

THE FUTURE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Anri Saputra¹ Rafika Nisa² Lahmuddin Lubis³ Pamonoran Siregar⁴

¹STAI Raudhatul Akmal Deli Serdang, Indonesia

²STIT Ar-Raudhah Deli Serdang, Indonesia

³UIN Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

⁴STIT Al-Ittihadiyah, Indonesia

Corresponden E-mail: anri.saputra2992@gmail.com

Abstract

Islamic education currently faces complex challenges amidst the current of globalization, the acceleration of digital technology, and the weakening of spiritual values among the younger generation. This study aims to explore in depth the various potentials and obstacles that influence the future direction of Islamic education. With a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature studies, this article analyzes various scientific sources, field data, and the thoughts of contemporary Islamic education figures. The results of the discussion show that the existence of global spiritual awareness, technological advances, and the spirit of integration between religious knowledge and science provide great opportunities for Islamic education to develop. On the other hand, challenges such as curriculum separation, weak mastery of technology among educators, and the influence of secularism are significant obstacles. Therefore, systemic strategies are needed such as holistic curriculum updates, improving teacher quality, wise use of technology, and strengthening moderate and universal Islamic values to realize relevant and contributive Islamic education in the modern era.

Keywords: *Islamic Education; Curriculum Transformation; Digital Literacy; Globalization; Integration Of Knowledge*

A. Introduction

Islamic education is a strategic instrument in forming individuals who excel spiritually, intellectually, and morally. According to al-Attas (1991: 17), Islamic education is truly a process of ta'dib, namely the instillation of manners and the integration of knowledge, deeds, and faith as the basis for the formation of a whole person. Thus, Islamic education should not be understood merely as the delivery of religious doctrine, but as a holistic process that prepares students to become caliphs (leaders) who bring blessings to the universe. However, social change and advances in digital technology today bring serious challenges. Massive and unfiltered access to information creates a space for identity confusion, especially among the younger generation of Muslims. The Pew Research Center report (2023: 12) noted that 87% of Muslim teenagers in Southeast Asia access religious content through digital media, but only a small portion sort it based on scientific authority. This indicates a crisis of religious literacy amidst technological advances.

In line with that, Nashir and Azizah (2019: 102) emphasized that without digital literacy and good pedagogical guidance, the Muslim generation is very vulnerable to the influence of extreme, shallow, or even misleading religious content. This condition suggests the need for a transformation of Islamic education that is not only responsive to the challenges of the times, but also remains based on solid monotheistic values.

The reality of this crisis increasingly shows its urgency when we look at empirical data. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) reported that from January to September 2024, there were 36 cases of physical and sexual violence in educational institutions with 144 student victims, including in Islamic schools (FSGI, 2024: 1). In fact, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) noted that there were deaths of students due to violence in several Islamic boarding schools in early 2024, such as in Kediri and Banyuwangi (KPAI, 2024: 1). This shows that there are structural gaps in the Islamic education system, both in supervision, character building, and the preventive role of educational institutions against violence.

One of the root problems is curriculum dualism, a sharp division between religious knowledge and general knowledge. As a result, students experience a gap between the spiritual and scientific dimensions. Amin Abdullah (2021: 45) calls this a fragmented epistemological legacy and calls for reconstruction through an epistemological interconnection approach, namely the integration of religious knowledge and modern knowledge in a dialogical manner. However, the application of this integration has not been fully realized at the practical level. Research by Hasanuddin and Rahma (2022: 155) found that 63% of teachers in madrasas have not utilized technology optimally in learning due to limited training and access. Laily, et. al (2023: 139) also shows the low digital literacy among teachers as the main obstacle to the transformation of technology-based Islamic learning.

This condition is reinforced by the findings of the International Islamic Education Council (IIEC, 2023: 10) that 55% of Islamic educational institutions do not yet have a consistent standard curriculum, while the Islamic Development Bank (2023: 5) states that almost half of Islamic education teachers do not routinely undergo modern pedagogical training. Thus, there is a gap between research and practice, especially in three areas: First, the weakness of empirical studies on preventive efforts against religious-based violence in educational institutions, second, the absence of in-depth studies on the systemic integration of digital technology (such as AI and IoT) in Islamic learning, and third, limited research related to structural discrimination against Islamic Education teachers in professional training (Kompas.com, 2024: 1).

For this reason, an educational approach is needed that is not only informative but also transformative. Mezirow (1997: 7) emphasizes the importance of the critical reflection process in education to produce changes in perspective and the formation of new awareness. This concept is very relevant in Islamic education that aims to build character, not just cognitive abilities.

