

RECONSIDERING THE PRODUCTION OF POST-1967 RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE: A HISTORICAL-CRITICAL INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF ABU-RABI' AS EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

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Abstract:

The study of Islam, education, and contemporary problems is often stuck in two simplifications: (1) normative textualism that argues that tradition is considered sufficient and self-answering; (2) secularist criticism that considers religion as a residue that must be abandoned. This study considers Contemporary Arab Thought (2004) by Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' to provide a fairly productive worldview, because it shifts the focus lens to the process of knowledge production: how religious thought is produced, legitimized, and transmitted through institutions, politics, and pedagogical practices. The method used was the qualitative document analysis of the monograph, by conducting argument mapping, theme coding and traceability audit so that each claim could be shown its source in the main text. There are four findings: (1) "post-1967" is understood as the beginning of history that reconstructs the Arabic dialectic of Islam, modernity, and authority; (2) the dominance of discourse is maintained through a network of ideas, institutions, and power, not through arguments alone; (3) the most fundamental issue of education is the tradition of criticism that is sensitive to the historical context and the discipline of verification that is still weak, this can be observed through the strengthening of memorization rather than scientific debate, as well as the elimination of the theme of "religion and society" as an academic study; (4) Abu Rabi' offers an anti-simplification way of reading with a re-approach between critical Islamic perspectives and Western critical theory. This research develops implications for religious education as educational thought: curriculum as an epistemic architect, pedagogy as a verification of argument, and institutional ecology as a prerequisite for keeping criticism alive.

Keywords: *Abu-Rabi'; intellectual history; religious education; educational thinking; knowledge production; criticism; institutions; power; Islam and modernity*

INTRODUCTION

In modern society, the discourse on religious education often revolves around debate: what doctrines should be taught, what identities should be recognized, and what practices should or should not be practiced. In fact, the problem of education is a matter of the quality of the way knowledge is produced: how claims are made, tested, authorized, and corrected, in educational institutions. When this procedural dimension is weak, students can feel confident without a solid foundation and educational institutions tend to reproduce patterns of intellectual closure, rather than fostering criticism.

Through *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (Abu-Rabi', 2004), this study analyzes these procedural problems. Abu Rabi' does not see Islam as an abstract essence that stands alone, but rather he analyzes the modern Arab discourse on Islam as something born in history: shaped by socio-political contexts and by educational institutions. Abu Rabi' correlates the text with the context, by setting the range 1967-2003 (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 65). In this framework, crises are epistemic and institutional, not just moral or doctrinal crises.

Abu Rabi's analysis is considered relevant because it turns what is often read as a "religious-political" story into an educational question. The theme of "religion and society" in many Arab institutions of higher education, according to Abu Rabi', is almost considered taboo as an academic topic (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24). Criticizing the tendency of Arab education to focus on memorization rather than scholarly debate, Abu Rabi' also associated pedagogical practice with the relationship of knowledge and power (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 158-161). This is not a peripheral record, in fact it shows the mechanism of education that makes epistemic crises can continue to be reproduced.

Three contributions are offered in this study: (1) a synthesis that can be traced to Abu Rabi's diagnosis of the post-1967 crisis as a problem of knowledge production, not merely a debate on the normative doctrine of religion, (2) transforming the diagnosis into three working languages in religious education research, namely: curriculum as an epistemic architect, pedagogy as an exercise in verification, and institutions as a place for criticism to grow, (3) this study distinguishes between two things, namely the findings taken from Abu Rabi's monograph and the analytical implications proposed for religious education.

This research answers three questions: (1) how does Abu Rabi' analyze the post-1967 period as an intellectual crisis and a reconfiguration of knowledge production? (2) What kind of mechanism does he show regarding how institutions and power relations shape religious discourse and the possibility of criticism? (3) What kind of analytical implications can be taken for religious education as an educational discourse from the findings, while maintaining strict inferential boundaries?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Education as an Educational Thought: Knowledge, Criticism, and Curriculum Problems

The main focus of religious education, whether as an identity formation, civic coexistence, morality development, or an entrenched and orderly understanding of religious traditions, has been going on for a long time. However, behind this dialectic there is one tension, namely related to epistemology: the standard of validity in religious learning.

