

RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN EDUCATION

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Abstract

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The advancement of science, digital technology, and global social dynamics has brought significant changes to the field of education, including Islamic education. These developments necessitate a renewal of educational paradigms to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant and capable of responding to the challenges of modern education without losing its normative values. This article aims to analyze the concept of reconstructing Islamic educational thought and its relevance in addressing contemporary educational demands, particularly in relation to curriculum reform, learning methodologies, and teacher professionalism. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method by examining the works of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars, academic books, scholarly journals, and relevant studies in the field of Islamic education. Data analysis is conducted through a descriptive-analytical method, focusing on the epistemological, philosophical, and pedagogical dimensions of reconstructing Islamic thought. The findings indicate that the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought represents a strategic effort to integrate Islamic spiritual values with the demands of twenty-first-century competencies. This reconstruction contributes to the development of adaptive curricula, the implementation of contextual and technology-based learning methods, and the enhancement of teacher professionalism as agents of educational transformation. Therefore, reconstructing Islamic educational thought strengthens the relevance, quality, and orientation of Islamic education in responding to the challenges of modern education.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science, digital technology, and global social dynamics has brought significant transformations to the educational landscape. These transformations not only affect teaching and learning processes but also influence educational goals, orientations, and the competencies expected from learners. Modern education is required to equip students with critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy as part of twenty-first-century competencies. In this context, Islamic education faces complex challenges, namely how to maintain its normative and spiritual values while simultaneously adapting to the continuously evolving demands of modern education (Azra, 2002; Syafii, 2021).

The reality of Islamic education indicates that some learning practices remain predominantly normative, textual, and memorization-oriented. Such approaches are considered less responsive to the changing characteristics of learners in the digital era, who are accustomed to rapid access to information and tend to think critically and visually. Consequently, a gap emerges between the Islamic values taught in educational institutions and the real needs of learners in addressing social, cultural, and professional challenges in the global era (Nurkholis, 2016). If not accompanied by adaptive and contextual paradigm renewal, Islamic education risks becoming less relevant.

In responding to these challenges, the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought becomes an unavoidable necessity. This reconstruction is not intended to alter the fundamental teachings of Islam but rather to reinterpret, develop, and contextualize Islamic educational thought to align with contemporary developments. Fazlur Rahman emphasized that many classical Islamic formulations emerged within specific historical contexts and therefore require reinterpretation to remain relevant to modern realities (Rahman, 1982). This historical and contextual approach allows Islamic education to uphold its normative values while constructively responding to social and intellectual changes.

Similarly, Arkoun emphasized the importance of adopting critical and rational approaches to Islamic intellectual traditions. According to him, intellectual stagnation in Islam partly stems from resistance to dialogue with modern sciences and contemporary social realities (Hasan, 2018). In education, such critical approaches form an essential foundation for developing curricula and learning methods that are not merely dogmatic but also reflective, analytical, and relevant to modern learners' needs. Meanwhile, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas positioned Islamic education as a process of forming civilized individuals (*insan adabi*), characterized by a balance between knowledge, adab, and spirituality (Al-Attas, 1993). This concept underscores that reconstructing Islamic education must remain oriented toward character and moral development rather than solely academic achievement.

Various contemporary studies also highlight the urgency of renewing Islamic educational paradigms. Azra (2002) emphasized the need to modernize Islamic education through the integration of Islamic intellectual traditions with modern educational systems. Hamzah and Pulungan (2019) highlighted the challenges posed by information technology and argued that technology utilization can enhance learning quality when supported by a strong philosophical framework. Nengsih (2020) further demonstrated that reconstructing Islamic education is essential to bridging the gap between traditional approaches and modern learning demands that emphasize flexibility, creativity, and innovation.