Furthermore, Islamic education needs to respond to the needs of the younger generation for spirituality that is relevant to the context of the times. The Ministry of Religion (2023: 33–34) emphasizes the importance of curriculum transformation that integrates revelation and modern science, as well as strengthening the capacity of teachers to be able to accompany students in facing a world that continues to change.

Based on this reality, the author is interested in conducting in-depth research on: *The Future of Islamic Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, with the aim of formulating conceptual and practical strategies so that Islamic education remains relevant, adaptive, and firmly rooted in the values of revelation amidst the complexity of the times.

B. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research method, considering that the focus of this study is to explore the future of Islamic education conceptually and normatively, through an analysis of relevant academic literature and primary Islamic sources (Zed, 2004: 3; Moleong, 2017: 11). Data were collected from various scientific sources such as books, journal articles, official documents, and the thoughts of contemporary Islamic education figures. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques, namely examining in depth the content and meaning of various literatures to find patterns of ideas and their implications for Islamic education policies and practices. Content validity is strengthened through source triangulation, namely by comparing references from various perspectives to ensure consistency and accuracy of findings (Furchan, 2004: 130). The results of this study are not directed at empirical generalization, but rather to build a conceptual framework that is able to strategically answer the challenges of the times without releasing the values of revelation as the main foundation of Islamic education (Muhaimin, 2009: 218).

C. Finding and Discussion

Future Opportunities for Islamic Education

Opportunities in Islamic education refer to situations that can be utilized to strengthen and develop the education system according to the needs of the times. These opportunities emerge along with social change, technological advances, and increasing awareness of the importance of spiritual values in education. Muhaimin (2009: 15) calls opportunities a strategic space to actualize Islamic values in a relevant manner, while Hasan (2016: 58) emphasizes that opportunities must be answered with innovation so that Islamic education remains adaptive and competitive.

The Awakening of Global Spiritual Consciousness

The development of the modern world marked by technological progress and globalization has brought serious implications to human life, especially in terms of values and meaning of life. Behind the material progress achieved, there is a tendency for the spiritual dimension to weaken in human life. This phenomenon encourages many people in various parts of the world to return to seeking a transcendental direction in life. In a situation characterized by a void of meaning and identity crisis, a new awareness has emerged of the importance of spiritual values in supporting a life that is balanced

psychologically, socially, and existentially (Nasution, 2005: 101). This reality is reflected in the increasing number of global communities who show interest in spiritual practices, both those originating from religious traditions and contemporary approaches such as meditation and mindfulness. This awareness has even spread to professionals, academics, and the younger generation who feel bored with modern life that is fast-paced but emotionally shallow. This phenomenon has been noted by several researchers as a form of spiritual turn in postmodern society (Zohar & Marshall, 2001: 44). This situation is a great opportunity for Islamic education to appear as an educational system that is able to answer human needs for balance between reason, heart, and divine values (Heriyanto, 2010: 52). In this context, the Qur'an has emphasized the importance of spiritual awareness as the foundation of human existence. Allah SWT says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنسَاهُمْ أَنفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

Meaning: And do not be like those who forget Allah, then Allah makes them forget themselves. These are the wicked people. (QS. Al-Hasyr: 19)

This verse shows that forgetting Allah not only results in a rift in transcendental relationships, but also causes a crisis of self-awareness. In the modern context, this can be interpreted as a loss of direction in life, existential goals, and increasing anxiety and spiritual emptiness that many contemporary societies experience. Islamic education, based on the values of monotheism and integration of knowledge, is an important instrument for overcoming this crisis. Islamic education has philosophical and historical foundations that support this role. The concept of ta'dib popularized by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, for example, emphasizes the importance of education as a process of forming a civilized person, not just intellectual achievement alone. Values such as noble morals, honesty, sincerity, and submission to God are important elements in Islamic education that are not possessed by the secular education system (Al-Attas, 1980: 17). In the current global context, Islamic education has a great opportunity to position itself as an alternative that does not only focus on mastering knowledge, but also on character formation and spiritual depth of students. This is very relevant considering the increasing need of modern humans for a more meaningful, calm and ethical life orientation (Abdullah, 2006: 92).

In addition, inclusive and humanist Islamic spirituality can encourage the role of Islamic education as a means of cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue. Universal principles in Islam such as justice, compassion, and global peace can be used as a foundation in creating a civilized civilization (Al-Attas, 1980: 23). Thus, Islamic education not only builds knowledgeable people, but also individuals who have a depth of soul and are ready to face the complexities of modern life wisely and morally (Azra, 2012: 74).

a. Development of Technology and Digital Learning

The rapid development of the digital revolution in recent decades has had a major impact on the world of education, including Islamic education. Information and communication technology is now an important tool in expanding access to learning and improving the quality of the teaching and learning process. Islamic education can take advantage of this momentum to spread Islamic values more widely, by utilizing various

digital media such as online classes, open learning platforms (MOOCs), educational applications, and technology-based learning management systems.