If religious education is understood only as an identity enhancer, students are only invited to receive knowledge that is claimed to be "ours", this

justification can be weakened, because it does not teach critical thinking about the reasons for receiving that knowledge. On the contrary, if education is understood as critical study, it will be accused of distancing students from the commitment they are living. In educational theory, this tension often arises as a difference between education as a means of transmission and education as the formation of *judgment* skills. Dewey's classical argument that education should foster reflective thinking, not just habits, provides useful direction – including for the context of a religiously pluralistic society (Dewey, 1916)

In religious education, epistemic questions become very important: what is considered a legitimate "reason," what counts as evidence, and how differences of opinion are managed without falling into two extremes: dogmatic closure on the one hand, or relativism that "dissolves" all claims on the other. Jackson's interpretive approach, for example, emphasizes that religious education needs to build understanding through the interpretation of traditions that are truly lived, while maintaining reflexivity and critical awareness (Jackson, 2013). In terms of curriculum theory, the curriculum is not limited to a neutral vehicle that accommodates material. The curriculum is an epistemic architecture: it has the authority to choose what questions can be considered legitimate, what methods are recognized, and what validation standards are used. This is an educational problem that Abu Rabi' (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24)

In this article, the concept of educational thinking used is not only a learning method, but a design principle that shapes epistemic practices: (1) the epistemic disposition that the curriculum forms, such as historical sensitivity, the ability to evaluate arguments, and humility in interpreting, (2) pedagogical practices to train such intellectual habitus, such as directed scientific debate, comparison, and argument mapping, and (3) the ecology of the educational environment that can protect or damage, such as academic freedom, governance, and the judging regime.

Islamic Reform Debate and Method Problems

In contemporary Islamic thought, the idea of change often emphasizes ways of studying and thinking rather than simply changing the content of doctrine. Fazlur Rahman emphasized the urgency of interpreting that understood the historical context, he criticized the pattern of traditionalism that accepts *turats* without critical reflection (Rahman, 1982). Meanwhile, Mohammed Arkoun encouraged a more radical study with the deconstruction of parts that were "unthinkable" due to orthodoxy and power relations (Arkoun, 2002). Recent studies that map neo-modern and postmodern reformist currents show that the reform debate is on methods and epistemology, not limited to teaching materials (Ahmad, 2023).

In the context of education, this discourse is considered important because it shows that change is not limited to "adding new material". What is more fundamental is to construct epistemic work, for example: placing discourse in the context of historicity, the ability to reason critically, and being open to

interpretive variants without being trapped in dogma and nihilism. Abu Rabi's thought relates to this intellectual tradition, but he provides an additional sharper institutional focus: he investigates how socio-political conditions, university culture, and authority structures shape the range of questions and methods considered legitimate (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 65; 24).

Production of Knowledge, Institutions, and Power

The third idea comes from social epistemology and the sociology of knowledge. In this perspective, knowledge is produced socially, so institutions, norms, and practices of credibility strongly determine epistemic reliability. Goldman's social epistemology, for example, analyzes how institutions distribute epistemic authority and how practices can be evaluated in terms of their reliability (Goldman, 1999). In intellectual history, recent works affirm that epistemology and historicism are key to understanding modern Arab debate, while simultaneously challenging simplistic dichotomy such as "secular vs religious" (El Shakry, 2021).

Abu-Rabi' project sits at the intersection of these three discourses: he reads the history of modern Arab intellectuals as an arena for the circulation of ideas through institutions intertwined with power relations. Therefore, education is not a periphery; Educational institutions are the main sites of the formation or weakening of epistemic virtues, as well as the reproduction of authority. The educational question: how institutions shape the epistemic habitus of learners through memorization, disputation, historicization, or theory production.

Mapping Contemporary Islamic Thought as an Educational Horizon

The literature of contemporary Islamic educational thought affirms that education is not sufficiently understood as a "religious doctrine", but rather concerns the establishment of knowledge authority, the transmission of traditions, and the fostering of epistemic virtue. Here, the concept of *ta'dīb* (Al-Attas, 1980) meets with a philosophical analysis of the goals of Islamic education and the challenges of colonialism-modernity (Memon & Zaman, 2016; Tan, 2018; Zaman, 2018). Other studies warn of the risk of indoctrination if religious education is only transmission without justification discipline (Tan, 2011), and encourages criticism of liberal-secular values and claims of Islamic education so as not to fall into epistemic closure (Sahin, 2018).