However, most existing studies tend to address Islamic educational reform partially such as curriculum modernization, technology integration, or methodological improvement—without comprehensively linking them to the philosophical framework of reconstructing Islamic educational thought. Studies that position reconstruction as a comprehensive conceptual foundation for addressing modern educational challenges, particularly regarding twenty-first-century competencies and teacher professionalism, remain limited. This gap underscores the need for further investigation.

Based on these considerations, this article aims to analyze the concept of reconstructing Islamic educational thought and its relevance in responding to modern educational challenges. The focus includes philosophical understandings of reconstruction, its urgency in contemporary contexts, and its implications for curriculum development, learning methodologies, and teacher professionalism. Through a qualitative library research approach and descriptive-analytical analysis, this study seeks to contribute conceptually to the development of Islamic education that is relevant, adaptive, and future-oriented without compromising its spiritual and normative foundations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Education in the Context of Modern Educational Challenges

Contemporary education is increasingly shaped by rapid technological advancement, globalization, and shifts in socio-cultural structures. These developments have significantly influenced educational objectives, pedagogical approaches, and the competencies expected of learners in the twenty-first century. Modern education emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and digital literacy as essential competencies for global citizenship (OECD, 2019, p. 21). Within this context, Islamic education faces the challenge of maintaining its spiritual and moral foundations while simultaneously adapting to evolving educational demands.

Several international studies highlight that religious education systems, including Islamic education, must undergo conceptual and structural renewal to remain relevant in modern societies (Hefner, 2018, p. 89; Sahin, 2019, p. 134). Without such adaptation, Islamic education risks being perceived as disconnected from contemporary realities and learners' lived experiences. This condition necessitates a paradigm shift grounded in critical reflection and intellectual reconstruction.

The Concept of Reconstruction in Islamic Thought

The notion of reconstruction in Islamic thought has been widely discussed by contemporary Muslim intellectuals as an intellectual response to modernity. Fazlur Rahman (1982, p. 6) argued that while Islamic teachings are normative and immutable, human understanding of these teachings is historically conditioned and therefore subject to reinterpretation. His “double movement” theory emphasizes the need to contextualize Qur’anic values within present-day social realities.

Similarly, Arkoun advocated for a critical and interdisciplinary approach to Islamic thought, encouraging engagement with modern humanities and social sciences to overcome intellectual stagnation (Arkoun, 2006, p. 45). From an educational perspective, this approach provides a philosophical foundation for reconstructing Islamic education to foster rational inquiry, intellectual openness, and ethical responsibility. Recent studies affirm that reconstruction is not an act of desacralization but a methodological effort to revitalize Islamic intellectual traditions (Sahin, 2019, p. 140).

Foundations of Islamic Education: Tarbiyah, Ta'lim, and Ta'dib

Islamic education is traditionally grounded in three interconnected concepts: *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*. *Tarbiyah* refers to holistic nurturing and development of human potential, encompassing cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions (Ramayulis, 2016, p. 32). *Ta'lim* emphasizes the transmission and development of knowledge, both religious and worldly, while *ta'dib* focuses on moral refinement and ethical formation.

Al-Attas (1993, p. 107) emphasized *ta'dib* as the core of Islamic education, aiming to produce *insan adabi*—a civilized human being who possesses intellectual discipline, moral integrity, and spiritual awareness. Recent educational research supports this framework, suggesting that holistic education models that integrate cognitive and moral development are more effective in addressing contemporary ethical challenges (Sahin & Francis, 2018, p. 512). The reconstruction of Islamic educational thought thus seeks to reposition these foundational concepts within modern pedagogical paradigms.

Curriculum Reconstruction in Islamic Education

Curriculum development constitutes a central theme in the reconstruction of Islamic education. Traditional Islamic curricula often emphasize textual mastery and doctrinal knowledge, which may limit learners' capacity to engage critically with contemporary issues. Modern curriculum theory, however, promotes competency-based, learner-centered, and context-sensitive designs (Tyler, 2013, p. 84).