The existence of digital media allows the education process to no longer be limited by physical classrooms. Students can access teaching materials anytime and anywhere, so that learning becomes more flexible, responsive, and oriented to the needs of the times. This is a great opportunity for Islamic educational institutions to appear relevant in the era of globalization of knowledge. Azra (2012: 61) emphasizes that if technology is managed with a creative approach and remains within the corridor of Islamic values, then it can be a very effective means of intellectual preaching. The use of digital technology provides a great opportunity to develop a learning approach that is more interactive and relevant to the context of students. The use of aids such as visualization of materials, digital simulations, online quizzes, and artificial intelligence that supports adaptive assessment can strengthen students' understanding and at the same time instill Islamic values. This method is more easily accepted by the younger generation who are very familiar with the digital world, compared to traditional learning approaches that are more rigid and limited to one-way interactions (Husain & Husain, 2020: 118).

From an Islamic perspective, the spirit of developing technology and its use in education is truly a form of manifestation of Allah SWT's command to read, learn, and explore the universe. This is reflected in the word of Allah:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

Meaning: Read with (mentioning) the name of your Lord who created. (QS. Al-'Alaq: 1)

This verse is the first revelation command that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, indicating that Islamic civilization was built on the basis of literacy, learning, and seeking knowledge. In the context of the digital era, "reading" is not only in the sense of written text, but also includes digital literacy skills, interpretation of information, and mastery of technology as a means to expand understanding of Islamic teachings and the world. In addition to opening wider access and increasing the effectiveness of the learning process, technology also allows for cross-country collaboration between Islamic educational institutions. Online scientific forums, exchange of digital materials, and virtual research collaboration are now easier to do, which in turn strengthens the position of Islamic education in the international world and opens up opportunities for a more dynamic and open exchange of ideas (Suryadi, 2021:45).

However, to take full advantage of this opportunity, readiness is needed from educators and educational institutions. In-depth training for teachers and lecturers to master the use of educational technology that is in line with Islamic values is essential. In addition, adequate technological infrastructure and adaptive policies are also important factors in supporting the development of digital-based Islamic education (Mulyasa, 2013:132). By utilizing technology intelligently and purposefully, Islamic education has the potential to carry out significant transformations to overcome the challenges of the modern era, while still maintaining the divine values and noble morals that are at the core of Islamic education.

b. Integration of Science and Religion

The concept of combining religious knowledge with general knowledge is now an aspect that is highly considered in the development of Islamic education. The aim of this integration is to not only teach religious teachings, but also introduce science and technology that are beneficial to the wider community. This integration paradigm has been initiated by figures such as Mulyadhi Kartanegara and Amin Abdullah, who attempted to eliminate the boundaries between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge, which are often considered as two separate things (Abdullah, 2006: 45).

In the context of Islamic education, the main aim of this integration is to provide a deep understanding of religious teachings while preparing students to be able to contribute in the field of science. Islamic education does not only aim to teach science technically, but also emphasizes the importance of applying science in everyday life based on religious principles. Kartanegara (2009: 72) argues that Islamic education must be able to bring together two fields that are often considered different, namely religion and science, by uniting the two to create the welfare of the people. In Islamic teachings, the principle of monotheism teaches that everything in this world, including knowledge and technology, is part of God's creation. Therefore, Islamic education which integrates religious knowledge with general knowledge aims to produce individuals who not only excel in science, but also have noble morals. Thus, science not only functions to achieve worldly progress, but also as a means of getting closer to God and providing benefits to humanity (Al-Ghazali, 1999: 102).

The urgency of this integration has actually been emphasized in the Al-Qur'an. Allah SWT says:

رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْفَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ

Meaning: Our Lord is He who gave everything its form and then guided it. (QS. Tāhā: 50)

This verse confirms that all creation, including reason and knowledge, has been bestowed by Allah and his guidance. Thus, the separation between world knowledge and religion is a secularistic construction that is contrary to the spirit of monotheism. Integration between the two is actually an effort to unite God's guidance in all aspects of life, including in the academic and scientific realms. Islamic education that integrates religious knowledge and science provides enormous opportunities to develop knowledge from an Islamic perspective. Through this approach, the aim of education is not only to master theory, but also to apply it in a social and community context, which is in accordance with Islamic principles which emphasize justice, peace and welfare of the people (Sina, 2005: 76).

