



THE MODERNIZATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION: AZYUMARDI AZRA'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

This research began with numerous discussions on the relationship between education and modernization in various Islamic communities. Azyumardi Azra, as an educator, provides a different perspective on the modernization of Islamic education compared to the thoughts that are usually used as references. The main objectives of this research are to examine (1) What is Azyumardi Azra's perspective on the concept of Islamic education; (2) What is Azyumardi Azra's view on modernization in Islamic education; (3) How modernization relates to elements of Islamic education, such as goals, curriculum, and educational institutions. The method applied in this research is library research, by analyzing relevant texts regarding Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on Islamic education. The data is processed through content analysis, which aims to find the meaning of the thoughts of these figures from an internal-textual and external-textual perspective, while paying attention to the socio-historical context that underlies their thoughts, so that objective conclusions can be drawn regarding views on the modernization of Islamic education in general. The findings of this study indicate that (1) Azyumardi Azra views Islamic education as a process of individual formation based on the teachings of Allah given to Muhammad SAW to become a caliph and achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter; (2) Azyumardi Azra views the modernization of Islamic education as an effort to reformulate Islamic educational thinking and reorganize systems and institutions to fit the concept of modernity that is in harmony with Islamic principles; (3) Azyumardi Azra believes that modernization in the aspect of Islamic education is closely related to the goals, curriculum, and institutions of education.

Keywords: *Modernization, Education, Thought, Azyumardi Azra*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely discussed issues concerning modernization in the Muslim world is the modernization of education. Modernization is essentially a complex, multidimensional process. On the one hand, education is regarded as a variable of modernization. In this context, education is considered a prerequisite and an essential condition for society to implement modernization programs and achieve their objectives. Therefore, many educational scholars argue that education is the key to opening the door to modernization.

On the other hand, education is often viewed as an object of modernization. In this perspective, the educational systems of countries undergoing modernization are generally considered underdeveloped in many respects and, therefore, unable to adequately support modernization programs.

Consequently, education must be reformed and modernized so that it can fulfill the expectations and functions assigned to it (Azra, 1999).

Harun Nasution viewed the modernization of education as an effort to integrate knowledge. According to him, the dichotomy of knowledge has even more detrimental consequences than secularization. He argued that in Ancient Greece, scientists and philosophers developed rational thought independently of any religion, giving rise to secular and even atheistic science and philosophy. During the classical period of Islam (650–1250 CE), Muslim scholars sought to Islamize the Greek intellectual tradition while formulating an integral educational system that combined religious and general sciences. Following the Renaissance, however, general education in Europe once again became secular and atheistic, much like that of Ancient Greece. Meanwhile, in the Islamic world during the medieval period (1250–1800 CE), knowledge and education became dichotomized into dualistic systems. According to Nasution, while secularism continued to characterize the West, the Muslim world failed to overcome the dichotomy of knowledge and education, even though this dichotomy had a more profound negative impact than secularization itself (Nasution, 2003).

Other scholars argue that the decline of Muslims resulted from their uncritical adoption of Western educational systems that were incompatible with Islamic teachings. The Western educational model is believed to have promoted dehumanization and secularization. Western modernization, despite its many achievements, has ultimately failed to improve humanity. This failure is frequently attributed to the flawed epistemological foundations of science and technology that developed after the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Western thinkers, through an anthropocentric epistemological paradigm, largely displaced the previously dominant theocentric worldview (Azra, 1999).

Western educational systems have also been described as experiencing a profound crisis. This crisis stems from the fact that education in the West has often been reduced to mere instruction. Educational practices are largely confined to the transfer of knowledge and technical skills within an existing technostuctural framework. As a result, education has become little more than a commodity, with significant implications for social life. It serves primarily to perpetuate continuous forms of oppression against disadvantaged groups (F. O'Neil, 1981).

To address what they perceived as the mistake of adopting Western paradigms, some Muslim scholars proposed replacing the anthropocentric paradigm with a theocentric one. However, this proposal was not universally accepted among Islamic educational thinkers. A vigorous intellectual debate emerged within Muslim scholarship. Thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Sayyid Amir Ali advocated an epistemology that remained largely anthropocentric (Muhaimin, 2006), whereas neo-traditionalist scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr promoted a distinctly theocentric epistemology (Cooper, 2000).

