

Critical Study of the Meaning of Modernity in Education

Muh. Natsir¹, Eva Sri Rohani², St Hajrawati³, Ismail Usman⁴, Muchlas Khotami⁵, Suhartina⁶, M. Yunus⁷

¹⁻⁶Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Furqan Makassar

⁷[*evasrirohani@gmail.com](mailto:evasrirohani@gmail.com)

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received June 22, 2026

Revised July 27, 2026

Accepted August 8, 2026

Keywords:

Modernity in Education; Educational Modernization; Islamic Education; Critical Study.

ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the meaning of modernity in education, with particular emphasis on the perspective of Islamic education. It aims to analyze the concept of educational modernization, explore the historical background of modernization in Islamic education, identify its key ideas and principles, and examine its implementation in light of educational values, especially Islamic values. Modernity in education is characterized by the rapid advancement of science, technology, and social transformation, which significantly influence educational systems and learning practices. While these developments provide opportunities to improve the quality, effectiveness, and accessibility of education, they also raise challenges in preserving moral values, cultural identity, and character development. Therefore, a critical understanding of modernity is essential to ensure that educational progress is not solely driven by technological advancement but also remains aligned with the fundamental goals of education. This study employed a library research method by reviewing relevant books, scholarly articles, and other academic literature. The findings indicate that educational modernization should be understood as a process of renewal that enhances educational quality and responsiveness to contemporary demands. However, its implementation must be balanced with ethical, spiritual, and character-based values to prevent scientific and technological progress from overshadowing the broader educational mission. The study concludes that modernity should be viewed as an adaptive educational paradigm that integrates innovation with humanitarian, moral, and religious principles, particularly within the framework of Islamic education. Such an approach is expected to foster competent, ethical, and socially responsible individuals capable of addressing the challenges of an increasingly dynamic global society.

I. INTRODUCTION

The modernization of Islamic education produced in Indonesia, which emerged since the 1900s, has indeed had a great influence on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia. This period recorded many changes in the world of Islamic education in Indonesia, ranging from institutional institutions, education systems, management management, to various government policies that also underwent changes due to the modernization flow. Although the change is not always positive, the change has added to the color of Islamic education in Indonesia. Because the essence of modernization is change, it is natural that every change is identified with modernization, but the change referred to here is a change based on the goal of being better. The changes and influences caused by modernization conditions will not stop at one point, but will continue along with the changes made by the modernization actors. In the world of education, everyone involved in the world of education can become a performer or initiator of modernization. But in certain contexts, modernization can be born from the efforts, authority, policies or movements of an organization. This means that in that case the product of modernization is not the product of one individual but a

product produced by many people on behalf of the organization. Furthermore, the modernization of Islamic education has encouraged the integration of religious knowledge with general sciences, creating a more balanced educational framework that responds to contemporary societal needs. Madrasahs and Islamic educational institutions have gradually adopted modern curricula, improved teaching methodologies, incorporated science and technology, and strengthened administrative systems. These developments have enhanced the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions while preserving their fundamental mission of nurturing students with strong religious values, intellectual competence, and moral character. However, modernization also presents significant challenges for Islamic education. The rapid advancement of globalization, digital technology, and changing social values requires Islamic educational institutions to continuously adapt without compromising their Islamic identity. Therefore, modernization should not merely emphasize technological advancement or institutional reform but should also reinforce ethical principles, spiritual development, and character education. A balanced approach to modernization ensures that Islamic education remains relevant to the demands of the modern era while maintaining its essential role in developing individuals who are intellectually capable, morally responsible, and spiritually grounded.

II. METHODS

This study uses a literature research method. Literature research aims to understand, analyze, and evaluate concepts and theories relevant to the topic discussed, namely a Critical Study of the meaning of Modernity in Education. In this study, the data used is sourced from published literature, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and other documents related to the Augustinian. This research does not require the collection of empirical data through surveys or field observations, but focuses on searching, critical evaluation, and in-depth analysis of existing written sources. (Kusumastuti, A., & Khoiron, A. M. 2019). The data collection technique in this study is carried out through, namely, studying and recording information from references related to the Critical Study of the meaning of Modernity in Education and its practice. The data collection process is carried out systematically by sorting out credible and up-to-date sources. The collected data is then mapped by topic, such as moral values in education, and educational integration. This technique helps researchers compile a complete picture of the Critical Study of the meaning of Modernity in Education from a scientific perspective. (Komarudin, Parman & Muhammad Rifki Hidayat, 2022). Data analysis was carried out using content analysis. This process includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selects relevant information and removes data that does not support the focus of the research. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of a narrative description that describes a Critical Study of the meaning of Modernity in Education. In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions based on patterns, relationships, as well as conceptual findings obtained from various literature sources. (Octaviani, Rika & Elma Sutriani, 2019). The validity of the data in this literature research is maintained through triangulation of sources, which is comparing information from various references to ensure the validity and consistency of the data. In addition, the researcher uses academically recognized literature and comes from verified sources such as scientific journals, academic books, and authoritative Islamic references. Thus, the results of the research have a high level of reliability and can be used as a basis for the development of further studies on the Critical Study of the meaning of Modernity in Education (Afiyanti, 2008).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