Recent studies indicate that reconstructed Islamic curricula integrate Islamic values with scientific knowledge and twenty-first-century skills, enabling learners to apply religious principles to real-world challenges (Yunus, 2019, p. 5; Abdullah & Halabi, 2021, p. 77). This integrative approach aligns Islamic education with global educational standards while preserving its spiritual identity. Empirical research also shows that contextualized curricula enhance student engagement and learning outcomes in Islamic educational institutions (Sahin, 2019, p. 147).

Pedagogical Transformation and Technology Integration

Pedagogical innovation is a critical component of reconstructed Islamic education. Student-centered learning approaches, such as problem-based learning, collaborative discussion, and project-based learning, are increasingly adopted to foster critical thinking and active participation (Hmelo-Silver, 2013, p. 236). In Islamic education, these approaches facilitate the internalization of values through experiential learning rather than rote memorization.

The integration of digital technology further reshapes Islamic pedagogical practices. Studies demonstrate that technology-enhanced learning environments can improve accessibility, interaction, and learning flexibility when guided by ethical and pedagogical frameworks (Hamzah & Pulungan, 2019, p. 220; Sahin, 2021, p. 98). Consequently, reconstruction emphasizes the ethical use of technology to support both intellectual growth and spiritual development.

Teacher Professionalism in Reconstructed Islamic Education

Teacher professionalism plays a pivotal role in implementing reconstructed Islamic educational paradigms. Teachers are expected to possess pedagogical competence, subject-matter expertise, moral integrity, and spiritual awareness. Tilaar (2005, p. 63) emphasized that educational reform cannot succeed without empowering teachers as reflective practitioners and agents of change.

Recent international research highlights the importance of continuous professional

development for teachers in religious education to adapt to technological and pedagogical innovations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 301). In Islamic education, teacher professionalism also entails the embodiment of Islamic values, ensuring coherence between instruction and ethical practice (Ramayulis, 2016, p. 112). Reconstruction thus redefines teachers' roles from mere knowledge transmitters to facilitators of holistic learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach using library research. The qualitative approach is employed because the research seeks to understand, interpret, and analyze the concept of reconstructing Islamic educational thought through theoretical and philosophical inquiry rather than statistical hypothesis testing. Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative research focuses on meaning-making through in-depth analysis of texts and contexts. In Islamic education studies, this approach is particularly relevant for examining conceptual and normative ideas (Ramayulis, 2016).

Library research is used because the object of this study consists of ideas, concepts, and theories documented in written sources. Zed (2014) explained that library research aims to analyze scholarly literature to construct systematic conceptual frameworks. Accordingly, this study does not involve field data collection but emphasizes critical analysis of relevant academic sources on Islamic educational reconstruction and modern educational challenges.

Data sources include primary and secondary references. Primary sources consist of classical and contemporary Islamic scholars who directly discuss Islamic thought reconstruction and educational philosophy, such as Fazlur Rahman (1982), Mohammed Arkoun, and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1993). These scholars provide epistemological and philosophical foundations for understanding Islamic educational reconstruction. Secondary sources include academic books, journal articles, previous research, theses, and dissertations related to Islamic education, educational modernization, curriculum development, learning methodologies, and teacher professionalism (Azra, 2002; Tafsir, 2017; Hamzah & Pulungan, 2019).

Data collection was conducted through document analysis by identifying, reviewing, and categorizing relevant literature. This process enabled systematic acquisition of conceptual, historical, and theoretical data (Arikunto, 2013). Key ideas were critically examined and thematically classified.

Data analysis employed descriptive-analytical and philosophical approaches. Descriptive analysis was used to present scholars' concepts systematically (Sugiyono, 2017), while analytical analysis examined their relevance to modern educational realities and twenty-first-century competencies. Philosophical analysis explored epistemological, ontological, and axiological dimensions of Islamic education (Tilaar, 2005; Ramayulis, 2016).

