many of the teachers merely seem to only transfer information, doing

repetition without providing the students with the chances to think beyond the current situations (Nuryatno, 2008).

Meanwhile, at this age of globalization, Indonesian Muslim youth encounter a big challenge in keeping holds with the right ideology in their lives and especially in being responsive to the Islamic values by prioritizing its values. The Muslim youths are viewed to be facing different kind of challenges, which could possibly be moral, social, or political issues. As Fok Shui Che (2002) states there are big challenges of moral, social, and political issues that have become increasingly intellectually complex than in the previous age. Hence, Indonesian schools should be ready to confront with all kind of challenges by preparing students to be independent Muslim thinkers.

The intention of combining critical thinking into practice can be related to the consideration of grouping criticality with educational issues. Such a combination is always viewed to be a related critical pedagogical concept. Critical pedagogy attempts to implement democratic educations that make students participate directly in the teaching and learning processes, as critical pedagogy is mostly related to the implementation of liberation and the empowerment of education. This particular implementation is viewed to be related to Dewey's idea of democratic education and Freire's idea that defines this approach as a question-posing education (Mencke, 2010).

Suhailah Hussein (2007) believes that practicing critical pedagogy in Islamic education is considered to be an important paradigm as an adequate resolution to the issue of crisis in the Muslim mind. It promotes learners to be active seekers rather than passive receivers. The intention of being critics has a very positive attitude as it invites the students to rethink and to reevaluate what has already been understood to raise the

level of *Iman* or faith. Thus, critical pedagogy analyses the teacher's and the students' beliefs, views, practices and values by defining the meaning on how they construct the truth.

Meanwhile, the idea of critical pedagogy is needed to be Islamized, because critical pedagogy is introduced in the west, and therefore, needs to be grounded on the Islamic worldview (Suhailah Hussein, 2007). The word "liberation" should be Islamized to refer to human's intuition and the realization of Allah's existence as Muslims believe that Islam has already substituted all the human needs, *fitrah*, and that is already constructed as the truth meaning of being free. Thus, the construction of the term "emancipatory" is related to the relationship between the person and God, and hence, the meaning of liberation of rational cannot be separated from the spiritual (Suhailah Hussein, 2007).

In conclusion, the introduction of critical pedagogy in Islamic education in Indonesian schools could be an important solution in the teaching of Islamic studies. As Daulay (2004) said, Indonesian educational system is still weak to overcome today's globalization era. Hence, critical pedagogy is an appropriate strategy to invite students to consider and recognize the social condition of today's era. Consequently, teachers should know how to teach critical pedagogy in order to stimulate students to think critically in the classroom, as Rosalina (2009) has found that, teachers are still confused about how to implement critical thinking method in their teaching and learning process. Chaedar (2005) found that 72% of his respondents viewed that Indonesian teachers are still using the traditional teaching method, rather than implementing the teaching of critical thinking. Around 46% of the respondents also viewed that Indonesian educational system has not been successful in making their students think critically (Chaedar, 2005).

Essentially, the type of personality that critics should have is viewed to be the basic character of Indonesian citizens, because of the democratic political system that requires its citizens to understand and to know how to be open-minded and respectful toward others' views. As Swartz and Perkins (1990) explained the consequence of applying and practicing critical thinking activities is that rather than reaching final decision of the an issue, citizens would be able to create a better understanding and to accept alternatives perspectives. Thus, based on these issues, Indonesian citizens have to start being involved in critical thinking activities especially students at school levels. They also need to be prepared to be the future citizen of the country.

Based on these reasons, this research intends to examine the implementation of critical thinking in Indonesian high school classroom. In this case, the subjects will be taken from the Islamic studies class at two national private high schools in Jakarta, Indonesia. It investigates whether or not, the Islamic teachers teach Islamic subjects critically. Furthermore, this research will discuss the possibility of the implementation of critical pedagogy in the teachers' strategies. Lastly, students' perspectives were also examined to see how their viewed their teachers' strategies of teaching in the classroom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research examines how teachers engage their students to think critically in their classes. Thereby, the researcher aims to observe and examine the teachers' teaching strategies and also students' perceptions toward their teacher's teaching strategies on teaching Islamic studies. This study is related to the ideology of critical pedagogy that have been studied by scholars such as Freire, Shor, hooks, Giroux and Apple (as

quoted in Breunig, 2009). The studies of critical pedagogy are illustrated in this table 1.1 below:

