

Integrative inclusive problem based fiqh learning for contextual understanding and epistemic engagement

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Abstract

The dominance of text-centered and normative pedagogies in Islamic religious education often limits students' ability to engage critically, contextually, and inclusively with fiqh learning. This study examines how an integrative-inclusive problem-based learning model can transform fiqh learning toward more contextual and interpretive engagement. Using a qualitative case study design, the research was conducted in an eleventh-grade classroom at a Madrasah Aliyah in Indonesia from January to February 2026, involving one teacher and 32 students. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, then analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings reveal that fiqh learning exists within a transitional space where normative transmission coexists with emerging contextual approaches. Problem-based learning increases student engagement and supports contextual reasoning, although its implementation remains situational rather than systematically embedded. The study also identifies a gap between procedural and epistemic inclusion, indicating that classroom participation does not necessarily ensure equitable knowledge construction. Furthermore, epistemic tension between normative legalism and contextual meaning-making emerges as a productive aspect of learning. This study contributes to Islamic education discourse by introducing the concepts of closed epistemic structures, situated pedagogical innovation, and productive epistemic friction as frameworks for reflective and context-responsive fiqh learning.

Keywords: fiqh education, problem-based learning, inclusive pedagogy, epistemic tension, contextual understanding.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) within formal education systems remains predominantly anchored in normative and text-centered pedagogical practices. In many Islamic educational settings, fiqh instruction continues to emphasize doctrinal transmission, legal memorization, and adherence to textual authority, often limiting students' opportunities to engage critically with the socio-ethical and contextual dimensions of Islamic legal thought (Halstead, 2018; Ilham, 2020; Sahin, 2018; Selwyn, 2021). Although fiqh historically functions as a comprehensive framework for regulating human conduct through divine law, its classroom implementation frequently positions Islamic law as fixed and immutable knowledge rather than as an interpretive and context-sensitive discipline (Kamali, 2021; Mardiana et al., 2020; Musonif, et al., 2026). Consequently, fiqh learning risks becoming detached from students' lived realities and contemporary social challenges, particularly within increasingly plural and dynamic socio-cultural contexts (Fahrezi, et al., 2026; Halstead, 2018; Saiin et al., 2025).

Globally, educational paradigms have shifted toward learning approaches emphasizing critical inquiry, meaning-making, and contextual problem-solving (Biesta, 2020b; Chen et al., 2021; Dolmans et al., 2015; Musonif, et al., 2026). Problem-based learning (PBL) has been recognized for encouraging analytical reasoning and active knowledge construction through engagement with real-world situations (Abdurrahman et al., 2020; Azis et al., 2026; C.-H. Chen et al., 2021). At the same time, inclusive pedagogy emphasizes equitable participation and dialogical learning (Ainscow, 2020; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Musonif & Misbah, 2026). However, fiqh instruction in many Islamic educational settings remains dominated by transmissive and doctrinal approaches, limiting opportunities for contextual interpretation and critical engagement.

Existing studies have examined contextual learning, value integration, and problem-based approaches in Islamic education. However, limited attention has been given to how these approaches can be systematically integrated within fiqh instruction, particularly in teaching sensitive Islamic legal topics. As a result, pedagogical models capable of combining contextual inquiry, dialogical engagement, and normative legal understanding within fiqh learning remain underdeveloped.

This gap becomes particularly significant in the teaching of jinayah (criminal law), hudud (fixed punishments), and bughat (rebellion), which involve ethical and legal

complexities requiring contextual interpretation (Alkouatli, 2018). Nevertheless, these topics are often taught through doctrinal explanation and memorization, limiting students' opportunities to critically engage with issues of justice and contemporary social realities (Panjwani, 2020; Sahin, 2018). As a result, students may develop reductive understandings of Islamic law that overlook its ethical objectives (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) (Kamali, 2021).

Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin Banjarnegara was selected as the research setting because it represents a formal Islamic educational institution where *fiqh* learning combines classical Islamic traditions with contemporary curricular demands. This context makes tensions between normative transmission and contextual interpretation particularly visible, especially in the teaching of *jinayah*, *hudud*, and *bughat*, which require students to negotiate textual authority, justice, and contemporary social realities.