Along with that, the integration of religious knowledge and science aims to eliminate the barriers between the two and create a harmonious balance between worldly and ukhrawi knowledge. Muslim scientists such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali have proven that science and religion are not two separate things, but rather two complementary entities. This approach has the potential to inspire future generations to not only master modern science, but also maintain morality and ethics that are in line with Islamic teachings

(Al-Farabi, 1995: 85). With this integration, Islamic education has the potential to form a generation that is not only competent in science, but also has a strong character and is ready to face the challenges of the times. Therefore, it is very important for Islamic educational institutions to design a curriculum that combines science and religion, so that students can see and feel the close relationship between the two and apply it in everyday life wisely (Kartanegara, 2009: 90).

c. Globalization and Internationalization of Islamic Education

Globalization has had a major impact on many sectors, including education. This globalization process has opened up opportunities for Islamic educational institutions to compete and interact internationally, expanding their influence on the global stage. With advances in technology and more sophisticated communication systems, Islamic educational institutions now have wider access to previously limited opportunities, such as establishing academic collaborations with universities abroad, participating in student exchange programs, joint research, and international conferences. The existence of Islamic educational institutions in the global arena shows that Islamic education can now compete with other education systems, both in terms of the values taught and the academic quality offered (Azra, 2012: 85).

Several leading Islamic universities have now expanded their international collaboration with global educational institutions through programs such as student exchanges, collaborative research, and international conferences (Azra, 2012: 85). These programs allow students to deepen their knowledge, expand their international networks, and produce research that combines religious perspectives with modern science. In addition, the international influence of Islamic education is increasingly widespread, which also provides space to introduce Islamic values as a solution to global moral issues, by emphasizing principles such as justice and a sense of social responsibility (Nasution, 2014: 120). Within this framework, the Qur'an encourages Muslims to interact openly with other nations in the spirit of getting to know each other and building cross-identity cooperation. Allah SWT says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Meaning: O people! Indeed, We created you from a man and a woman, then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Compliant. (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13)

This verse is an important normative basis that cultural and national differences are not a reason to create conflict, but rather become a space for dialogue, exchange of knowledge, and collaboration for the common good. The internationalization of Islamic education can be an effective means to realize the Qur'anic vision, where Muslims are present as active contributors to global discourse. Through this internationalization, Islamic education also encourages intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which can strengthen

understanding between the Islamic world and the non-Islamic world. This approach prioritizes the integration of religious values with academic quality, which can strengthen the position of Islamic education in the international education arena and contribute to improving global morals (Hasan, 2016: 150). In the future, the development of increasingly global Islamic education requires educational institutions to innovate in compiling curricula and teaching methods, so that they can continue to follow the times (Kartanegara, 2009: 75).

d. The Growth of a Young Generation of Muslims Who Are Technologically Literate and Inclusive

Today's young Muslim generation is growing up in a world heavily influenced by the development of digital technology, which gives them access to a variety of information and opportunities to interact with cultures and ideas from around the world. Life in this digital ecosystem has encouraged them to develop a new interest in linking Islamic teachings to contemporary issues such as climate change, social justice, and inclusivity. Islamic education has great potential to shape this generation into creative, moderate individuals who are able to face the challenges of the times responsively. By designing an adaptable curriculum, Islamic education can emphasize the development of soft skills, digital literacy, and a comprehensive understanding of Islam that brings blessings to all humanity (Rohman, 2020: 40). Islamic education also has the opportunity to produce future leaders who are not only skilled in science, but also understand religious values that can have a positive impact on the global world. The Islamic education curriculum must be designed adaptively, integrating religious teaching with rapidly developing technology and social needs. In this case, Islamic education must be able to provide practical skills and academic knowledge that are relevant to the demands of the modern world (Rohman, 2020: 40). It is important to prioritize the value of rahmatan lil 'alamin in Islamic education, namely being a blessing for the whole world. This can be done by emphasizing moral values that teach justice, compassion, and social responsibility towards others, which can then provide solutions to the moral crisis that is currently occurring in global society. Islamic education must be able to develop a young generation with strong character, while also guiding them in interacting with different cultures and religions (Nashir, 2018: 112). In this context, the Qur'an provides a very basic and transformative principle, as in the word of Allah SWT:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

Meaning: And so (also) We have made you (Muslims) a wasath (middle/moderate) people so that you become witnesses of human (deeds)... (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143)