Table 1.1
The studies of Critical Pedagogies (Mary Breunig, 2009)

Critical Social Theorists- social and economic equality	Liberatory Education emancipation from oppression	Pedagogical Project of Possibility- disrupting the dominant (socio economic privileged) discourse	Feminist Pedagogy disrupting the dominant (male privileged) discourse	Post-Structuralism multiple “ways of knowing” that are situated, contextual, and partial	The Possibility of Pedagogical Practice- employing the theory of critical pedagogy in praxis
Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse	Paulo Freire	Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren (cultural studies), Michael Apple (curriculum studies), Roger Simon	bell hooks, Caroline Shrewsbury, Kathleen Weiler	Patti Lather, Donna Haraway, Deborah Britzman	Paulo Freire, Ira Shor

Critical pedagogy is essentially influenced by the idea of the neo-Marxian literature on critical theory (Burbules & Berk, 1999). Moreover, John Dewey’s idea on his democratic education theory also gives an idea to the form of Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy explanation (Mencke, 2010). Freire presents critical pedagogy as a dialogical relationship between student and teacher and advocates students for a collaborative learning effort. In other words, both teacher and student are building a

partnership in the classroom. They decided the objective of knowledge together, students are allowed to become integrated into the subject matter. Mencke (2010:32) states “Critical pedagogy has the ability to transform both the oppressed and oppressor; therefore, the curriculum must be concomitantly designed by teacher and student to promote intrinsic motivation within both and illuminate democratic practices within education”.

However, this research is guided by the theory of critical pedagogy, i.e. critical theory that is similar to what Paulo Freire described in his book ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ in 1970s. Freire indicates that critical pedagogy is the foundation of personal transformation by involving critical consciousness about the world and the person’s condition to the reality of world (Mencke, 2010). He further explained that critical consciousness is related to the meaning of social condition. He does not solely talk about a person’s social situation rather he focuses on class issues and the applicability of other forms of marginalization such as race, gender, sexuality.

Critical pedagogy was introduced as an alternative way of thinking in education that brings students to become critical thinkers and agents of change in their societies (Jungmi Kim, 2006). This indicates that teachers teach students to be able to perceive social, political and economic oppression and respond to the oppression of the community (Suhailah Hussein, 2007). As Burbules and Berk (1999) states critical pedagogy does not focus on implementing critical thinking as skills, but recognized it as part of a system of belief and action that are related to the power structure of the society. The main goal of critical pedagogy is based on transforming society by merging theory with practice (McLaren, 2003; Shor, 1996; cited in Mencke, 2010).

Based on the idea of critical theory, critical pedagogy was constructed from the association of agreement critical theorists of the Frankfurt School about the

relationship of education and society (Burbules & Berk, 1999; Suhailah Hussein, 2007). Thus, they named critical pedagogy as a critical theory's method of 'ideology-critique' (Suhailah, 2007). By presenting a question of "*who's got the benefits in education?*".

Consequently, there is no more traditional teaching approach but the emancipatory of knowledge, liberatory pedagogy or empowerment pedagogy (Jungmi Kim, 2006). As Freire (2000) states the traditional teaching model is a 'Banking Model' teaching. He affirms banking model education is actually organized in such a way to make people become an act of depositing when teachers are the depositors and students are the depositories of the information (Johnson and Reed, 2008). In this situation, the 'Banking education' (Freire, 1972: 73) is being recognized as follows:

- a. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- b. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
- c. The teachers think and the students are taught about.
- d. The teacher talks and students listen-meekly.
- e. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
- f. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.
- g. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
- h. The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
- i. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
- j. The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere object.

Critical pedagogy can be identified as transforming teachers' teaching methodology, from traditional to liberal teaching and is based on the about democratic and problem-posing instruction of teaching. It is because critical pedagogy is involves learners' critical consciousness that locates a new consciousness. Critical consciousness that it is allows students to understand about the world, finding truth and a knowing their own belief from multiple perspectives (Mencke, 2010).

Freire's ideas in critical pedagogy as cited in Jungmi Kim (2006: 2-6) introduces new perspectives of teaching that is against teacher-centered in the classroom. His idea of critical pedagogy encourages students to participate in deciding the goal of the subjects. At least, there are three key concepts of his description of critical pedagogy, which are:

1. Power relation in the classroom
2. A dialogues practice
3. A problem posing approach.

The 'power relation in the classroom' discussion talks about implementing a strong relationship between the teachers and students. It states that teacher and students' relationship is fundamentally revealed through narrative characters in any level, inside or outside the school (Johnson & Reed, 2008). In other words; this kindof relationship shows that, the teachers appears narrators, while students as the listeners. The teachers act as the subject of the information while students as the object who can only accept whatever the teachers provide them with. Freire called this classroom relation as the Banking of education. The relationship will lead the students to work as learner-receivers.