Preliminary observations conducted in January 2026 involving one *fiqh* teacher and 32 eleventh-grade students indicate that classroom practices remain largely teacher-centered and text-driven. Learning activities are predominantly delivered through lectures and textbook-based assignments, with limited contextual and dialogical interaction. Students' participation is generally confined to answering factual questions. Students also experience difficulty relating *fiqh* concepts to real-life situations and tend to perceive Islamic law as absolute and immutable. These findings reveal a significant gap between the intended goals of *fiqh* education, namely fostering ethical reasoning, contextual understanding, and reflective judgment, and the realities of classroom practice.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of problem-based learning, contextual approaches, and value integration in Islamic education. However, these studies rarely provide operational pedagogical frameworks capable of integrating contextual inquiry, dialogical engagement, and normative legal understanding within *fiqh* instruction (Arizona et al., 2025; Fahrezi, et al., 2026; Halstead, 2018; Sahin, 2018). Empirical research addressing the teaching of Islamic criminal law topics within Southeast Asian madrasah contexts also remains limited (Ahmad, 2015; Halstead, 2018; Ramadona et al., 2026). This study addresses these gaps by proposing an integrative-inclusive *fiqh* learning model grounded in problem-based and contextual learning principles.

Theoretically, this study identifies a tension between normative *fiqh* instruction and learning approaches emphasizing inquiry, interpretation, and contextual understanding (Biesta, 2020). This tension demonstrates the absence of instructional frameworks capable of

connecting textual authority with ethical reflection and contemporary social realities in fiqh learning.

In response to these challenges, this study explores how an integrative–inclusive fiqh learning model grounded in problem-based and contextual approaches can facilitate students' contextual understanding of Islamic criminal law topics. The study addresses three research questions: (1) how is an integrative–inclusive fiqh learning model conceptually constructed within the context of Madrasah Aliyah education; (2) how is the model implemented in classroom practice; and (3) how do students experience and interpret problem-based and contextual fiqh learning processes?

Using a qualitative case study approach, this study examines how students and teachers negotiate contextual and interpretive learning processes within fiqh instruction.

This study contributes to the development of an integrative–inclusive fiqh learning framework that combines contextual inquiry, dialogical engagement, and problem-based learning within Islamic legal education. The proposed framework is intended to support teachers in facilitating interpretive engagement, ethical reflection, and inclusive participation when addressing sensitive fiqh topics in contemporary educational settings. In this way, the study contributes not only to Islamic education scholarship but also to broader discussions on contextual and dialogical learning within normative knowledge traditions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate how an integrative–inclusive problem-based fiqh learning model was implemented within a natural classroom context. A case study approach was considered the most appropriate design because the study focused on examining complex pedagogical interactions, interpretive processes, and contextual meaning-making within a bounded educational setting (Yin, 2021). The selected classroom at Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin Banjarnegara was treated as an information-rich case because it represented a pedagogical context in which tensions between normative fiqh instruction and contextual learning practices were particularly visible. The madrasah combines strong classical Islamic learning traditions with contemporary curricular demands, making it a relevant setting for examining how problem-based and inclusive pedagogical approaches operate within fiqh education. The study was

conducted from January 10 to March 25, 2026, during the teaching of second-semester fiqh topics, including jinayah, hudud, and bughat.

Participants consisted of one fiqh teacher and 32 eleventh-grade students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and six purposively selected students representing diverse learning experiences in terms of classroom participation, academic engagement, and confidence in discussion activities. Purposive sampling was used to identify information-rich participants relevant to the research focus (Patton, 2020).

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted across eight classroom sessions (90 minutes each) focusing on classroom interaction, the implementation of problem-based learning, and students' engagement with contextual fiqh issues. Interviews, lasting between 30 and 45 minutes, explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretive processes related to integrative and inclusive fiqh learning. Documents analyzed included lesson plans, instructional modules, and student assignments.

Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and audit trails (Lincoln & Guba, 2020). Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021), involving data familiarization, inductive coding, theme development, and iterative interpretation to identify patterns of meaning across the dataset.

The researcher acted as a non-participant observer while maintaining reflexive awareness throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality.

To enhance methodological transparency, the data collection design is presented in Table 1, while Figure 1 illustrates the iterative stages of thematic analysis employed in this study.