These intellectual tensions eventually gave rise to the concept of the Islamization of knowledge, pioneered by Ismail al-Faruqi and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Islamization, in this context, refers to the effort to revive the intellectual spirit of the Muslim community through freedom of reasoning, rational-empirical inquiry, and scientific and philosophical development rooted in commitment to the fundamental doctrines and values contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Muhaimin, 2006). Furthermore, scholarly discussions on the modernization of Islamic education have continued to evolve beyond these initial ideas, encompassing a wide range of perspectives (Ramayulis & Nizar, 2010).

In the Indonesian context, the modernization of Islamic educational systems and institutions has taken place since the beginning of the twentieth century, largely without serious engagement in epistemological discourse. Consequently, institutional modernization has often been adopted uncritically. As a result, modernization has generated new complexities rather than producing conceptual breakthroughs that are theoretically sound, viable, sustainable, and continuous (Azra, 1999).

The ongoing debate over the modernization of Islamic education encouraged Azyumardi Azra to formulate his own perspective on the subject. One of his most influential works, *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization toward the New Millennium*, extensively discusses the modernization of Islamic education. Azra criticized the discourse on the Islamization of knowledge, arguing that it has yet to achieve conceptual clarity. While acknowledging that the Islamization of science and technology may serve as an important initial step toward developing a more Islamic paradigm at both the Muslim and global levels, he cautioned that it should not distract Muslim societies from addressing pressing practical challenges (Azra, 1999).

Azra also criticized the tendency among some Muslims to view science and technology originating from the West with excessive suspicion. He argued that Muslims should cultivate openness by abandoning apologetic, defensive, and reactive attitudes. According to Azra, accelerating educational development and advancing science and technology require Muslims to remain open to scientific knowledge regardless of its origin. This openness necessarily entails abandoning the apologetic, defensive, and reactive attitudes still held by some Muslims toward Western scientific developments (Azra, 2011).

To realize his vision of modernizing Islamic education, Azra also advocated the transformation and modernization of State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN) into Islamic universities (Nata, 2005). Furthermore, he paid considerable attention to the modernization of *surau* and *pesantren* as Indonesia's earliest Islamic educational institutions. Academically, his ideas have significantly influenced lecturers, educators, and scholars within Islamic educational institutions throughout Indonesia. His position as a leading modernist of Islamic education has been further affirmed by Abuddin Nata, who includes Azyumardi Azra among Indonesia's most influential Islamic educational thinkers.

The continuing relevance of discussing the modernization of Islamic education, together with Azyumardi Azra's distinctive conceptualization of educational modernization that differs from mainstream modernization theories, motivated the author to examine Azra's thought on the modernization of Islamic education.

To sharpen and facilitate the analysis, this study focuses on the following research question: How does Azyumardi Azra conceptualize the modernization of Islamic education? Specifically, this study aims to describe: (1) Azyumardi Azra's concept of Islamic education; (2) his concept of the modernization of Islamic education; and (3) his views on the modernization of the components of the Islamic educational system, including educational objectives, curriculum, and Islamic educational institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a library research design using a qualitative approach. The data were collected from the writings of Azyumardi Azra as the primary source, as well as other relevant sources serving as secondary data. These sources included books, journals, magazine articles, conference papers, research reports, and bulletins related to the topic under investigation.

The study utilized qualitative content analysis as its primary analytical method. Content analysis may be defined as a technique for collecting and analyzing the content of texts. The content may consist of words, meanings, images, symbols, ideas, themes, or other communicative messages (Martono, 2010). Weber, as cited in Lexy J. Moleong (2010), defines content analysis as a research methodology that employs systematic procedures to draw valid and reliable conclusions from books or other documents. Accordingly, the textual analysis in this study was directed toward identifying Azyumardi Azra's ideas on the modernization of Islamic education by examining texts related to Islamic education that contain his educational perspectives.

