



Reconstruction of the Problematics of Islamic Education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School from the Perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and reconstruct the problems of Islamic education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School from the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy. This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design, conducted through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies involving pesantren leaders, teachers, curriculum managers, and students. Data were analyzed thematically using the framework of Islamic educational philosophy encompassing ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions.

The findings indicate that the main problem of Islamic education in this pesantren does not lie in the backwardness of its educational system, but rather in excessive modernization that weakens the classical scholarly traditions of the pesantren. Such modernization has led to a shift in educational goals, the weakening of traditional modes of knowledge transmission, reduced intensity of *turas* (classical Islamic texts) studies, and the erosion of scholarly ethics (*adab*) among students.

Based on these findings, the study recommends reconstructing pesantren Islamic education by reaffirming the goal of *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deep understanding of religion) and the formation of ethically grounded individuals, revitalizing traditional pesantren learning methods, and integrating modernity proportionally as a supportive instrument in education. The implications of this research are expected to serve as a conceptual foundation for developing an integrative pesantren education model rooted in Islamic intellectual tradition while remaining relevant to contemporary educational challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is a strategic process in shaping individuals who possess faith, knowledge, and noble character, and who are capable of fulfilling their role as *khalifah* on earth. In the Indonesian context, Islamic boarding schools (*pondok pesantren*) represent one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions, playing a crucial role in preserving Islamic values, scholarly traditions, and character formation within the Muslim community.

However, social dynamics, scientific development, and the demands of globalization pose new challenges for pesantren in maintaining the relevance of their educational systems. These challenges require pesantren not only to preserve tradition but also to undertake conceptual and systemic renewal so that the objectives of Islamic education can be achieved holistically and contextually (Azra, 2017; Langgulang, 2003; Muhaimin, 2019).

In practice, Islamic education in pesantren still faces fundamental problems related to educational objectives, curriculum, learning methods, and value orientation. Several studies indicate a tendency

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toward dichotomy between religious and general sciences, the dominance of less dialogical traditional teaching methods, and weak integration between intellectual, spiritual, and social development. These issues are not merely technical-operational but also philosophical, concerning perspectives on the nature of knowledge, humanity, and the ultimate goals of Islamic education (Hidayat & Suyadi, 2020; Nata, 2018; Tilaar, 2015).

Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School possesses distinctive characteristics in developing education based on Islamic and national values. Nevertheless, like other pesantren, it faces challenges in adapting its educational system to contemporary needs without losing its Islamic identity. Therefore, a critical and in-depth examination of the educational problems in this pesantren is necessary. The perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy is considered relevant as it provides a comprehensive analytical framework to understand educational issues ontologically, epistemologically, and axiologically, while offering a conceptual basis for sustainable Islamic educational reform (Al-Attas, 1993; Rahman, 1982; Nata, 2020).

Previous studies have largely examined pesantren education from managerial, curricular, or methodological perspectives in a partial manner. Studies that specifically reconstruct pesantren Islamic education based on contemporary Islamic educational philosophy remain limited. Hence, this research differs fundamentally from earlier studies by attempting a philosophical and holistic reconstruction of Islamic education—not merely proposing practical solutions but rebuilding the paradigm and orientation of pesantren education to remain relevant in the present and future (Suyadi, 2019; Azra, 2017).

Accordingly, this study aims to examine and reconstruct the problems of Islamic education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School from the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy, thereby formulating an integrative, humanistic, and contextually relevant conceptual framework for pesantren education without neglecting the fundamental values of Islam.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of Islamic educational problems occurring naturally at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School and to reconstruct Islamic educational concepts based on contemporary Islamic educational philosophy. The case study method allows for a holistic, contextual, and detailed exploration of educational phenomena, enabling an understanding of the interrelation between values, practices, and educational paradigms within the pesantren (Yin, 2011; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Research participants included pesantren leaders, teachers (*ustaz* and *ustazah*), curriculum managers, and students selected through purposive sampling. This technique was used based on criteria such as direct involvement in educational processes and sufficient experience and knowledge relevant to the research issues. Data sources consisted of primary data obtained through in-depth interviews and observation, and secondary data derived from institutional documents, curricula, syllabi, pesantren regulations, and relevant literature on Islamic educational philosophy and pesantren education.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument. Supporting instruments included semi-structured interview guides, participant observation sheets, and documentation guidelines. Interviews explored participants' views on educational goals, learning methods, challenges, and reform efforts. Observations focused on teaching practices, teacher–student interactions, and the academic culture within the pesantren.