Table 1. Data Collection Design

Method	Frequency	Participants	Focus	Output
Observation	8 sessions (90 min each)	Teacher & students	Classroom interaction, PBL implementation	Field notes
Interviews	7 participants	Teacher + 6 students	Experiences & meaning-making	Transcripts

Documents	3 types	Lesson plans, modules, assignments	Instructional design	Document analysis
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Furthermore, Figure 1 visually represents the analytical process, demonstrating how data progressed from collection and coding to theme development and interpretative analysis, ultimately informing the construction of an integrative-inclusive fiqh learning model.

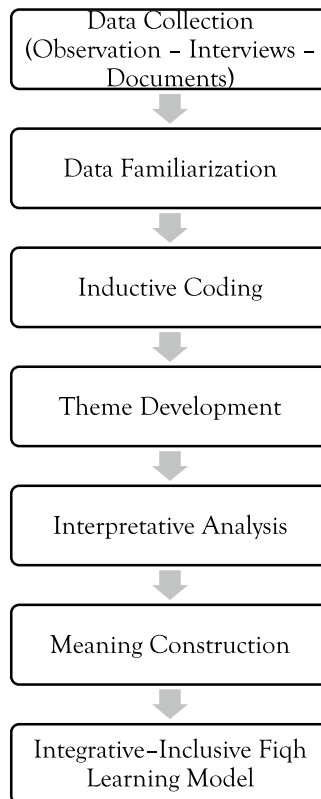


Figure 1. Analytical Process

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Persistence of Normative and Text-Centered Pedagogy in Fiqh Learning

Classroom observations conducted on January 15, 2026, indicate that instruction was initiated through teacher-led explanations focusing on definitions, legal classifications, and textual references related to jinayah. During the session, the teacher repeatedly

emphasized the importance of adhering to established legal formulations, stating that “Students must first understand the legal rulings as written in the classical texts before Discussing other perspectives” (Teacher observation, January 15, 2026). Classroom interaction was largely structured around explanation and clarification delivered by the teacher, while students primarily listened, took notes, and responded to factual questions. Classroom observations conducted on January 15, 2026, indicate that instruction was initiated through teacher-led explanations focusing on definitions, legal classifications, and textual references related to jinayah. Within this instructional configuration, students were positioned primarily as recipients of knowledge, as reflected in their engagement patterns, where most learners were engaged in note-taking rather than dialogic interaction.

This pedagogical pattern is further reinforced by document analysis, particularly lesson plans, which reveal a structured yet largely administrative design that lacks explicit articulation of problem-based or dialogic learning strategies. The absence of pedagogical scaffolding for interpretive engagement suggests that instructional design remains oriented toward content delivery rather than meaning construction.

Importantly, this transmissive orientation is not only enacted at the instructional level but also internalized by students as a dominant mode of learning. As one student explained during an interview on February 22, 2026, “the material is difficult to understand when it is explained too quickly and only through theory” (S4). Similarly, another student noted on February 5, 2026, that “usually we just listen and write, so it is hard to really understand” (S1). These accounts indicate that learning is constructed as a unidirectional process of knowledge reception, where epistemic authority is centralized in the teacher.

The Emergence of Situated Problem-Based Learning as Contextual Pedagogical Practice

Despite the persistence of normative pedagogy, the findings indicate the emergence of problem-based learning practices as a contextual pedagogical shift, albeit in a fragmented and situational manner. Observations conducted on January 29, 2026, during a lesson on hudud, demonstrate that the introduction of real-life cases, such as accusations of zina without sufficient evidence, significantly transformed classroom interaction patterns.

In this context, students began to actively engage in discussion, attempting to connect abstract legal concepts with social realities. For example, during a group discussion, one student stated, “in society, people often judge without proof, even though in Islam it requires

strong evidence” (S6, January 29, 2026), while another added, “if someone accuses without proof, it can actually be qadzaf” (S2, January 29, 2026). These responses reflect an emerging capacity for contextual reasoning and indicate a shift from rote memorization toward conceptual application.

This transformation is further supported by interview data. As expressed by one student on February 26, 2026, “when we discuss real cases, I can understand not only the law but also the reasons behind it” (S5). Such statements suggest that contextualized learning environments enable students to move beyond surface-level understanding toward deeper interpretive engagement.