The primary data sources consisted of books authored by Azyumardi Azra, including: (1) *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization toward the New Millennium*; (2) *The Network of Middle Eastern and Nusantara Ulama in the Seventeenth Century*; (3) *The Dynamics of Islamic Politics: From Fundamentalism and Modernism to Postmodernism*; (4) *Modern Developments in Islam*; (5) *The Islamic Renaissance in Southeast Asia: History, Discourse, and Power*; (6) *Essays on Muslim Intellectualism and Islamic Education*; (7) *Toward a Civil Society: Ideas, Facts, and Challenges*; (8) *Reformist Islam: Intellectual Dynamics and Movements*; (9) *Substantive Islam: Preventing the Muslim Community from Becoming Mere Foam*; (10) *A New Paradigm of National Education: Reconstruction and Democratization*; (11) *Surau: Traditional Islamic Education in Transition and Modernization*; (12) *Islam in the Midst of Contemporary Currents*; (13) *The Context of Theology in Indonesia: The Islamic Experience*; and (14) *Islam Nusantara: Global and Local Networks*.

The secondary data sources included scholarly works related to Islamic education, such as: (1) *Encyclopedia of Islamic Education Figures* by Ramayulis and Samsul Nizar; (2) *Islamic Education* by Zakiah Daradjat; (3) *The Philosophy of Islamic Education* by Mohammad al-Toumy al-Syaibany; together with other relevant academic references.

The data were collected through document analysis, involving written materials such as archives, books, scholarly opinions, theories, principles, and other documents related to Azyumardi Azra's ideas on the modernization of Islamic education (Margono, 1997). The content analysis procedure, adapted from Moleong (2010), consisted of the following steps;

(1). Examining books written by Azyumardi Azra that address the research questions, (2). Identifying and classifying relevant sections and themes by developing analytical categories and conceptual definitions covering the fundamental concepts of Islamic education, the concept of the modernization of Islamic education, and the modernization of the components of the Islamic educational system, (3). Reviewing and verifying the validity and reliability of the established categories and concepts, (4). Interpreting texts related to the fundamental concepts of Islamic education, the modernization of Islamic education, and the modernization of the components of Islamic education, (5). Drawing conclusions regarding Azyumardi Azra's perspectives in accordance with the scope and objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Education According to Azyumardi Azra

Azyumardi Azra argues that when the educational process is regarded merely as instruction, education is reduced to a commodity with far-reaching implications for social life. According to him, the fundamental distinction between education and instruction lies in education's emphasis on developing learners' consciousness and character in addition to transferring knowledge and

skills. Through such a process, a society is able to transmit its religious values, culture, intellectual traditions, and practical competencies to younger generations, thereby preparing them to face future challenges (Azra, 1999).

Azra maintains that the concept of Islamic education should integrate the meanings of the terms al-tarbiyah, al-ta'lim, and al-ta'dib. He explains that the concept of education, in its entirety within the Islamic context, is inherently embedded in these three interrelated concepts, which must be understood collectively. Each term conveys profound meanings concerning human beings, society, the environment, and their relationship with God. Together, these concepts also encompass the full scope of Islamic education, including informal, formal, and non-formal education (Azra, 1999).

Consequently, Azra concludes that Islamic education is a process of developing individuals based on the teachings of Islam as revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad. Through this educational process, individuals are nurtured to attain moral and intellectual excellence, enabling them to fulfill their role as khalifah (God's vicegerent) on earth while achieving well-being in both this world and the hereafter (Azra, 1999).

According to Azra, the most fundamental distinction between Islamic education and other educational systems is that Islamic education is not solely concerned with preparing individuals for worldly success. Rather, it aims to cultivate personalities inspired by Islamic teachings so that individuals remain firmly grounded in religious values throughout their lives (Azra, 1999).