This verse emphasizes the importance of the role of Muslims as moderate people (wasathiyah), who are witnesses and main actors in building a just, inclusive, and civilized society. In the context of education, this can be interpreted as an encouragement to produce a young generation of Muslims who are open-minded, but still firmly rooted in divine values. Islamic education must also recognize the importance of digital literacy as a primary

skill for the younger generation in an increasingly technologically connected world. The ability to use technology wisely and productively is key to equipping the younger generation of Muslims to contribute to a digital knowledge-based society. Islamic education based on religious values can help them utilize technology for purposes that are beneficial to humanity (Abdullah, 2015: 89). Inclusive Islamic education is essential in encouraging the younger generation to see religion as part of a broader life, which can be accepted in diverse social contexts. By introducing the values of inclusivity in learning, Islamic education can help build a more harmonious society that respects differences (Syam, 2021: 76). Overall, Islamic education plays an important role in shaping a young generation that is ready to face this fast-paced world, by combining technological skills with universal Islamic principles, such as peace, justice, and compassion. Responsive and relevant Islamic education will help create individuals who can make positive contributions to the progress of global society (Fathoni, 2017: 45).

Future Challenges of Islamic Education

Challenges in Islamic education refer to various forms of pressure, obstacles, or conditions that may hinder the achievement of educational goals rooted in Islamic values. These challenges may arise internally, such as inadequate teacher quality or outdated curriculum design, or externally, including the influence of globalization and secularism. Muhaimin (2009: 27) explains that challenges are circumstances that demand educational institutions to remain responsive to change while upholding core Islamic principles. Similarly, Hasan (2016: 44) views challenges as critical moments to assess whether Islamic education can adapt constructively or risks being left behind by the flow of modern developments.

a. Identity Crisis and the Flow of Secularization

One of the main challenges currently facing Islamic education is the fading of Islamic identity as a result of the increasingly strong secularization in the world of education. Secularism does not only refer to the elimination of religious elements from the political and social realms, but is also reflected in educational practices that ignore the relationship between science and religious values (Al-Attas, 1991: 12). In the current education system, religious studies are often not placed as the main pillar, but are only considered as a complement, so that their role in forming the Islamic character of students becomes less significant (Heriyanto, 2010: 45). Furthermore, Heriyanto (2010: 45) highlights that the current education curriculum tends to fail in making religious education the foundation of morals and ethics of society. In fact, in the tradition of Islamic education, the integration of science and faith is an inseparable necessity. As a result, a generation emerges that excels in mastering technology and knowledge, but has minimal spiritual understanding and a crisis of life orientation. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the dominance of the Western education model that prioritizes cognitive achievement and work skills, but ignores the spiritual dimension and divine values. In this context, al-Attas (1991: 12) emphasized that secularization is not a neutral process, but rather an ideological effort that shifts the center

of educational values from faith to rationality alone. As a result, Islamic education is trapped in the current of materialism and utilitarianism, losing its direction in developing intellectually and spiritually whole people. In the face of the strong influence of secularism, many young generations of Muslims experience confusion in understanding their religious identity. Islamic teachings are often narrowed down to ritual worship activities alone, without any connection to the social, economic, or political dynamics they are facing (Abdullah, 2010: 63). In fact, Islam is a comprehensive value system (kaffah) that covers all aspects of human life, as emphasized by Al-Faruqi (1982: 15) that Islam must be understood as an integrated and comprehensive outlook on life. This is in line with the word of Allah SWT in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Meaning: O you who believe! Enter into Islam as a whole, and do not follow the steps of Satan. Indeed, he is a real enemy for you. (QS. Al-Baqarah: 208)

This verse emphasizes the importance of embracing Islam in its entirety, comprehensively, not partially. Islamic education that only makes religion an additional element in the curriculum does not reflect the spirit of this verse. On the contrary, education that integrates Islamic values in all subjects will strengthen Islamic identity and form a generation that is not only intelligent, but also has character and spirituality. In response to this problem, Islamic education needs to prioritize an integrative approach that unites science and the principles of monotheism. The curriculum must be developed not only to improve academic achievement, but also to instill a solid Islamic mindset. In line with the view of Al-Attas (1991: 42), ideal education is education that is able to unite science with Islamic spiritual values through the process of Islamization of science.