Data were analyzed thematically following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Analysis was guided by the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy. NVivo qualitative analysis software was used to assist data organization and analysis. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation and member checking to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. These measures ensured the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Paradigm Shift in Islamic Education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School

Based on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, this research finds that the main problem of Islamic education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School does not lie in the backwardness of its educational system, but rather in a tendency toward excessive modernization, which has weakened the classical scholarly traditions of the pesantren. This finding indicates a significant shift in educational orientation from the traditional pesantren character toward a modern, formal school-based education model.

From an ontological perspective, the objectives of pesantren education have shifted from forming students as subjects and inheritors of Islamic scholarly traditions to shaping learners oriented toward administrative achievements, formal academic performance, and readiness to pursue general higher education. Consequently, the identity of students as *ṭālib al-‘ilm* who deeply engage with *turāṣ* (classical Islamic texts) has gradually been marginalized. This shift is evident in the reduced hours allocated for the study of classical texts (*kitab kuning*), the weakening of the *talaqqi* system, and the declining intensity of mastery in auxiliary disciplines such as *nabwu*, *ṣarf*, and *balāghah*.

From an epistemological perspective, this study finds that the patterns of knowledge transmission in the pesantren have undergone fundamental changes. Traditional learning methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *ḥalaqah* are no longer the main modes of instruction, having been replaced by modern classical systems that prioritize time efficiency and formal curriculum targets. As a result, the process of deep knowledge internalization (*tafaqqub fi al-dīn*) has weakened, and students' mastery of classical Islamic literature has become limited both textually and methodologically. This epistemological modernization has produced students with broad general knowledge but shallow mastery of classical Islamic scholarship.

From an axiological perspective, the study reveals an erosion of pesantren-specific values such as scholarly *adab*, patience in seeking knowledge, and respect for scholarly lineage (*sanad*). Although moral and ethical education is still taught normatively, it is no longer deeply embedded within students' learning culture. The modernization of the pesantren education system, which overly emphasizes efficiency and formal achievement, has reduced the process of scholarly character formation that traditionally defines pesantren education.

B. Critique of Pesantren Educational Modernization from the Perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy

The findings of this study affirm that the modernization of pesantren education that is not grounded in Islamic educational philosophy has the potential to weaken the very essence of pesantren education. From the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy, modernization should be integrative rather than substitutive—that is, it should strengthen Islamic scholarly traditions rather than replace them. Al-Attas (1993) emphasizes that the crisis of Islamic education does not stem from the backwardness of tradition, but from the loss of *adab* and misunderstandings regarding the true purpose of education.

Epistemologically, these findings align with Fazlur Rahman's (1982) critique of modern Islamic education, which fails to produce scholar-intellectuals due to its neglect of the depth of Islamic intellectual traditions. Pesantren that excessively adopt modern educational systems risk producing graduates who are "educated but unrooted," possessing formal certificates yet lacking strong methodological grounding in classical Islamic scholarship. Studies by Azra (2017) and Nata (2018) also demonstrate that uncontrolled modernization can marginalize *kitab kuning* studies and pesantren intellectual traditions.

From an axiological standpoint, the erosion of scholarly *adab* identified in this study reinforces the view that Islamic education is not merely a process of knowledge transfer, but a process of forming ethically grounded personalities. According to Langgulang (2003), Islamic education loses its spiritual essence when values and *adab* no longer serve as the primary foundation of the learning process. Therefore, modernization without value-based reconstruction stands in contradiction to the fundamental objectives of Islamic education.