3.1. Understanding Modernization in Education

The word modern comes from the word *modo* which means just now. It can also be interpreted as an attitude and way of thinking, as well as acting in accordance with the demands of the times, while modernization is interpreted as a process of shifting attitudes and mentalities as citizens to be able to live in accordance with today's demands. According to Harun Nasution, "Modernization in western society means thoughts, flows, movements and efforts to change old beliefs, customs, institutions and so on, to be adjusted to the new atmosphere caused by changes and circumstances, especially by the advancement of modern science and technology (Nasution, Marlian Arif, 2024). The definition of modernity is the achievement produced by the change from traditional things to modern situations or conditions. Basically, modernity relies on the modernization process. Broadly speaking, changes in the modernization process can be seen in two aspects, namely changes related to value systems or ideal norms (ways of thinking) and changes that are material or that concern something visible (fashion or lifestyle and technology). The meaning of modernization in Abdurrahman Wahid's view is actually contained in dynamism, namely the revival of existing positive life values, including old values and new values that are considered more perfect. This means that modernization can be said to be a change towards improving the situation by using existing life attitudes and equipment as the basis of values. (Jalil, Abdul.2019). The term modernization is synonymous with "development", which is a complex multi-dimensional process. According to him, modernization must be in accordance with the framework of modernity. In this context, education is considered an absolute prerequisite and condition for the community to run programs and achieve the goals of modernization or change. Thus, it is not surprising that education is said to be the key to modernization and renewal. (Rofiq, Aunur, 2023).

3.2. Background of Islamic Education Modernization

Islamic education has a long history. Islamic education developed along with the emergence of Islam itself. In the context of Arab society where Islam was born and first developed, the arrival of Islam complete with educational efforts was a major transformation. This is because pre-Islamic Arab society basically did not have a formal education system. In the early days of Islamic development, of course, systematic formal education had not been implemented. The education that takes place can be said to be generally informal; and this is also more related to the efforts of Islamic *da'wah*, the spread and cultivation of the foundations of faith in Islamic worship. (Rahman, Kholilur, 2018). In addition to the advancement of Islamic intellectuals, Islamic educational institutions also experienced rapid development after contact with Hellenism. Islamic educational institutions such as *kittāb*, mosques, *khalaqah* and assemblies (in certain places, such as in the houses of scholars), underwent characteristic changes, and even new forms of educational institutions emerged, which gave rise to the dualism of Islamic educational institutions, namely there were Islamic educational institutions that were open to general knowledge and some that specifically taught religious knowledge. There were two types of Islamic educational institutions in the Classical period, namely formal and informal Islamic educational institutions. The criterion used to distinguish the two forms of institutions is the relationship between educational institutions and the state in the form of a theocracy. Formal educational institutions are educational institutions established by the state to prepare Islamic youth to master religious knowledge and play a role in religion, or to become bureaucratic workers, or government employees. The administrative management is handled by the ruler. The curriculum is about religious science or *naqliyah* science. While informal educational institutions offer general knowledge lessons, including philosophy. (Masrur, Achmad, 2014).