Banking of education creates a hierarchical relationship between the teachers and the students. The role of the teachers as experts and the students as passive acceptors will result in building an education that is based on memorization, repetition, without understanding the exact meaning of the concepts. Hence, this oppression of learning should be replaced by with an educational dialogue or liberal educational dialogue in the classroom.

The second key of the concept of critical pedagogy is the ‘dialogic practice’. In this strategy, a teacher builds a democratic society in the classroom. It is an open dialogue classroom. The concept is about two ways of learning process, where it involves the relation between the teachers and the students. This concept encourages the students to invoice their thoughts (Jungmi Kim, 2006). Students are encouraged to speak and to express their ideas on an equal ground. Such an environment of learning will lead to a democratic classroom that enhances two ways of communicative dialogue between the teacher and the students. The students will feel free to ask and to argue in a discussion session, and the teachers on the other hand, will have to accept and appreciate the student’s perspectives. Thus, a comfortable environment will be constructed to give all students the opportunity to ask and to share their ideas (Jungmi Kim, 2006). “Critical pedagogy aims to listen to students’ voices in the design and implementation of classroom practices” (Mencke, 2010: 25).

The other key concept of the critical pedagogy is ‘a problem-posing approach’. This concept is viewed to be the main concept of critical pedagogy compared to other approach able concepts. This concept is related to the ‘problem-posing approach’ which discusses about the existence of critical consciousness in the classroom that brings the idea into social practice. It encourages the students to be aware of the social realities by directly connecting the classroom discussion to issues in the society.The

implication of engaging critical consciousness in the classroom is, to engage students to take action and to bring changes in their lives. Suhailah Hussein (2007) believes that consciousness enables the learners to be aware of the social, the political and the economical oppressions. Through critical consciousness, the problem posing-approach allows students to see the world as socially constructed and to have the ability to critically analyze the connection between knowledge, power, and domination (Giroux, 2003). Moreover, it brings the students to the opportunity of taking any action to or against the oppressions.

Jungmi Kim (2006) asserts that students are encouraged to create some questions from any situational circumstances that they faced in the broader social context. In the classroom, the ‘problem posing-approach’ enable a teacher to present a democratic environment, which focuses on teaching the students on how to share their opinions and to do some discussions in order to enhance the ability in connecting the discussions to their lives. Hence, the purpose of this method is to produce critical thinkers and to gain the ability in solving any related societal issues. Thus, the conceptual framework of the critical pedagogy can be shown in figure 1.1.

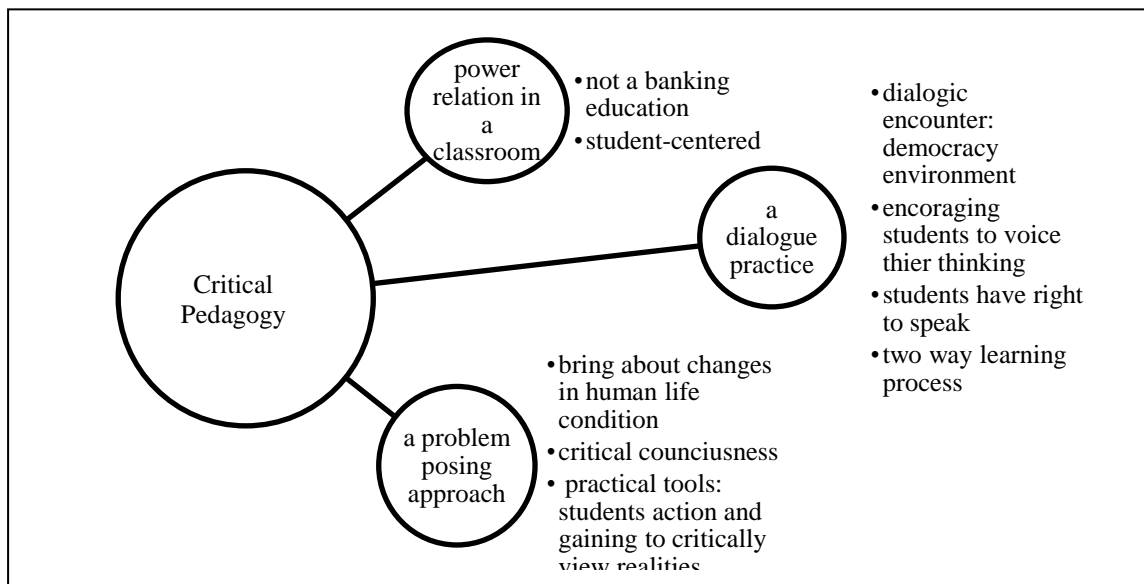


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of Critical Pedagogy (according to Jungmi Kim, 2006; analysis on Critical Pedagogy by Freire)