In the context of Southeast Asia, discussions about Islamic education also emphasize the complexity of institutional ecology: transnational currents, ideological orientations, and school/*pesantren* designs that negotiate with modernity (Suharto, 2018; Tayeb, 2018). Cross-regional studies show the diversity and variety of Islamic educational traditions (Daun, 2017), while historical studies of embodied knowledge also emphasize that education is a practice that instills habitus, not just the imparting of information (Ware, 2014). With al-Jabiri lenses, a deconstructive reading of school-centric design suggests that institutional change can change the epistemic logic of the curriculum,

including the way modernity is understood and taught (N.S & Naufal, 2017).

Epistemology, Authority, and Tradition: from *the Usul of Al-Fiqh* to Critical Theory.

At the epistemological level, some literature affirms the importance of an Islamic knowledge paradigm that is able to interact with interdisciplinary studies without losing methodological discipline (Mahmudin et al., 2021), including discussions on the integration of knowledge in education (Jarin et al., 2021). In the realm of public education, the themes of "epistemic rationality" and moderation are also discussed as problems of justification and difference management, not just normative slogans (Prasetia et al., 2021). In the realm of philosophy, the discussion of rationality and ethics at the intersection of Western and Islamic traditions helps to make it clear that the critique of modernity is not synonymous with the rejection of reason, but demands argumentation and the ethics of reasoning (Hourani, 1985; Mangini, 2018).

To read the knowledge-power relationship more closely, the genealogical approach emphasizes that tradition always operates through discipline and regime of authority (Asad, 1993). In Islamic law, historical studies of the *usul al-fiqh* and the transformation of authority show how continuity and change are governed through methodological tools that ultimately also shape the style of religious education (Hallaq, 1992, 1997, 2001; Wael B. Hallaq, 2005; Wael B Hallaq, 2005). On the other hand, the debate about truth and authority in modern Islam affirms the need for an epistemological framework capable of resisting reductionism without losing evaluative standards (Abou El Fadl, 2016).

At the level of Arab intellectual history and critique of modernity, al-Jabiri's project on the formation of "Arabic reason" places texts and traditions within the construction of modernity, thus providing a tool for reading the relationship between curriculum, authority, and historicity (al-Jabri, 2011; Zohdi, 2017). The history of knowledge transmission also shows that the production of historical Islamic knowledge was shaped by the cross-linguistic and institutional confluence (Gutas, 2012). On a broader horizon, cultural criticism in contemporary Arab thought emphasizes that "criticism" is not merely an attitude, but a conceptual work that is always linked to social-institutional formations.

In the realm of theology-philosophy, classical tensions about rationality and authority are seen in criticisms of philosophers (al-Ghazali, 1997) and in the mapping of wisdom traditions that try to integrate the dimensions of metaphysics and spirituality (Nasr, 1976). Meanwhile, al-Fārābī's political-theological philosophy of "virtuous religion" shows how the category of "virtue" can be read as a normative design for public education (Parens, 2006). In the discussion of the pluralism of contemporary Islamic thought, the works that map Arkoun, Abu Zayd, and Soroush affirm that epistemic plurality is a key theme in the critique of traditional-modernity (Zohouri, 2021), and the study of Arkoun itself shows how historical and deconstruction methods are used to interrogate the boundaries of the "thinkable" in modern Islamic discourse (Kersten, 2011). At

the level of early reformism, the study of Abduh and its impact on Rida emphasizes that reform often operates as an epistemological reform, that is, a change in the way of knowing, not just a change in content (Amir, 2021). Finally, the study of psychoanalysis and Islam in modern Egypt adds to the illustration that the production of religious knowledge can meet modern disciplines in complex configurations (Shakry, 2017).

METHODS

Corpus and Analysis Units

The primary corpus is Abu-Rabi' *Contemporary Arab Thought* (2004). The text is treated as an ongoing argument about the post-1967 Arab intellectual history, including claims about institutions, education, and knowledge-power relations. Secondary sources are used to position contributions to the study of religious education and Islamic thought. The unit of analysis is the unit of argument: a claim, the reasons that support it, the illustration of the case, and the implications stated or hinted at by the text.