Azra further elaborates on the distinctive characteristics of Islamic education. First, Islamic education emphasizes the pursuit, mastery, and advancement of knowledge as acts of worship (ibadah) to Allah. Every Muslim is obligated to seek knowledge, understand it thoroughly, and further develop it for the benefit of humanity as an expression of devotion to God. Second, Islamic education recognizes every individual's inherent potential and capacity for personal development. Every learner is regarded as one of Allah's creations who deserves respect and proper guidance so that his or her potential can be fully realized. Third, knowledge must be practiced responsibly before both Allah and society. Knowledge is not intended merely to be acquired and expanded but must also be implemented in real life. Within Islam, possessing knowledge is considered inseparable from applying it in practice (Azra, 1999).

Azra strongly criticizes educational practices that position teachers as the sole authority in the learning process. He argues that Islamic education should emphasize guidance rather than instruction, as the latter often carries authoritarian implications. Guidance should be rooted in Islamic teachings while allowing learners ample opportunities to actualize their innate potentials. In this framework, teachers function primarily as facilitators who direct students toward discovering and developing their abilities. Teachers should not be viewed as the exclusive source of knowledge, nor should students be regarded as empty vessels waiting to be filled. Instead, teachers are expected to respect students as human beings endowed with diverse capabilities. Such an educational relationship helps prevent what Paulo Freire describes as the "banking concept" of education, which has been widely criticized in contemporary educational discourse (Azra, 1999).

Based on the foregoing discussion, Azyumardi Azra defines Islamic education as a process of developing individuals in accordance with the teachings of Islam revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad. Its objective is to enable individuals to attain excellence, fulfill their responsibilities as khalifah on earth, and achieve prosperity in both the worldly life and the hereafter. This conception is grounded in his view that Islamic education must be understood through the integrated meanings of tarbiyah, ta'lim, and ta'dib, which collectively represent

the philosophical foundation of Islamic education (Azra, 1999).

The Modernization of Islamic Education According to Azyumardi Azra

It has become a widely accepted view that future civilization will be largely driven by knowledge—particularly scientific knowledge—which, in its practical application, develops into technology. Observing the educational and scientific backwardness of many Muslim societies, Azyumardi Azra proposed ideas on how Muslims could become more competitive and better prepared to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Azra's concept of the modernization of Islamic education is closely associated with the challenges of globalization, rapid scientific advancement, and technological development. He proposed several strategies for modernizing Islamic education, including strengthening Islamic Studies as a university discipline, improving the quality of human resources, and establishing centers of educational excellence (Nata, 2005). He also criticized the exclusive and suspicious attitude of some Muslims toward Western science and technology. According to Azra, accelerating educational development and scientific progress requires Muslims to embrace openness toward knowledge regardless of its source. Such openness necessarily involves abandoning apologetic, defensive, and reactive attitudes toward science and technology originating from the West (Azra, 1999).

Azra argued that improving Islamic education requires its modernization within the broader framework of modernity. In his view, adapting Islamic educational thought and institutions to contemporary developments is essential for the revival of Muslim civilization in the modern era. He maintained that the fundamental principle underlying Islamic modernism is that the modernization of Islamic thought and institutions constitutes a prerequisite for the advancement of Muslim societies. Consequently, Islamic educational institutions must be reformed in accordance with the demands of modernity. Preserving traditional educational structures without meaningful reform would only prolong the intellectual and social stagnation of Muslims in confronting the progress of the modern world (Azra, 1999).

Today, modernization has affected virtually every region of the world, including Muslim societies. Whether willingly or not, Islamic education faces increasing demands to provide solutions to contemporary social challenges. Ironically, although Islam doctrinally encourages the pursuit of knowledge, and both the Qur'an and the Sunnah establish a strong intellectual foundation for scientific inquiry, many Muslim communities continue to experience educational and scientific decline. This situation raises an important question concerning the underlying causes of Muslim intellectual stagnation.

According to Azra, one of the principal causes is that contemporary Muslims have forgotten the historical legacy of scientific excellence achieved by Muslim scholars during the classical Islamic period. That remarkable achievement was made possible by their openness toward knowledge from diverse civilizations, which they critically examined, developed, and transformed into universal scientific contributions that benefited humanity (Azra, *Republika*, July 21, 2011).