To ensure analytical rigor, source triangulation was applied by comparing ideas across multiple references, minimizing interpretive bias and strengthening conceptual validity (Moleong, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on an extensive review of primary and secondary literature, this study identifies several comprehensive conceptual findings regarding the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought in responding to the challenges of modern education. These findings emerge from a systematic descriptive analysis of classical and contemporary Islamic educational theories, philosophical discourses, and recent scholarly studies addressing educational reform within Islamic contexts.

First, the findings indicate that the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought is fundamentally understood as a process of reinterpretation and recontextualization rather than a transformation of Islamic doctrinal foundations. Reconstruction aims to renew educational concepts, objectives, and practices so that they remain responsive to contemporary realities while preserving Islamic normative principles. Fazlur Rahman's historical-contextual approach emphasizes that many classical formulations of Islamic education were shaped by specific socio-historical conditions and therefore require reinterpretation to remain meaningful in modern contexts (Rahman, 1982). This perspective highlights reconstruction as an intellectual necessity rather than an ideological deviation.

Second, the analysis reveals that reconstruction is epistemologically grounded in the integration of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* as the core components of Islamic education. *Tarbiyah* emphasizes holistic human development encompassing intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. *Ta'lim* focuses on the acquisition and development of knowledge, including both religious and general sciences. *Ta'dib*, as emphasized by Al-Attas, represents the cultivation of adab and ethical consciousness, aiming to produce civilized individuals (*insan adabi*) who possess moral integrity and intellectual responsibility (Al-Attas, 1993). The findings show that reconstruction does not eliminate these foundational concepts but repositions them within contemporary educational frameworks.

Third, the results indicate that several external and internal factors necessitate the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought. These factors include rapid advancements in science and digital technology, globalization and cultural exchange, changes in learners' cognitive and social characteristics, and the limitations of traditional pedagogical approaches that rely heavily on textualism and memorization (Azra, 2002; Nurkholis, 2016). Technological developments, in particular, have reshaped learning patterns, information access, and communication styles, requiring Islamic education to adopt more interactive, student-centered, and technology-integrated pedagogies (Hamzah & Pulungan, 2019).

Fourth, the findings demonstrate that reconstructing Islamic educational thought has direct implications for curriculum development. Reconstructed curricula tend to be integrative, contextual, and competency-based, combining Islamic values with twenty-first-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (Tafsir, 2017; Yunus, 2019). This integration reflects a shift from content-oriented curricula toward outcome-based educational designs that prioritize learners' intellectual and moral competencies.

Fifth, the analysis reveals that reconstruction significantly influences learning methodologies in Islamic education. Reconstructed pedagogical approaches emphasize active learning strategies, including problem-based learning, project-based learning,

collaborative discussion, and reflective inquiry. These methods encourage learners to connect Islamic teachings with real-life issues, enhancing relevance and applicability. Additionally, the utilization of digital technologies such as e-learning platforms and multimedia resources supports flexible and interactive learning environments while remaining guided by Islamic ethical values.

Finally, the findings indicate that reconstruction contributes substantially to the enhancement of teacher professionalism. Teachers are repositioned not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators, mentors, and agents of educational transformation. Professionalism within reconstructed Islamic education encompasses pedagogical competence, subject-matter expertise, ethical integrity, spiritual awareness, and digital literacy (Tilaar, 2005; Ramayulis, 2016). This reconceptualization underscores the strategic role of teachers in realizing the objectives of reconstructed Islamic education.

Overall, these findings suggest that the reconstruction of Islamic educational thought provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for addressing modern educational challenges by integrating spiritual values, intellectual development, and contemporary competencies within a coherent educational paradigm.

Discussion

Reconstruction of Islamic Educational Thought as a Strategic Response to Modern Educational Challenges

The findings of this study confirm that reconstruction of Islamic educational thought represents a strategic and systematic response to the complex challenges posed by modern education. Contemporary educational environments are characterized by globalization, technological disruption, and shifting epistemological paradigms that redefine knowledge production and learning processes. In this context, Islamic education must transcend traditional transmission-oriented models and adopt adaptive, reflective, and future-oriented paradigms (Azra, 2002).