Analysis Steps

The analysis was carried out in three steps: (1) argument mapping was used to extract and structure the argument units (claims → reasons → illustrations → implications), (2) thematic coding grouped the extracted units into four themes that were aligned with the research question. (3) Traceability audits test any thematic claims against the textual units and the underlying page references. When the textual basis is weak, the claim is revised into a more defensible form or moved to the discussion section as an analytical inference.

Validity, Trustworthiness, and Inference Limits

Since this is a document analysis, reliability relies on inferential discipline rather than statistical validity. Therefore, this article enforces two rules: (1) the claims attributed to Abu-Rabi' are supported by page references; (2) educational implications that go beyond text are labeled as "analytical-derivative implications". In addition, this article keeps contextual records of post-9/11 discourse to a minimum. Expanded studies need to include post-2003 Abu-Rabi' writings to base broader historical claims beyond this monograph.

RESULTS

Theme 1: Post-1967 as a Historical-Intellectual Horizon

Abu-Rabi' explicitly conceptualizes intellectual history as an attempt to establish links between texts, paradigms, and historical contexts, by establishing 1967–2003 as a relevant horizon (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 65). Within this framework, "1967" serves as a horizon that rearranges the questions that intellectuals can ask, the anxieties they articulate, and the sources of legitimacy to which they refer. He states that the book documents and analyzes "the most significant theoretical

output of post-1967 Arab intelligence", noting that the period produced a distinctive discursive formation rather than merely a continuation of previous debates (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 71)

The educational significance is that the crisis is both historical and institutional. If religious education treats knowledge as an enduring content and independent of historical conditions, then it can inadvertently reproduce epistemic rigidity. The Abu-Rabi' horizon framework suggests that educational thought must take into account historicity: how changing socio-political conditions shape what can be learned, what questions are legitimate, and what counts as authoritative knowledge.

A concrete illustration appears in Abu-Rabi'' comments about the fate of Islamist projects. He noted the "rapid post-1967 regression" of certain ideological formations and said that the promised keys to success were not realized (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 66). Apart from the normative evaluation of Islamism, the educational point is that the claims of knowledge are historically tested under conditions of failure and disappointment; Educational institutions can build the capacity to analyze such historical dynamics or even suppress them.

Theme 2: The Mechanism of Domination between Ideas–Institutions–Power

The second theme is that discursive dominance cannot be explained through argument alone. Abu-Rabi' repeatedly points to institutional locations, networks of authority, and socio-political conditions as mechanisms that allow some discourses to circulate as "valid" while others are marginalized. In a programmatic statement, he noted that contemporary political elites can "co-opt and neutralize" religious discourse (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24). This hints that educational institutions do not operate in a vacuum; Institutions can be channels of state interests, ideological policing, or credibility management.

Abu-Rabi' also identifies socio-structural tensions among the elite, implying a struggle between those who have hereditary power and those who have Western knowledge (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 49). This kind of tension affects who is authorized as an interpreter, what knowledge is funded, and what methodology is rewarded. From the perspective of educational thought, it highlights the economic-politics of academic knowledge: the curriculum and research agendas are shaped by the authority structures that determine legitimacy.

In this reading, Abu-Rabi' complements the social epistemology: if institutions allocate credibility and regulate discourse, then epistemic virtues are institutionally trained. In the context of education, this means that the claim of "religious knowledge" is inseparable from the institutions that certify knowledge and from pedagogical practices that accustom learners to a particular epistemic posture (Goldman, 1999).

Theme 3: Educational Criticism between Taboo Topics, Memorization, and Theoretical Deficits

The third theme is the most explicit of educational nature. Abu-Rabi' states that academic studies of religion and society are almost taboo in most Arab universities (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24). The problem is not that religion is absent from education, but rather that the historical-bound critical study of the social entrenchment of religion is limited, even noting that religion can be taught as dogma in key institutions. Educationally, these restrictions define what counts as legitimate inquiry and narrow the methodological repertoire available to students.

The Abu-Rabi' criticism extends to pedagogical norms. He stated that Muslims "prefer memorization to scientific disputes and studies" (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158). In the same discussion he observed that, in the theology department, the idea of "knowledge production" could be seen as controversial while the memorization of classical texts was glorified (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158). This observation crystallizes the problem of education: curriculum and pedagogy can produce competent memorizers without producing competent *reason-givers*.