Therefore, religious education is not enough if it is only positioned as an administrative complement in the curriculum, but must be the core that enlivens all teaching and learning processes in all subjects (Zarkasyi, 2016: 88). In facing the challenges of secularization, Islam does not need to reject the development of modern science, but needs to place it within the framework of Islamic ethics and spirituality. Through such an educational approach, Islamic identity can be strengthened again and Islamic education is able to produce a young generation that is intellectually intelligent as well as superior in faith and morals (Nasution, 2005: 111).

b. Quality and Capacity of Teaching Staff

One of the fundamental challenges in the development of Islamic education today is the limited competence of educators, especially in terms of teaching approaches and mastery of technology. Many religious teachers still use conventional methods that are less suited to the characteristics of generation Z and Alpha students who grow up in a digital environment and are accustomed to interactive and visual learning. This non-adaptive teaching approach results in low student involvement in learning and a weak

understanding of Islamic values in depth and contextually (Furchan, 2004: 130). Furchan further stated that the limitations of modern pedagogical training and minimal skills in information technology are the main factors in the incompatibility between the methods used by teachers and the learning styles of today's students. As a result, the learning process becomes ineffective and fails to form a strong Islamic character in students.

In addition to being teachers, teachers in Islamic education should also function as educators and moral mentors who are able to instill Islamic values in students' daily lives. Langgulong (2003: 156) emphasized that the ideal teacher in Islam is a figure who is able to be a mu'allim, murabbi, and at the same time mursyid. Unfortunately, many Islamic educational institutions have not provided the training and ongoing development programs needed to strengthen the capacity of this role. In this context, the Qur'an provides a noble description of the duties of teachers and educators, as the role that Allah first assigned to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Allah SWT says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

Meaning: It was He who sent to the illiterate people a Messenger from among them, who recited His verses to them, purified them, and taught them the Book and Hikmah (wisdom). (QS. Al-Jumu'ah: 2)

This verse emphasizes that ideal education is one that not only teaches knowledge (ta'lim), but also purifies the soul (tazkiyah) and forms wisdom (hikmah). This shows that the task of teachers in Islam is not merely to transfer knowledge, but also to develop morals and spiritual awareness of students comprehensively. In the midst of the complexity of the challenges of the times, educators are also required to have broad insight and the ability to link Islamic teachings with various contemporary issues, such as technological developments, social diversity, and environmental issues. Qomar (2005: 91) argues that superior teachers are those who are not only able to convey knowledge, but also bridge Islamic values with the modern realities faced by students. Therefore, teacher education programs in Islamic universities need to be designed in a more innovative and integrative way. The curriculum should combine mastery of Islamic knowledge with 21st-century pedagogical skills, such as the use of digital media, project-based learning, critical thinking, and collaborative work. With this step, Islamic educators will be better prepared to form a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has a strong Islamic personality that is relevant to the demands of the times.

c. Curriculum Dualism: Religion vs General

One of the major challenges faced by Islamic education is the separation between religious education and general education curricula. In many Islamic educational institutions, there is a clear division between these two types of education, which hinders the integration of faith and knowledge. Religious education is often seen as a separate subject that is more theoretical in nature, while general education that focuses on practical knowledge and skills is considered more important in everyday life. This division creates

inequality, where many students have limited understanding of religion, but do not master general knowledge, or they tend to master general knowledge without a strong ethical and moral foundation (Rahman, 1982: 147). Furthermore, Rahman (1982: 147) criticized the Islamic education system that emphasizes dogmatic memorization and clearly separates religious and general education. According to Rahman, this system must undergo a reform that emphasizes the development of critical, contextual, and solution-oriented thinking to the challenges of the times. Islamic education does not only aim to teach religious knowledge, but also prepares students to face the challenges of the world with a holistic approach, combining religious principles with practical knowledge and skills.

This reform includes changes to the curriculum and teaching methods that are more inclusive and responsive to the development of the times. For example, educators should integrate moral and ethical values in every subject, not just limited to religious studies. This can be done by teaching values such as justice, responsibility, compassion, and tolerance in the context of science, mathematics, or even social sciences. This approach will make Islamic education more relevant to the needs of the times, and help shape individuals who are not only intelligent in academics, but also have strong characters and are able to overcome various social, economic, and political challenges from a comprehensive religious perspective (Furqan, 2004: 131). The integration of science and religion is truly a command that is in line with the values of the Qur'an. Allah SWT says:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

Meaning: Say: Are those who know the same as those who do not know? In fact, only intelligent people can learn from it. (QS. Az-Zumar: 9)

This verse implicitly emphasizes the primacy of knowledge, without limiting it to the dichotomy of religion or the world. Islam does not separate knowledge and faith; the two strengthen each other. Therefore, the structural separation of the curriculum is actually contrary to the integrative spirit of revelation, which requires unity of knowledge as a means towards knowing and serving Allah SWT. Along with the rapid development of technology and globalization, it is important for the younger generation of Muslims to not only acquire the latest scientific knowledge, but also have a deep understanding of the application of Islamic values in everyday life. This includes the application of Islamic values in decision-making related to global issues, such as climate change, social justice, and world peace. Therefore, the integration of religious and general curricula is key to producing a generation of Muslims who have an international outlook, but still adhere to the principles of their religion (Ahmad, 2021: 77).