However, this pedagogical shift remains situated rather than systematized. Document analysis reveals that problem-based learning is not explicitly embedded within lesson plans, indicating that its implementation depends largely on teacher initiative rather than a coherent instructional framework.

Unequal Participation and the Partial Realization of Inclusive Pedagogy

The findings also reveal significant disparities in student participation, highlighting the limited realization of inclusive pedagogy within the classroom. Observational data consistently show that active engagement is concentrated among a small group of students, while others remain peripheral participants. During the January 29, 2026 session, for instance, students such as S3 and S6 actively contributed to discussions, whereas others, particularly S4, remained largely silent and engaged primarily in note-taking.

This pattern is further substantiated by interview data. One student stated, “I usually just listen because I am afraid of being wrong” (S2, February 12, 2026), while another explained, “I am not confident enough to speak in front of the class” (S4, February 22, 2026). These accounts reveal that participation is not only shaped by instructional design but also by affective factors such as confidence and fear of error.

Observational data further indicate that classroom participation was influenced by hierarchical interaction patterns in which academically confident students tended to dominate discussion, while quieter students positioned themselves as passive listeners. In several sessions, male students were also more likely to initiate responses during plenary discussions, whereas female students participated more actively within smaller group settings.

Although small-group discussions provide relatively safer spaces for participation, they do not fully eliminate these disparities. Students with lower confidence levels continue to occupy marginal positions within the learning process. This suggests that inclusivity in this context operates at a procedural level, through the provision of participatory structures, without necessarily achieving epistemic inclusion, where all students are equally able to contribute to knowledge construction.

Epistemic Tension Between Normative Legalism and Contextual Meaning-Making

A central finding of this study is the emergence of epistemic tension in students' understanding of fiqh, particularly in relation to the interplay between normative legalism and contextual meaning-making. This tension becomes most evident in discussions of qisas and diyat, as observed on February 13, 2026.

When presented with a case involving unintentional killing, students articulated differing perspectives on justice and responsibility. One student argued, "if it is not intentional, it should not be punished the same way" (S3, February 13, 2026), while another responded, "but there must still be responsibility because someone has died" (S6, February 13, 2026). A more reflective position emerged when a student suggested, "maybe the law considers not only the action but also the intention behind it" (S5, February 13, 2026). These exchanges indicate that students are actively negotiating the relationship between legal rules, ethical considerations, and contextual realities.

However, this interpretive engagement was frequently constrained by teacher-led closure, where discussions were concluded through authoritative clarification grounded in textual formulations. During the February 13, 2026 session, after students debated the fairness of punishment in cases of unintentional killing, the teacher responded by stating, "regardless of personal opinion, the rulings in fiqh have already determined the distinction between qisas and diyat, and these rulings must be understood first according to the established legal framework" (Teacher observation, February 13, 2026). Following this explanation, classroom discussion noticeably diminished, and students returned to note-taking activities. This interaction illustrates how pedagogical authority operates not only through content delivery but also through the regulation of interpretive boundaries. While students initially engaged in ethical and contextual reasoning, the teacher's authoritative closure redirected discussion toward doctrinal certainty, thereby limiting the continuation of

dialogical exploration. Thereby reasserting normative boundaries and limiting further exploration of alternative interpretations.

Nevertheless, observations also showed that the teacher occasionally encouraged students to express differing opinions before providing doctrinal clarification. During one discussion, the teacher asked students to explain why they considered certain punishments fair or unfair before summarizing the formal legal distinctions. Although these dialogical opportunities remained limited, they indicate emerging attempts to create interpretive space within a predominantly normative instructional framework.

This dynamic reflects a fundamental tension between two epistemological orientations: *fiqh* as a system of fixed legal prescriptions and *fiqh* as a context-sensitive framework for ethical reasoning. This tension is further articulated in interview data, where a student noted on February 28, 2026, “I often wonder how these laws apply today because the situation is different” (S6). Rather than indicating confusion, such reflections can be understood as forms of productive epistemic friction, where learners begin to critically engage with the relationship between text, context, and meaning.

Taken together, these findings suggest that *fiqh* learning in this setting is situated within a transitional pedagogical space characterized by the coexistence of normative transmission, emerging contextual practices, partial inclusivity, and unresolved epistemic tensions. This condition underscores the need for a pedagogical reorientation that not only integrates problem-based and inclusive approaches but also explicitly acknowledges the interpretive and dynamic nature of *fiqh* as a discipline.