Abu-Rabi' explicitly attributes this pattern of education to power. He states that "knowledge and power are interrelated" and implies that the absence of a theoretical treatment of Islam is evident in how the Islamic Studies curriculum is constructed in leading universities (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158). In adjacent pages, he sharpens his diagnosis by describing how students can be made to believe that "text, and not historical conditions, gives birth to text", and that memorization is the best way to approach text (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 160). These are powerful educational claims: pedagogical ideologies that deny historicity and reduce interpretation to *recall*. Such claims are in line with reformist criticism that emphasizes historicity and method-conscious interpretation (Arkoun, 2002; Rahman, 1982).

Furthermore, Abu-Rabi' notes that memorization becomes the rule across various educational sources, producing intelligence with different *worldviews* but similar epistemic habits (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 161). The result is not just pedagogical weaknesses; rather, it is an epistemic environment in which critical theory, social analysis, and historically based interpretations remain underdeveloped. From the point of view of religious education, this is a warning diagnosis: when pedagogy prioritizes *recall* and trivializes differences, education trains closure.

Theme 4: Anti-Reductionist Reading and Rapprochement with Critical Theory

The fourth theme is the methodological orientation of Abu-Rabi'. He argues that an "amalgamation" between critical Islamic discourse and Western critical methods is necessary, and he positions the critical theories of Hegel and Marx to Arendt, Horkheimer, and Habermas as a central force in the Western critical tradition (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 11). He also argues that a deep appreciation of the

dominance of capitalism is necessary to analyze modern Arab and Muslim societies, and that critical theory provides a tool for such analysis (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 12).

This orientation is educationally constructive because it proposes methodological pluralism without abandoning tradition. He rejected two reductions at once: (1) a reduction that reduces Islam to a doctrinal essence detached from history, and (2) a reduction that reduces religion to a social function without normative and interpretive depth. In the debate on Islamic higher education in Indonesia, similar arguments regarding an integrative-interconnective approach seek to connect religious studies with the humanities and social sciences (Abdullah, 2012, 2022). Abu-Rabi'' contribution is to affirm that such pluralism is not optional: without it, institutions tend to produce dogmatic closures or superficial polemics.

Close Reading of the Education Sections: from Memorization to Verification

The most powerful claims of Abu-Rabi' education are concentrated in his discussion of academic culture and the construction of the Islamic Studies curriculum. A close reading of this group clarifies the internal logic of its criticism and shows its educational stakes. (1) Abu-Rabi' diagnoses a curriculum-methodological deficit: the study of "religion and society" is institutionally restricted, while the theological department treats knowledge as something to be preserved rather than produced (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 24; 158), (2) he identifies a pedagogical regime in which memorization predominates as a preferential mode of interacting with the text – an order that undermines the capacity for historical-context-bound criticism and theoretical development (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 158–161), (3) he frames this regime as a knowledge-power problem, implying that the absence of theoretical treatment is connected to the way institutions construct curricula and regulate intellectual possibilities (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158).

Pay attention to the order of the claims. Abu-Rabi' first placed the problem of education within the broader institutional environment. He notes that questions about religion and society as academic topics are almost taboo in many Arab universities (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24). This note goes beyond describing the omission of the topic; it marks epistemic boundaries. If religion is taught primarily as a dogma, while its social immersion is methodologically limited, learners lose the critical vocabulary to analyze how religion operates within social structures. Such restrictions have educational consequences: it trains students to treat the social world as irrelevant to understanding religious discourse, making it easier for institutions or political actors to mobilize religious language without critical scrutiny.

Abu-Rabi' then turned to pedagogy. He stated that Muslims "prefer memorization to scientific disputes and studies" (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158). The key term here is not "memorization" simplistically – memorization can be a

legitimate practice in many religious traditions—but rather the elimination of dispute and study as a disciplined habit of inquiry. Disputation, in this context, indicates argumentative testing: a willingness to subordinate claims to counter-arguments, examine reason, and refine a position through criticism. When memorization is elevated as the primary epistemic virtue, education can be a reproductive mechanism: it produces authoritative repetition, but it does not necessarily produce justified beliefs. In the framework of Abu-Rabi', this is connected to the institutional suspicion of "knowledge production" in the theological department, where such ideas can be seen as repugnant (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158).