C. Reconstruction of Pesantren Islamic Education Based on Islamic Educational Philosophy

The reconstruction of Islamic education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School is necessary as a response to modernization that has tended to shift the pesantren's identity from a center of traditional Islamic scholarly deepening into a merely formal educational institution. From the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy, reconstruction does not imply rejection of modernity, but rather a reorganization of educational paradigms, systems, and practices to remain rooted in Islamic scholarly traditions (*turās*) while remaining relevant to contemporary needs. Accordingly, the reconstruction of pesantren education is directed toward three main dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

Ontologically, reconstruction is aimed at reaffirming the purpose of pesantren education as a process of *tafaqqub fi al-din* and the formation of ethically grounded individuals (*insan beradab*). Pesantren education must view students not merely as learners pursuing formal certificates, but as inheritors of Islamic scholarly traditions who bear moral and social responsibilities. This ontological reaffirmation requires repositioning pesantren educational goals so that deep religious understanding, mastery of *turās*, and the formation of scholar-intellectual personalities become the primary orientation, while modern formal education functions as a supporting component rather than the ultimate objective.

Epistemologically, reconstruction involves reintegrating traditional pesantren knowledge transmission methods into the existing educational system. Methods such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, and *halaqah* need to be revitalized as intensive and continuous means of deep scholarly engagement. Modern educational approaches, including classical curricula and educational technology, should function to strengthen students' understanding of classical texts rather than replace them. Thus, epistemological reconstruction prioritizes depth of knowledge over mere breadth of content.

Axiologically, the reconstruction of pesantren education emphasizes the re-strengthening of *adab*, scholarly ethics, and *sanad* as the spiritual core of Islamic education. *Adab* education should not be taught merely in a normative manner, but internalized through the exemplary conduct of *keiai* and teachers, the academic culture of the pesantren, and the integration of values throughout the entire learning process. In this context, contemporary Islamic educational philosophy positions *adab* as the foundational pillar of education, as emphasized by Al-Attas, who argues that the crisis of Islamic education originates from the loss of *adab*, not from a lack of knowledge.

Practically, the reconstruction of pesantren Islamic education can be realized through curriculum restructuring that places *turās* studies at the core of education, increasing both the time allocation and intensity of auxiliary sciences instruction, and fostering student development based on pesantren intellectual traditions. Furthermore, institutional policies are required to firmly protect pesantren scholarly identity from domination by administrative and formalistic modern education systems. Through this reconstruction, pesantren are expected to become Islamic educational institutions that are modern in management and technology, yet traditional in scholarship and values

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the main problem of Islamic education at Dr. M. Natsir Islamic Boarding School is not caused by the backwardness of its educational system, but by a tendency toward excessive modernization that has weakened pesantren scholarly traditions. Modernization that emphasizes administrative aspects, formal curriculum efficiency, and academic achievement has shifted pesantren education away from deep religious scholarship and mastery of *turās* toward a model resembling modern schooling. This condition has led to a decline in the intensity of classical scholarship, the weakening of traditional knowledge transmission methods, and reduced internalization of scholarly *adab* and ethics among students.

From the perspective of contemporary Islamic educational philosophy, this study affirms that pesantren education loses its essence when modernization is not accompanied by strong ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations. Therefore, the reconstruction of pesantren Islamic education is an urgent necessity. This reconstruction involves reaffirming educational goals as a process of *tafaqqub fi al-din* and the formation of ethically grounded individuals, revitalizing traditional pesantren learning methods as the core of knowledge transmission, and strengthening the internalization of values and *adab* as the spirit of Islamic education. In this framework, modernity is positioned as a supportive instrument rather than a substitute for pesantren scholarly traditions.

The implications of this study indicate that pesantren need to reorganize curricula and institutional policies to preserve Islamic scholarly identity amid the demands of educational modernization. Moreover, this research can serve as a conceptual reference for pesantren administrators and Islamic education policymakers in formulating integrative pesantren education models that harmonize tradition and modernity. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies on the implementation of Islamic education reconstruction across pesantren with diverse characteristics or to develop implementable reconstruction models grounded in Islamic educational philosophy that can be empirically tested in broader contexts.

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