This historical experience, Azra argues, should restore Muslims' self-confidence. Excessive suspicion toward external knowledge often originates from fear and insecurity, eventually producing a closed mentality and a sense of being under constant threat. Nevertheless, the weakness of Muslim societies cannot be attributed solely to educational shortcomings. It is also closely related to political, social, cultural, and even religious realities throughout the Muslim world. Therefore, efforts to empower Muslim societies must be accompanied by broader reforms capable of creating conditions conducive to educational, scientific, social, and cultural advancement (Azra, *Republika*, July 21, 2011).

One of the most prominent debates concerning the modernization of Islamic education concerns the Islamization of science and technology. Azra acknowledges that the Islamization of knowledge has its merits and may serve as an initial step toward developing a more Islamic intellectual paradigm, both

within Muslim societies and at the global level. However, he cautions that this discourse should not divert attention from more urgent practical challenges confronting Muslim societies. He identifies several fundamental obstacles that must first be addressed:

- a. The weakness of the scientific community.
- b. The lack of integrated national science policies.
- c. Inadequate funding for scientific research.
- d. Limited awareness within the economic sector regarding the importance of scientific research.
- e. Insufficient library facilities, documentation systems, and information centers.
- f. The isolation of scientists and researchers.
- g. Bureaucratic constraints, regulatory restrictions, and inadequate incentives.

According to Azra, these issues represent the primary obstacles preventing Muslim countries from advancing science and technology. If Muslim societies genuinely aspire to overcome their backwardness—or more ambitiously, to reconstruct Islamic civilization—these structural challenges must first be resolved. Otherwise, the reconstruction of Islamic civilization will remain merely a rhetorical aspiration rather than an achievable reality.

Another significant concern in Azra's educational thought is the integration of religious and general sciences. He argues that Islamic Studies can and should be expanded into broader social science disciplines. Authentic Islamic sources provide a solid foundation for developing academic fields such as Islamic economics, political science, sociology, international relations, and related disciplines.

Furthermore, drawing upon the ideas of Nasr (1981), Azra argues that it is also possible to develop the natural sciences within Islamic educational programs because Islamic civilization possesses a rich intellectual heritage in these fields. During the classical and medieval Islamic periods, disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, geography, and physics flourished. The challenge today is not to recreate these sciences from the beginning but to bridge the methodological and conceptual gap between the classical Islamic scientific tradition and contemporary scientific developments, enabling them to evolve in harmony with modern scientific disciplines (Azra, 1999).

Based on the foregoing discussion, the modernization of Islamic education according to Azyumardi Azra may be understood as the reorientation of Islamic educational thought and the restructuring of educational systems and institutions within the framework of modernity while remaining faithful to Islamic values. Regarding the reorientation of educational thought, Azra maintains that Islam, doctrinally, strongly supports modernization. Consequently, debates surrounding the Islamization of knowledge should not overshadow more urgent efforts to address the practical problems facing Muslim societies. Likewise, the integration of religious and secular knowledge can be achieved by expanding Islamic Studies to address contemporary social issues, developing the humanities from an Islamic perspective grounded in historical scholarship, and fostering openness toward scientific and technological knowledge from all sources so that it may be further developed for the advancement of humanity. At the institutional level, Azra emphasizes the importance of improving educational infrastructure and learning facilities while harmonizing the demands of modernity with the cultural values and social realities of Muslim communities.

The Modernization of the Components of Islamic Education According to Azyumardi Azra

The Modernization of the Objectives of Islamic Education

In defining the ultimate objectives of Islamic education, Azyumardi Azra does not differ substantially from other prominent Islamic educational scholars. In formulating the final goal of Islamic education, Azra bases his argument on Qur'an 51:56 and Qur'an 3:102:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me."
(Qur'an 51:56)

"O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and do not die except in

a state of Islam." (Qur'an 3:102)

According to Azra, the purpose of human life as described in these Qur'anic verses also constitutes the ultimate objective of Islamic education: to cultivate individuals who are devoted servants of Allah, characterized by piety (*taqwa*) and sincere worship. Consequently, all knowledge and competencies acquired through Islamic education should ultimately serve as expressions of devotion to Allah (Azra, 1999).