The stakes of his education were sharpened when Abu-Rabi' associated pedagogy with epistemic ideology. He describes a scenario in which students are made to believe that "text, and not historical conditions, gives birth to text", and that memorization is the best approach to text (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 160). This is a powerful claim about the denial of historicity: it positions the text as something that "gives birth to itself", regardless of the historical conditions in which the text is produced and interpreted. From the perspective of educational thought, this is precisely the curriculum-pedagogical configuration that blocks criticism tied to historical contexts. This also explains why Abu-Rabi' repeatedly affirms intellectual history as a method: if the crisis involves the denial of historical conditions, then historical reconstruction is not an optional "setting"; it is an epistemic corrective practice.

The next step of Abu-Rabi' is to place these pedagogical patterns in power relations. He stated that "knowledge and power are interrelated" and immediately attributed it to the "absence of a theoretical treatment of Islam", pointing to the construction of the Islamic Studies curriculum in leading universities (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158). In other words, the education regime is not described as a purely internal pedagogical choice; It is described as a product of an institutional order that regulates what can be said and what can be taught. If theoretical treatment is absent, it is not only because the teacher is poorly trained; Rather, because institutions and structures of authority do not reward the development of theories, they may even push them away. This is consistent with the broader claim that elites can co-opt and neutralize religious discourse (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24) as well as that tensions among elites form the authority of knowledge (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 49).

This close reading results in a precise diagnosis of education: crises are reproduced through a system that is intertwined between the boundaries of curriculum (taboo topics), pedagogy (memorization outperforms dispute), and institutional authority (knowledge-power intertwining). This diagnosis is not limited to one particular geography. It offers a transferable analytical framework for evaluating religious education systems elsewhere, including contexts when policy pressures encourage "safe religions" or "fully critical religions". In both cases, the risk is epistemic: either the criticism is suppressed by authority, or the depth of interpretation is replaced by an external criticism that is thin and

incapable of understanding the internal rationality of the tradition.

Theme 5: Capitalism, Modernity, and the Critical Curriculum

Although this book is not an educational treatise, Abu-Rabi' early methodological arguments hint at a "critical curriculum" oriented toward the analysis of modern systems. He argues that critical theory provides a tool for understanding capitalism as the dominant economic, social, cultural, and political system in the Muslim and Arab worlds over the past two centuries (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 12). This point is educationally important because it reframes what counts as "religious" knowledge in modernity. If the education system treats religion as if it is isolated from the political economy, then it can produce students who are able to repeat doctrinal statements but are unable to analyze the structural conditions that shape religious life such as state formation, the labor market, media infrastructure, and global capital flows.

Abu-Rabi' assertion of *rapprochement* between critical Islamic perspectives and Western critical theories (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 11–12) can therefore be read as a proposal for curricular pluralism that has an analytical purpose. The goal is not to import theory for the sake of prestige, but to expand the repertoire of explanatory and criticism tools available to scholars and students. In educational thought terms, this is a claim about what an intellectually responsible religious education curriculum should allow: not only an understanding of the internal meaning of religion, but also the competence to analyze the social and economic conditions that shape the formation, acceptance, and institutionalization of religious discourse.

This theme reconnects to the educational parts about memorization. If students are trained to believe that texts produce themselves regardless of historical conditions (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 160), then they are simultaneously trained to ignore the systemic forces that shape the production and circulation of texts and interpretations. In contrast, a critique curriculum normalizes movement from text to context: it treats historical conditions as part of the formation of meaning and trains students to ask how institutional and economic structures shape what becomes authoritative. In a pluralistic society, this kind of curricular movement can also support civic goals by strengthening students' capacity to diagnose and reject ideological manipulation, both religious and secular.

DISCUSSION

This section develops derivative-analytical implications for religious education. Primary texts support a diagnosis: epistemic crises are reproduced when institutions limit critical topics, when pedagogy prioritizes memorization over dispute, and when the curriculum treats texts as something that "gives birth to itself" rather than being historically situated (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 24; 158–161). From that diagnosis, three implications followed.