Normative Fiqh Pedagogy and Closed Epistemic Structure

This study makes three interrelated contributions to the field of Islamic education and contemporary learning theory. First, it reconceptualizes the persistence of normative *fiqh* pedagogy as a closed epistemic structure, referring to classroom conditions in which legal knowledge is treated as fixed and authoritative, leaving limited space for reinterpretation or contextual inquiry. Second, it introduces the notion of situated pedagogical innovation to explain why problem-based learning (PBL) practices often emerge during classroom interaction but remain weakly institutionalized within curriculum structures. Third, and most significantly, it advances the concept of productive epistemic friction to theorize moments when students critically negotiate tensions between textual legal authority and contemporary social realities as a generative condition for learning.

The findings both align with and challenge existing scholarship on Islamic education. Consistent with prior studies, the dominance of transmissive and text-centered pedagogy confirms long-standing critiques that Islamic education often prioritizes doctrinal reproduction over critical engagement (Ilham, 2020; Maharani & Musonif, 2026; Sahin, 2018; Saifudin et al., 2026). However, this study moves beyond viewing this condition as merely a pedagogical limitation. Instead, it demonstrates that such practices are sustained by a deeper epistemological orientation in which fiqh is constructed as fixed, authoritative, and resistant to reinterpretation within classroom contexts. In this sense, the issue is not simply how fiqh is taught, but how it is epistemically positioned, as immutable knowledge rather than as an interpretive and context-responsive discourse. This finding became visible through repeated teacher-led clarification patterns in which alternative student interpretations were redirected toward singular doctrinal conclusions. Such interactional patterns illustrate how epistemic authority is centralized within the teacher and authoritative texts.

Situated Pedagogical Innovation in Problem-Based Fiqh Learning

At the same time, the emergence of problem-based learning practices observed in this study resonates with broader findings that emphasize the transformative potential of inquiry-based and contextual learning approaches (Hung, 2021; Musonif, et al., 2026; Yusuf, 2024). Yet, this study critically extends that literature by demonstrating that the presence of PBL does not necessarily indicate pedagogical transformation. Contrary to the implicit assumption in much of the literature that adopting PBL leads to systemic change, the findings reveal that such practices often remain situated, contingent on teacher initiative rather than structurally embedded within curriculum design. This challenges the dominant narrative of pedagogical innovation by highlighting the gap between methodological adoption and epistemological integration. Practically, this suggests that PBL in fiqh education requires systematic curricular integration through structured case-based modules, guided reflective questioning, and assessment strategies that value interpretive reasoning rather than memorization alone.

Inclusive Pedagogy and Participation Inequality

At the same time, the emergence of problem-based learning practices observed in this study resonates with broader findings that emphasize the transformative potential of inquiry-based and contextual learning approaches (Anugrah et al., 2025; C.-H. Chen et al., 2021). Yet, this study critically extends that literature by demonstrating that the presence of PBL does not

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Productive Epistemic Friction and Interpretive Learning

The most significant theoretical contribution of this study lies in its articulation of epistemic tension as a central and productive feature of fiqh learning. While prior studies have framed the relationship between Islamic legal traditions and contemporary contexts as a problem of relevance or curricular adaptation (Alkouatli, 2018; Kamali, 2021; Musonif & Azis, 2026), this study reconceptualizes it as an inherent tension between two epistemological orientations: fiqh as a system of normative legal prescriptions and fiqh as a context-sensitive, interpretive practice. Importantly, this tension is not merely a constraint to be resolved but a condition that can enable deeper learning. In operational terms, productive epistemic friction emerged when students attempted to reconcile formal fiqh rulings with contemporary ethical concerns, such as fairness, social justice, and human responsibility. Rather than reflecting confusion, these moments indicated active meaning negotiation and critical engagement.