These verses have frequently been employed by Islamic educational scholars to explain the ultimate aims of Islamic education, emphasizing that Islamic education is inseparable from Islam itself. Therefore, its educational objectives must be aligned with the broader objectives of human life as prescribed by Islamic teachings. Beyond these general objectives, Azra also recognizes more specific educational goals. He argues that these objectives should not merely represent the idealization of Islamic teachings but should instead focus on practical educational outcomes achieved throughout the learning process while simultaneously providing criteria for evaluating those outcomes (Azra, 1999).

These specific objectives include learners' mastery of various dimensions of human development, encompassing intellectual, emotional, volitional, intuitive, and practical competencies—or, in contemporary educational terminology, the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. From these foundational objectives, more detailed educational goals can subsequently be formulated, including appropriate learning materials, instructional methods, and evaluation systems (Azra, 1999).

Azra's balanced and harmonious understanding of the relationship between human beings, Allah, and the natural world leads to a modern interpretation of the objectives of Islamic education. In his view, modernizing educational objectives means moving beyond an exclusive emphasis on the hereafter while also giving due attention to worldly life. Likewise, the modernization of the specific objectives of Islamic education requires shifting from merely idealizing Islamic educational principles toward emphasizing practical competencies and their application in everyday life.

The Modernization of the Islamic Education Curriculum

The curriculum is defined as a set of plans and arrangements concerning educational objectives, learning content, instructional materials, and teaching methods that serve as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve specific educational goals (National Education System Law, 2003).

According to S. Nasution, curricula evolve in response to new understandings of learning processes, changes in society, and advances in scientific knowledge. Such developments inevitably render existing curricula less relevant over time, regardless of their previous effectiveness (S. Nasution, 2009). Responding to this reality, Azyumardi Azra argues that contemporary Islamic higher education must undergo curriculum reform by incorporating more diverse, substantial, and intellectually engaging topics. He emphasizes that various aspects of Islamic teachings and civilization should be understood as major branches of the humanities, encompassing religion, philosophy, ethics, spirituality, literature, art, archaeology, and history (Azra, 1999).

According to Azra, the curriculum of Islamic education should be broadened through the comprehensive development of Islamic Studies, extending its scope to include the social sciences. Furthermore, citing Nasr (1981), Azra argues that it is also possible to incorporate the natural sciences into Islamic academic programs because Islamic civilization possesses a rich historical legacy in disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, geography, and physics.

Considering these developments, Azra maintains that Islamic education curricula should continue to cultivate religious values while simultaneously placing greater emphasis on scientific and technological competence. Accordingly, every component of the curriculum should address two fundamental educational priorities: first, mastery of science and technology; and second, the cultivation of religious understanding and practice. Only by integrating these two dimensions can Islamic education effectively prepare graduates who possess

scientific competence while maintaining strong faith and religious commitment. Azra's educational philosophy significantly influences his conception of curriculum modernization. His vision of producing intellectually capable Muslims who can fulfill their responsibilities as khalifah on earth and attain success in both this world and the hereafter requires a curriculum that incorporates diverse, meaningful, and engaging subjects. Such a curriculum should expand Islamic Studies to address contemporary societal issues, develop the humanities from an Islamic perspective, and integrate science and technology into the overall structure of Islamic education.

The Modernization of Islamic Educational Institutions

According to Azra, educational reform has primarily focused on two dimensions: the educational system and the curriculum. Before the introduction of modern reform ideas, Islamic educational institutions generally employed a non-classical instructional system. Subsequently, these institutions adopted a classical classroom-based system. Likewise, while traditional curricula originally concentrated almost exclusively on religious sciences, educational reform gradually produced a more balanced curriculum integrating both religious and general sciences (Azra, 1999).

Azra identifies two major streams in the modernization of Islamic educational institutions. The first consists of Islamic educational institutions that essentially function as general schools while incorporating limited Islamic instruction. The second includes institutions that have undergone more comprehensive modernization in response to national development needs. The modernization of pesantren, particularly since the late 1970s, has significantly transformed both their institutional structures and educational systems, bringing about substantial organizational reforms (Azra, 1999).