Derivative-Analytical Implications 1: Curriculum as an Epistemic Architecture

If "religion and society" become an academic taboo, the curriculum is revealed as an epistemic architecture that limits what can be known and how it can be known (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24). Therefore, religious education needs to be designed to protect certain epistemic capabilities: historical sensitivity, interpretive reflexivity, and social analysis. Concretely, it suggests the inclusion of intellectual history, basic social science literacy to analyze institutions and power, and explicit training to distinguish between texts, interpretations, and historical conditions. This kind of curriculum is consistent with reformist-methodological arguments (Arkoun, 2002; Rahman, 1982) and with an interpretive approach in religious education that emphasizes understanding through contextual interpretation (Jackson, 2013).

This proposal is not a universal curriculum, but rather a curriculum evaluation criterion: does the curriculum allow students to ask historical-conscious questions about the production of religious knowledge, or does it limit them to authorized answers? When the curriculum is dominated by rote coverage, it risks transforming religious education into identity maintenance without epistemic accountability.

Derivative-Analytical Implications 2: Pedagogy as Verification and Argumentative Ethics

Abu-Rabi'' contrast between memorization and "scientific disputes and studies" (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158) can be translated into pedagogical distinctions: *recall* training versus verification training. Religious education as an educational thought requires pedagogy *warrants*, namely claims, reasons, evidence, and counter-arguments, so that students obtain argumentative ethics, not performative certainty. This can be operationalized through: (1) the task of mapping arguments that separate claims-reasons-evidence-implications; (2) comparative reading protocols that force students to identify interpretive assumptions; and (3) assessment rubrics that reward justified reasoning and historical contextualization.

This kind of pedagogy is compatible with strong traditions because it does not negate authoritative texts; it clarifies the epistemic movements through which texts are interpreted and applied. He also responds to Islamic educational literature that identifies persistent tensions between traditional transmission and modern critical literacy (Abbas, 2018; Hashim et al., 2011). In Abu-Rabi' terms, the goal is not to replace tradition with external theory, but to prevent education from becoming a closed cycle of memorization without theoretical construction.

Derivative-Analytical Implications 3: Institutional Ecology as a Critical Condition

Abu-Rabi'' assertion that knowledge and power are interrelated (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158) suggests that reform cannot be limited to classroom

techniques. Institutions allocate credibility, regulate speech, and form the cost of dissent. Therefore, an ecological-knowledge approach is needed: curriculum, pedagogy, governance, and scientific norms must be coherent to protect criticism from political co-optation and from dogmatic closure. Here social epistemology becomes practically relevant: institutions can be evaluated on the basis of norms that increase reliability, openness to criticism, correction mechanisms, and protection against epistemic intimidation (Goldman, 1999).

Abu-Rabi' rapprochement with critical theory (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 11–12) provides a model for institutional ecology: a university culture that allows methodological pluralism while maintaining standards of argument. For the context of religious education in a pluralistic society, the point is analogous: religious education must sustain interpretive depth as well as critical precision, avoiding two risks – indoctrination and superficial relativism.

Minimal Contextual Notes: Post-9/11 Discourse

Post-9/11 public discourse often reinforces the securitised framing of Islam, which can influence education policy and public expectations of religious education. Since this article is limited to Abu-Rabi' (2004), this point is treated as a background rather than a proven finding. Further research expanding Abu-Rabi' corpus could examine how his intellectual history is connected to post-9/11 discursive shifts and education policy debates in various national *settings*.

Limitations and Research Agenda

The main limitation is the limitations of the corpus: this analysis is based on a single monograph. Although this allows for close traceability, it limits claims about the wider oeuvre of Abu Rabi' and about subsequent developments. Further research can (1) expand on the writings of Abu-Rabi' afterwards, (2) detrigulagate documentary diagnoses with empirical curriculum studies or classroom ethnography, and (3) compare the Abu-Rabi' approach with other frameworks in Arab intellectual history and religious education theory (Jackson, 2013; Shakry, 2017).

Theoretical Implications: Epistemic Accountability without Reductionism

The Abu-Rabi' diagnosis provides a conceptual tool to sharpen that balance: epistemic accountability. If religious education wants to avoid indoctrination, it must build the capacity to ask for warrants, why a claim is admissible, what reasons support it, and what evidence would abort it. If religious education is to avoid reductionism, it must also foster an interpretive depth, the ability to understand religious traditions as internally reasoned practices, not just social functions.