3.3. Ideas and Principles of Modernization of Islamic Education

Modernization that contains thoughts, trends, movements, and efforts to change customs, old institutions and so on, so that all of them can be adjusted to new opinions and circumstances arising from the goals of modern science and technology. Modernization or renewal also means the process of shifting attitudes and mental mentality as citizens to be able to live according to the demands of today's society (Rizik, Miftahur, Lias Hasibuan, and Kasful Anwar Us, 2021). Modernization is the process of adjusting Islamic education to the progress of the times. The background and patterns of reform in Islam, especially in education, take place as: 1. groups oriented to the modern western educational pattern 2. Islamic education reform movement that is oriented to pure Islamic sources and 3. educational reform oriented to nationalism (Hantoro, Ramandha Rudwi, 2022). However, what needs to be underlined is that the modernization of Islamic education must remain in line with the principles of Islamic education, including: First, the Principle of Integration. A principle that should be embraced is that this world is a bridge to the afterlife. Therefore, preparing yourself completely is inevitable so that the period of life in this world is really useful for the provisions that will be brought to the hereafter. Educated behavior and God's favor whatever one gets in life. Second, the principle of balance. Because there is a principle of integration, the principle of balance is a must, so that in human development and development there are no gaps and gaps. Balance between material and spiritual, physical and spiritual elements. In many verses of the Qur'an, Allah mentions faith and charity at the same time. No less than sixty-seven verses that mention faith and charity in the same way, implicitly describe an inseparable unity. Third, the principle of equality. This principle is rooted in the basic concept of human beings having a unity of origin that does not distinguish degrees, whether between gender, social position, nation, or ethnicity, race, or skin color. So that even slaves get the same rights in education. Fourth, the Principle of Lifelong Education. Actually, this principle originates from the view of basic human needs in relation to human limitations where human beings throughout their lives are faced with various challenges and temptations that can plunge themselves into the abyss of humiliation. In this case, human maturity is required in the form of the ability to admit and regret mistakes and crimes committed, in addition to always improving the quality of oneself. Fifth, the principle of priority. With this principle, it is emphasized that education is not just a mechanical process but a process that has a spirit where all its activities are colored and directed to priorities. These virtues consist of moral values. The highest moral value is monotheism, while the worst and lowest moral value is shirk. With this principle of virtue, educators are not only tasked with providing learning conditions for the subject of education, but more than that also shape their personality with the treatment and example shown by the educator himself. (Nasution, Mulyadi Hermanto, 2018).

3.4. How Modernization of Education Is Viewed from the Perspective of Values (Especially Islamic Education)

Modernization of education in the perspective of values, especially Islamic education, is a process of renewal that must remain based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith as the main source. In Islam, education is not only aimed at educating the intellect, but also to form noble morals and strengthen faith and piety to Allah SWT. Therefore, modernization in Islamic education must be directed at a balance between the advancement of science and technology with the strengthening of spiritual and moral values. (Zuhriansah, M., Jamil Abdul Aziz, and Muhamad Ibtissam Han, 2025). Basically, Islam does not reject modernization. In fact, Islam strongly encourages its people to study and follow the times. This can be seen from the many verses of the Qur'an and hadith that emphasize the importance of science. In this context, modernization can be understood as part of human ijtihad to develop the education system to be more effective and relevant. However, the modernization must

remain within the corridor of Islamic values, so that it does not cause negative impacts such as moral degradation or loss of Islamic identity. (Chasanah, Hidayatul, and Mulyanto Abdullah Khoir, 2026). The modernization of Islamic education can be seen from the efforts to integrate religious science and general science. So far, there has often been a dichotomy between the two, as if religious science and general science are running separately. In fact, in the Islamic view, all knowledge comes from Allah SWT and has the same goal, which is for the benefit of mankind. Therefore, the modernization of Islamic education should be able to eliminate this dichotomy by integrating Islamic values in every aspect of learning, including science and technology. Modernization of education also requires changes in learning methods. From an Islamic perspective, educational methods must be able to touch all aspects of human beings, both intellect, heart, and behavior. (Rizki, Arif Aulia, and Salmi Wati, 2025). The use of technology in learning, such as digital media and online platforms, can be an effective means of delivering material. However, the role of teachers as educators remains very important, especially in providing examples (*uswah hasanah*) and guiding students in the formation of morals. Thus, technology must not replace the role of values and exemplary in Islamic education. The modernization of education in an Islamic perspective must also pay attention to the ethical aspect in the use of technology. In today's digital era, students have very wide access to a wide range of information, both positive and negative. Therefore, Islamic education has an important role in equipping students with moral and ethical values to be able to use technology wisely and responsibly. This includes honesty, discipline, responsibility, and the ability to filter information in accordance with Islamic teachings. (Baroroh, Alisia Zahroatul, 2024). The modernization of Islamic education also faces various models of challenges. One is the tendency to put more emphasis on the cognitive aspects and technical skills, while the spiritual and moral aspects receive less attention. If this continues to happen, then the goal of Islamic education as the formation of *kamil* (perfect human beings) will not be achieved. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to restore a balance between the intellectual and spiritual aspects of the education system.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that modernization in education should not be interpreted merely as the adoption of technological innovations or the transformation of educational institutions. Rather, modernization represents a comprehensive process of changing educational paradigms, systems, and practices to respond to evolving social, scientific, and technological demands while preserving the essential values that define education itself. In the context of Islamic education, modernization is therefore understood as a process of educational renewal that seeks to harmonize contemporary developments with the enduring principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This perspective distinguishes Islamic educational modernization from secular modernization by emphasizing that educational progress should strengthen, rather than diminish, spiritual and moral formation. The historical development of Islamic education further illustrates that modernization is not a new phenomenon but has characterized Islamic civilization since its early expansion. Throughout history, Islamic educational institutions continuously adapted to changing intellectual, political, and social contexts, including the incorporation of new branches of knowledge and the establishment of diverse educational institutions. The emergence of formal and informal educational systems during the classical Islamic period demonstrates that Islamic education has historically possessed a dynamic and adaptive character. Consequently, current efforts to modernize Islamic education should be viewed as a continuation of this historical tradition of renewal rather than a departure from Islamic educational heritage. The findings also indicate that successful modernization of Islamic education depends upon adherence to fundamental Islamic educational principles. The principles of integration, balance, equality, lifelong learning, and priority provide a philosophical framework that ensures