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

As a democratic system country that asks its citizen to express their ideas freely, Indonesia requires its citizens to gain the ability in producing critical thoughts. It will make the citizens become a self-monitored thinkers, and to have great communication skills. Elder and Paul (2005) believes that, enhancing critical thinking skill in schools will make the students self-directed, self-disciplined, and self monitored thinkers. Hence, they will develop their ability to decide the very important questions and problems, to gather and assess relevant information, to come with well-reasoned solutions, to think openly within an alternative system of thought and to communicate effectively to others.

Since the Indonesian population is viewed to be among the largest populated countries, thus each million of its citizens has their own perspectives in perceiving every issue. People need to have the ability to communicate effectively and to have an open-mind. Implementing such effectiveness is viewed to be very much important as

Indonesia needs to start implementing critical thinking skill starting from lower school level. Teachers should aim to teach the youths the appropriate related skills in order to become critical thinkers.

Essentially, Indonesian ministry of education's law no.23 on educational issues stated that one of the requirements for students who can pass primary and secondary school is the evaluation of students who can think logically, critically and creatively through the teachers' guidance (Kardi, 2006). This affirmation clearly stated that teaching thinking in the teaching and learning process is important. Hence, implementing critical thinking method in school should be one of the main goals of Indonesia national educational system.

Unfortunately, critical thinking has never been realized to be an important issue for teachers to be used in their teaching process (Awaina, 2009). In the classroom, teachers seem to use traditional method. Teachers are only viewed to be as facilitators of knowledge rather than stimulating students to think (Paul, 2004). Budiarti (2000 as cited in Chandra, 2009) also states that students' critical activity is still limited in the classroom. Teachers also feel that they are not competent enough to teach critical thinking, whereas the school curriculum is too crowded to allow the teaching of other things than those that will come out in the public examinations. Awaina (2009) revealed that Indonesian schools' curriculum did not emphasize on teaching critical thinking directly, even though it is stated implicitly in the national curriculum. Consequently, teachers still lack the teaching of critical thinking skills.

Realizing religion as the basic foundation of the country, Indonesia makes it obligatory upon every citizen to follow one religion as their ideology, philosophy and way of life. Thus, religious education became the compulsory subject that should be taught at all levels in the Indonesian schools (Salleh, 2005). It is stated in the Law of

the Republic of Indonesian, number 20, year 2003 about the National Educational System, chapter II about Basic, Function and Objectives, article 3 states that:

National education serves to develop skills and character forming as well as the civilization of the nation's dignity in the context of intellectual life nation, aimed at developing the potential of learners in order to be human who believe and fear of the Almighty God, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become citizens of a democratic and responsible (Shaleh, 2005: 39)

Hence, in Islamic studies, teachers do not have the chance to teach the subjects critically (Nuryatno, 2008). Moreover, the intention of teaching critical thinking skill to students is still out of consideration as teachers are still performing the active rule while students are still performing the passive rule. The purpose of teaching does not seem to move beyond the traditional teaching method although it is most relevant for the development and strengthening of Muslims' values, which are, iman, aqidah, fiqh and akhlaq. Apart from that, critical thinking should also be taught because it can be one of the ways to strengthen students' faith and to avoid misunderstanding.

Today's era is requires youth to be critics and conscious before merely accepting any information from other people. According Haidar (2004) some teacher feels that Indonesian teenagers still lack the understanding of and practicing the religious value. Thus, youth should be smart in order to adhere to the Islamic principles as their way of life, and in many cases to avoid misconception of Islam. In view of the current teaching of Islamic studeis in Indonesian school, this research intends to find out how teachers' teach Islamic studies in two private national high schools in Indonesia. The study explores teachers' implementation of critical approach in their teaching strategies. The study also explores whether teachers use critical pedagogy in their teaching. The study employ interviews and observational methods.