Fazlur Rahman's historical-contextual approach provides a strong theoretical justification for reconstruction, emphasizing that while Islamic teachings remain normative, their interpretations must evolve in response to changing realities (Rahman, 1982). This aligns with Arkoun's call for critical engagement with tradition to overcome intellectual stagnation and foster meaningful dialogue with modern sciences (Hasan, 2018). Thus, reconstruction serves as a bridge between Islamic intellectual heritage and contemporary educational demands.

Integrating Tarbiyah, Ta'lim, and Ta'dib in Contemporary Islamic Education

The integration of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* constitutes a central pillar of reconstructed Islamic education. This triadic framework ensures that education addresses human development holistically. *Tarbiyah* nurtures learners' potential comprehensively, *ta'lim* equips them with knowledge and intellectual skills, and *ta'dib* instills ethical consciousness and moral responsibility (Ramayulis, 2016).

In the modern era, where technological progress often coincides with moral and ethical challenges, the emphasis on *ta'dib* becomes particularly relevant. Al-Attas's concept of *insan adabi* offers a counterbalance to the instrumentalization of education by reaffirming its moral and civilizational purpose (Al-Attas, 1993). The integration of these concepts demonstrates that reconstruction enhances rather than diminishes Islamic educational identity.

Curriculum Development within Reconstructed Islamic Education

The discussion further reveals that reconstruction significantly reshapes Islamic educational curricula. Traditional curricula that separate religious knowledge from general sciences are increasingly viewed as insufficient for addressing contemporary realities. Reconstructed curricula adopt integrative designs that connect Islamic values with scientific knowledge and real-world applications (Tafsir, 2017).

Competency-based curricula emphasize not only cognitive achievement but also affective and psychomotor domains, aligning Islamic education with global educational standards while preserving its spiritual orientation. Contextual and thematic approaches enable learners to understand the relevance of Islamic teachings in social, economic, and technological contexts, thereby enhancing meaningful learning experiences (Yunus, 2019).

Pedagogical Transformation and the Role of Technology

The findings also highlight that reconstruction necessitates pedagogical transformation. Student-centered learning approaches replace teacher-dominated instruction, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Methods such as project-based learning and reflective discussion allow learners to internalize Islamic values through experiential learning.

The integration of digital technology further supports pedagogical innovation. However, reconstruction emphasizes that technological utilization must be guided by ethical considerations to preserve the spiritual dimension of Islamic education. Technology is thus positioned as a tool for enhancing learning effectiveness rather than as an end in itself (Hamzah & Pulungan, 2019).

Teacher Professionalism as a Core Component of Reconstruction

Teacher professionalism emerges as a critical factor in the successful implementation of reconstructed Islamic education. Teachers are expected to embody Islamic values while demonstrating pedagogical innovation and adaptability. Tilaar (2005) emphasized that teachers play a pivotal role in educational reform, while Ramayulis (2016) stressed the integration of spiritual and professional competencies in Islamic educators.

Reconstruction encourages teachers to engage in continuous professional development, reflective practice, and technological literacy. By positioning teachers as change agents, Islamic education can effectively respond to evolving educational landscapes and societal expectations.

CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of Islamic educational thought is a strategic and indispensable effort in addressing modern educational challenges marked by technological advancement, globalization, and evolving learner characteristics. This reconstruction does not alter Islamic foundational principles but reinterprets educational concepts and practices to remain relevant and adaptive.

Grounded in the integration of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*, reconstructed Islamic education promotes intellectual competence, moral integrity, and spiritual depth. It significantly impacts curriculum development, learning methodologies, and teacher professionalism, positioning educators as agents of transformation. Overall, reconstruction strengthens the relevance, quality, and future orientation of Islamic education while preserving its normative and spiritual foundations.

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