modernization remains value-oriented. These principles prevent modernization from becoming solely a technical or administrative reform by emphasizing the development of the whole person. Educational reform that prioritizes cognitive achievement while neglecting spiritual, emotional, and moral dimensions risks producing graduates who are academically competent but ethically unprepared to address contemporary societal challenges. Therefore, modernization should promote equilibrium between intellectual excellence and character formation. Another important finding concerns the integration of religious and general sciences. The long-standing dichotomy between these fields has often limited the effectiveness of Islamic educational institutions in responding to contemporary realities. The discussion suggests that modernization offers an opportunity to eliminate this separation by recognizing that all knowledge ultimately originates from Allah and serves the common good of humanity. Consequently, curriculum development should encourage interdisciplinary learning in which scientific knowledge is accompanied by ethical reflection and religious values. Such integration enables learners to develop scientific competence while maintaining a strong Islamic identity.

Furthermore, technological advancement has become one of the most significant drivers of educational modernization. Digital learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and online educational resources have expanded access to knowledge and diversified instructional methods. Nevertheless, the findings emphasize that technology should function as a pedagogical instrument rather than a substitute for educators. Within the Islamic educational perspective, teachers remain indispensable because they transmit not only knowledge but also values, moral guidance, and exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*). Therefore, technological innovation should complement, rather than replace, meaningful teacher-student interactions that foster ethical and spiritual development. Despite its numerous opportunities, modernization also presents significant challenges for Islamic education. The rapid expansion of digital information exposes students to both beneficial and harmful influences, making ethical literacy increasingly important. Without adequate moral guidance, modernization may contribute to value erosion, excessive materialism, and weakened religious commitment. These challenges reinforce the necessity of integrating digital literacy with Islamic ethics so that students develop the capacity to evaluate information critically, exercise responsible digital citizenship, and maintain moral integrity in an increasingly interconnected world. Overall, this study indicates that modernization and Islamic educational values are not inherently contradictory. Instead, they can function as complementary forces when educational reforms are guided by Islamic philosophical principles. Effective modernization should therefore pursue educational excellence while preserving the objectives of Islamic education, namely the development of intellectually capable, morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially productive individuals. Such a balanced approach enables Islamic education to remain relevant in addressing contemporary educational demands without compromising its religious identity and core values.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the results of some of the interviews above, the researcher can conclude that educational modernization is a process of renewal carried out to adapt the education system to the development of science, technology, and the dynamics of people's lives. From the perspective of Islamic education, modernization does not mean eliminating the values of Islamic teachings or replacing the principles that have become the basis of education. On the contrary, modernization is understood as an effort to improve and improve the implementation of education in order to be able to answer the challenges of the times, while remaining based on the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. Thus, Islamic education is expected to be able to produce a generation that has a balance between intellectual intelligence, spiritual depth, and moral maturity. The course of history can show that

Islamic education has always undergone development along with changes in social conditions and the progress of civilization. Starting from the simple education system in the early days of Islam to the birth of various more structured educational institutions, the entire process shows that Islamic education has the ability to adapt to the times. Therefore, modernization of education is a necessary step to strengthen the quality of learning through the improvement of curriculum, learning methods, the use of technology, and the integration of religious and general sciences without eliminating their Islamic characteristics. The application of modernization of Islamic education must remain based on the basic principles that characterize Islamic education, such as the balance between the interests of the world and the hereafter, the unity between knowledge and charity, equal rights in obtaining education, lifelong learning, and the formation of noble morals. Technological advances and learning innovations should be used as a means to improve the quality of education, not as a factor that shifts moral and spiritual values. Therefore, the role of educators is not only as a transmitter of knowledge, but also as a guide and role model in shaping the character of students. In the end, in the word modernization of Islamic education is an unavoidable need in the midst of increasingly rapid global development. The success of modernization is not only measured by the progress of facilities, technology, and mastery of science, but also by its ability to form human beings who have faith, noble character, think critically, and are able to provide benefits to society. By harmoniously combining educational innovation and Islamic values, Islamic education will remain relevant to face the changing times while being able to produce a generation that is superior, has integrity, and has competitiveness without losing its Islamic identity.

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