These developments demonstrate that the continued relevance and effectiveness of Islamic educational institutions in the modern era largely depend upon their ability to respond to contemporary societal needs. Azra argues that the distinctive identity of Islamic educational institutions cannot be determined merely by symbolic religious elements such as teachers beginning lessons with *basmalah* and greetings, or by the presence of prayer rooms and other religious facilities. Instead, their uniqueness should be grounded at the epistemological and axiological levels of the knowledge they teach. Nevertheless, Azra acknowledges that developing an authentically Islamic epistemological framework for empirical and natural sciences remains a significant intellectual challenge (Azra, 1999).

In other words, the distinguishing characteristic of Islamic educational institutions lies not in their religious facilities but in their educational philosophy, institutional values, and commitment to nurturing individuals according to Islamic principles. Religious infrastructure alone does not guarantee an institution's Islamic identity; rather, this identity is reflected in its educational mission and its implementation within the learning process.

Azra's practical commitment to the modernization of Islamic education can also be observed during his tenure as Rector of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah). Under his leadership, the university's facilities were significantly upgraded through architectural designs integrating advanced technology, Islamic identity, and Indonesian cultural values. He also established various research centers, expanded academic collaborations, and promoted the welfare of the university's academic community (Nata, 2005).

His policies aimed at positioning UIN Syarif Hidayatullah alongside leading public universities reflect his comprehensive understanding of educational reform, encompassing both material and non-material dimensions. In Azra's view, the modernization of Islamic education cannot be confined solely to intellectual or psychological transformation; physical infrastructure also plays an important role in motivating educational excellence. Consequently, he sought to integrate modern management practices into Islamic educational institutions while preserving their Islamic identity and adapting them to the social and cultural realities of Indonesian society (Nata, 2005).

Based on Azra's institutional leadership and educational philosophy, the modernization of Islamic educational institutions may be understood as improving educational infrastructure and institutional management through the integration of modern administrative principles with local cultural values. Contemporary scientific and managerial approaches should be adopted to reform outdated institutional systems, while social conditions within the surrounding community must also be considered to ensure that educational development remains relevant and responsive to societal needs.

CONCLUSION

According to Azyumardi Azra, Islamic education is a process of developing individuals based on the teachings of Islam revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Its ultimate purpose is to enable individuals to attain moral and intellectual excellence, fulfill their role as khalifah (vicegerent of Allah) on earth, and achieve happiness in both this world and the hereafter. This understanding is founded upon Azra's view that the concept of education in Islam is inherently embodied in the integrated meanings of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*, all of which must be understood as a unified and comprehensive educational framework.

According to Azra, the modernization of Islamic education involves both the reorientation of Islamic educational thought and the restructuring of educational systems and institutions within the framework of modernity while remaining consistent with Islamic values. From his perspective, Islamic doctrine fundamentally supports modernization, making educational reform an essential component of the advancement of Muslim societies.

With regard to the modernization of the objectives of Islamic education, Azra advocates a shift away from an educational paradigm that focuses exclusively on preparation for the hereafter toward one that also emphasizes success and responsibility in worldly life. Furthermore, the specific objectives of Islamic education should not merely represent the idealization of Islamic teachings but should instead focus on practical educational outcomes and their application in real life.

Regarding the modernization of the Islamic education curriculum, Azra proposes the incorporation of diverse, substantial, and intellectually stimulating topics into the curriculum. He emphasizes the development of Islamic Studies as an interdisciplinary field capable of addressing the contemporary challenges facing Muslim societies, the advancement of the humanities from an Islamic perspective, and the integration of science and technology into the curriculum of Islamic educational institutions.

Finally, the modernization of Islamic educational institutions, according to Azra, requires improving educational infrastructure and institutional facilities through the integration of modern management practices with the cultural values of society. Contemporary scientific and managerial approaches should be adopted to reform outdated institutional systems, while social conditions within the community should also be taken into consideration to facilitate the contextualization of knowledge and ensure that Islamic education remains relevant to the needs of society.

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