However, it should be remembered that the combination of these two curricula does not mean ignoring the importance of religious education or general knowledge. On the contrary, Islamic education must be able to create the right balance between the two by encouraging the development of critical, creative thinking, and based on Islamic values. With this approach, Islamic education can produce students who not only have academic

intelligence, but also the strength of faith and the ability to think critically and provide solutions in facing the challenges of the times (Bakar, 2019: 102). Ultimately, the separation between religious and general education is not only a structural problem, but also a problem related to the philosophy of education. Deep reform is needed so that Islamic education can integrate these two aspects effectively, producing a generation that is academically intelligent and also has a strong faith and the ability to think critically and provide solutions in facing the challenges of the times (Rahman, 1982: 147).

d. Lagging behind in Curriculum Innovation

One of the significant challenges faced by Islamic education today is the slow development of a curriculum that is relevant to global issues and contemporary challenges. Many Islamic educational institutions have not been able to adapt their curriculum to current developments, especially in terms of the environment, digitalization, and social justice. Islamic education needs to design a curriculum that not only covers religious aspects, but can also respond to the needs of the modern world (Al-Attas, 1991: 102). Without updates and innovations in the curriculum, Islamic education is at risk of becoming outdated and losing its relevance. Along with the rapid changes in the world, including rapid developments in technology and increasing awareness of environmental issues, Islamic education is expected to be able to align religious teachings with the dynamics of the times. For this reason, the curriculum that is designed must be able to integrate religious knowledge with practical skills that students need in their daily lives. For example, the Islamic education curriculum must teach about the importance of preserving the environment, which can be strengthened by the values in Islamic teachings regarding human responsibility towards the earth (Sabri, 2019: 240).

In this case, the Qur'an directly reminds us of the role of humans as caliphs on earth and the importance of maintaining environmental balance:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Meaning: And do not cause damage to the earth after (Allah) has repaired it, and pray to Him with fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is very close to those who do good. (QS. Al-A'raf: 56)

This verse emphasizes the importance of ecological responsibility in Islam and is a strong spiritual basis for Islamic education to integrate environmental issues into its curriculum. In addition, the continuous development of technology that is changing the world requires Islamic education to ensure that the young generation of Muslims also has adequate digital literacy skills. Integrating technology education into the curriculum will prepare students not only to have in-depth religious knowledge, but also to be ready to face the challenges of the digital world (Laily, et al., 2023: 139). Issues of social justice that are of global concern today also need to be part of the Islamic education curriculum. Islamic education has many principles that can be used to address issues of social and economic inequality. A curriculum that is responsive to social and economic change will enable students to apply Islamic teachings in the context of social justice, strengthening their role

as individuals who contribute to society (Idris, 2017: 270). Al-Attas (1991: 102) emphasized that the curriculum of Islamic education must be more than just a transfer of religious knowledge, but must be able to respond to changes in the times by combining Islamic values and the needs of the modern world. For this reason, Islamic education must continue to innovate, in order to produce a generation that is not only intelligent, but also able to provide solutions to world problems through the application of religious principles that are relevant to today's challenges.

e. Challenges of Globalization and Digital Literacy

Globalization has had a huge impact on the way young Muslims learn and interact with the world. While globalization offers opportunities to expand knowledge, challenges arise if young people are not supported by adequate digital literacy and a solid understanding of Islam. Without these skills, they risk losing their way in living a life based on religious values. Islamic education in the digital era needs to adapt to these changes and utilize technology as a tool for effective da'wah and education. Azra (2012: 88) emphasizes that media, technology, and the internet must be utilized as a means to introduce Islam in an interesting and relevant way to today's young generation. Technological developments allow for very broad access to information, but also raise the risk of exposing young people to information that is not properly filtered. Without proper mastery of digital literacy, they can get caught up in consuming information that is not useful or contradicts Islamic principles. Therefore, it is important for Islamic education to integrate the teaching of digital skills with a deep understanding of religion. This allows them to filter information wisely, while enriching their faith through the positive use of technology (Nashir & Azizah, 2019: 102).

In this context, the Qur'an provides important guidelines on how a Muslim should behave towards the information and news he receives, especially in the digital age full of disinformation:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِبْحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ
تُدْمِينَ

Meaning: O you who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with news, then examine it carefully so that you do not cause misfortune to a people without knowing the circumstances that will cause you to regret your actions. (QS. Al-Hujurat: 6).