This insight aligns with and extends constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories, which emphasize that knowledge emerges through negotiation, conflict, and meaning-making rather than passive reception (C.-H. Chen et al., 2021; Musonif, et al., 2026). However, the present study contributes a more nuanced perspective by showing that in religious education contexts, such tensions are often prematurely closed through authoritative teacher interventions. Nevertheless, observations also showed that the teacher occasionally opened limited dialogical space by inviting students to explain the ethical reasoning behind their opinions before reasserting doctrinal clarification. This indicates that epistemic closure was not absolute, but negotiated within institutional and pedagogical

constraints. This limits the potential of what is conceptualized here as productive epistemic friction, a state in which learners actively grapple with competing interpretations, ethical considerations, and contextual realities. Rather than eliminating this friction, effective pedagogy should sustain and structure it as a space for critical inquiry.

For instance, instead of immediately providing definitive legal conclusions, teachers may facilitate structured dialogical inquiry by inviting students to compare differing interpretations of a fiqh case and justify their reasoning using ethical, contextual, and textual considerations. In discussions of qisas or hudud, teachers can encourage students to examine how legal rulings relate to contemporary issues of justice, social responsibility, and human dignity before introducing formal doctrinal explanations. Such an approach allows epistemic tension to function as a pedagogical resource, where uncertainty and disagreement become opportunities for reflective engagement rather than conditions requiring immediate closure. In this way, the teacher's role shifts from transmitting fixed answers toward facilitating interpretive negotiation within clearly guided ethical and pedagogical boundaries. Such strategies may help transform fiqh classrooms from spaces of doctrinal reception into environments that support reflective, dialogical, and context-responsive learning.

Implications for Fiqh Education and Curriculum Development

From a broader theoretical standpoint, these findings suggest that the integration of PBL and inclusive pedagogy in fiqh education cannot be achieved through methodological adjustments alone. Instead, it requires a fundamental epistemological reorientation that repositions fiqh as a dynamic and interpretive discipline. This aligns with emerging perspectives in Islamic educational reform that advocate for the integration of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, ethical reasoning, and contextual awareness in the teaching of Islamic law. However, this study extends these perspectives by providing empirical evidence of how such reorientation begins to emerge within classroom interactions, albeit in partial and unstable forms. Therefore, curriculum developers and madrasah policymakers should consider embedding contextual case analysis, dialogical discussion models, and reflective assessment practices within fiqh curricula to support more interpretive and inclusive learning environments.

Broader Educational Implications

Importantly, the implications of this study extend beyond the specific context of Islamic education. The tension identified between authoritative knowledge and interpretive engagement reflects a broader challenge in education systems globally, particularly in disciplines where knowledge is traditionally framed as fixed and canonical. In this sense, the concept of epistemic friction offers a transferable analytical lens for understanding how learning occurs at the intersection of tradition and modernity, authority and inquiry, stability and change.

Taken together, this study argues that meaningful transformation in fiqh education, and by extension, in other forms of normative knowledge, requires an integrative framework that simultaneously addresses pedagogy and epistemology. Such a framework must move beyond the mere adoption of innovative methods toward the reconfiguration of how knowledge is understood, negotiated, and constructed within the classroom. By positioning epistemic tension not as a problem to be eliminated but as a resource for learning, this study provides a conceptual foundation for rethinking the future of religious education in a rapidly changing world. In this regard, the study positions fiqh education not merely as the transmission of legal doctrine, but as an ongoing process of ethical interpretation, critical reflection, and contextual engagement within contemporary Muslim societies.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to Islamic education by reconceptualizing fiqh learning as not merely a methodological issue, but an epistemological one. The findings show that normative and text-centered pedagogy reflects a closed epistemic structure in which knowledge is viewed as fixed and authoritative, limiting students' contextual reasoning and critical engagement. Although problem-based learning and dialogical interaction have emerged, they remain situated pedagogical innovations that depend largely on individual teacher initiative rather than systematic curricular integration. The study also distinguishes between procedural and epistemic inclusion, revealing that classroom participation does not always ensure equal involvement in knowledge construction, as some students remain epistemically marginalized. Most importantly, the study advances the concept of productive epistemic friction,

demonstrating that tensions between normative legalism and contextual meaning-making can become productive spaces for reflective and interpretive learning. These findings suggest that meaningful transformation in fiqh education requires an epistemological reorientation that positions fiqh as a dynamic, contextual, and interpretive discipline. Practically, this implies integrating contextual case analysis, ethical inquiry, and dialogical engagement into curriculum, instruction, and assessment, while preparing teachers to facilitate interpretive dialogue and manage epistemic tension constructively.

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