The three analytical-derived implications posed earlier can be restated as relevant design questions. (1) Curriculum: does the curriculum authorize conscious-historical questions about religious–societal relations, or implicitly

makes it invalid? Abu-Rabi' observation that "religion and society" can become academic taboos (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 24) provides an evaluative warning: taboo boundaries are curricular decisions that shape epistemic habitus. (2) Pedagogy: does classroom practice only reward memorization, or reward argumentative testing and interpretive reasoning? The contrast of memorization vs disputation (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158) proposes a practical standard: learners should be assessed on justificative competence, not just recall. (3) Institutions: do governance and assessment regimes protect criticism, or do they channel religious discourse into politically convenient forms? The Abu-Rabi' knowledge-power framework (Abu-Rabi', 2004, p. 158) implies that institutional ecology is not merely an adjunct, but a condition of educational possibilities.

These questions can be incorporated into teacher education. Teachers can be trained to distinguish between "teaching about" a tradition and "teaching from" in a tradition without reducing both to indoctrination. They can also be trained using argument-based mapping and controversy-structured protocols that discipline differences. This kind of training is in line with the view of educational theory that education aims to form judgment, reasoning capacity and differ responsibly, not just to have information (Dewey, 1916).

Finally, Abu-Rabi' rapprochement strategy provides a model for managing theory in religious education. His assertion that critical theory provides a tool for analyzing modern systems such as capitalism (Abu-Rabi', 2004, pp. 11-12) can be translated into a curriculum principle: religious education should equip students with conceptual tools to analyze modern conditions without reducing religion to those conditions. It supports a non-reductionist critical religious education: it is able to question structural questions – economics, authority, state policy – while still taking seriously the interpretive and normative dimensions. This kind of attitude is especially relevant in a pluralistic society when religious education is pressured to serve multiple agendas at once (identity, cohesion, critical literacy).

Summary: Claims Map-Implications

In summary, the claims attributed to the Abu-Rabi' text support a three-layered model. At the curriculum level, institutional boundaries determine what can be learned (taboo vs. legitimate inquiry). At the pedagogical level, epistemic virtues are habituated (memorization vs disputation and verification). At the institutional level, power relations form credibility and the formation of theories (knowledge and power intertwined). The derivative-analytic implications for religious education reflect these three layers: redesigning the curriculum as an epistemic architecture, redesigning pedagogy as a discipline of verification, and redesigning institutional ecology as a condition of criticism.

Operational Indicators for the Analysis of the "Epistemic Environment"

In order for the environmental-epistemic approach to be used by researchers and practitioners, it is useful to formulate operational indicators that

can be audited in real educational settings. At the curriculum level, indicators include: whether the syllabus authorizes questions that are historically bound (e.g., religious–societal relations) or implicitly excludes them; whether methodological pluralism is explicitly stated; and whether learning outcomes include justificative competencies. At the pedagogical level, indicators include: the proportion of assessments dedicated to recall rather than argument evaluation; the existence of structured disputes (debates, dialogical inquiry, mapping of arguments); and explicit teaching on how to relate texts to historical conditions. At the institutional level, indicators include: governance rules on controversial topics, protection of teacher autonomy, and the existence of correction mechanisms that allow curriculum claims to be revised in the light of scientific criticism. These indicators operationalize the Abu-Rabi’ diagnosis without enlarging the scope of the evidence beyond the primary text; He translates documentary criticism into actionable research and design tools.

CONCLUSION

This article argues that Abu-Rabi’ *Contemporary Arab Thought* can be read productively—for the sake of religious education—as an educational thought about the production of knowledge. Through traceable themes, Abu-Rabi’ constructs post-1967 as an intellectual horizon, analyzes discursive dominance through a network of ideas–institutions–power, criticizes educational norms that prioritize memorization and denies historicity, and proposes an anti-reductionist orientation through rapprochement with critical theory (Abu-Rabi’, 2004, pp. 11–12; 24; 65–66; 158–161). From these findings, the article derives three implications for religious education: curriculum as an epistemic architecture, pedagogy as a discipline of verification, and institutional ecology as a condition for criticism. These implications are presented with inferential caution and invite further research that expands the Abu-Rabi’ corpus and empirically tests the relevance of education.

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