This verse emphasizes the importance of tabayyun (information verification), which is the main basis for strengthening Islamic digital literacy. Digital literacy in Islamic education is not only limited to mastery of technology, but also the formation of critical, selective, and moral character in consuming and disseminating information. In facing this challenge, technology and media must be utilized to enrich religious learning. Digital platforms, such as Al-Quran learning applications, da'wah videos, and online discussion forums, can be effective means to deepen religious understanding for the younger

generation. As part of Islamic education, technology must be a tool to support the learning process, in a way that is not only interesting, but also strengthens religious values in everyday life (Hendrik & Susanti, 2020: 75). Furthermore, Islamic education must also develop a curriculum that prioritizes digital literacy, where students are not only taught about the use of technology, but are also provided with strong Islamic ethics. This will help them to sort out useful information and respond to global challenges wisely, while maintaining noble morals. With this approach, Islamic education in the digital era not only produces individuals who are academically intelligent, but also morally and socially responsible (Al-Faruqi, 2004: 64).

Strategies for Welcoming the Future of Islamic Education

In the context of Islamic education, strategy refers to a well-planned and comprehensive effort designed to achieve educational goals optimally. It is not merely a reactive response to challenges but the result of careful planning that considers both internal dynamics and external developments. Muhaimin (2009: 143) emphasizes that educational strategies must be grounded in solid philosophical and operational foundations to ensure their relevance while preserving Islamic values. Likewise, Hasan (2016: 98) describes strategy as a bridge between educational ideals and their practical implementation. Therefore, it is essential to formulate adaptive and value-oriented strategies so that Islamic education can remain resilient and contribute meaningfully to shaping a more civilized and ethical future.

a. Reformulation of Modern Islamic Curriculum

The design of the Islamic education curriculum should combine revelation as the basis of religious teachings with the realities of modern life. This means that the curriculum must integrate spiritual and scientific elements, with the main goal of forming students' characters based on universal Islamic values, such as justice, compassion, and responsibility (Ma'arif, 2011: 68). This curriculum reform aims to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant to the times, while maintaining the core values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. A curriculum that is flexible and responsive to social change will equip the young generation of Muslims with solid academic skills and moral resilience that can be applied in the context of increasingly complex global life. For example, Nafi (2016: 102) emphasizes the importance of Islamic education that aligns the needs of the times with comprehensive religious principles. To face global challenges, Islamic education must pay attention to academic aspects as well as moral and social aspects. Therefore, a curriculum that combines revelation and modern knowledge will help prepare students to become individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have strong characters in facing the challenges of the times.

In addition, Hassan (2017: 87) explains that the integration of revelation with modern science gives Islamic education a more relevant and responsive direction to the needs of the times. This education not only provides religious understanding, but also the practical skills needed to face the challenges of an increasingly complex world. Therefore, Islamic education must be able to provide a strong moral foundation while preparing students with

applicable skills. Thus, a curriculum that combines revelation and the realities of the modern world will ensure that Islamic education remains a relevant foundation for the Muslim generation, both in terms of academic skills and in facing the dynamics of global life.

b. Improving Teacher and Lecturer Competence

One of the strategic steps to prepare Islamic education to face future challenges is to improve the professional capacity of teachers and lecturers. Educators must receive training in a comprehensive Islamic pedagogical approach, which not only focuses on delivering academic material, but also develops students' critical and creative thinking skills by combining Islamic values (Rohman, 2020: 33). In line with this, Muhaimin (2009: 210) emphasized that improving the quality of teachers is very important to improve the quality of Islamic education, by introducing learning methods that encourage students to think independently and critically. Comprehensive training is needed, especially involving the application of digital technology in the teaching and learning process.

This is very relevant in the era of industry 5.0, where artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and digitalization dominate various aspects of life. In this case, Islamic education must utilize technology to improve the effectiveness of teaching and preaching (Suyanto, 2018: 62). In addition, mastery of social media and digital platforms as tools for preaching and learning can expand the influence of educators on the younger generation who live in a globally connected world. Islamic education that integrates this technology will have a broader impact in shaping the character and knowledge of the younger generation, while still maintaining deep Islamic values (Zuhdi, 2017: 55). Therefore, to face the challenges of the times and realize the goals of better Islamic education, it is important for educators to continue to develop their capacity through training and utilization of technology. Thus, they will be able to prepare students to become individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also have a global understanding based on Islamic values.

c. Global Collaboration and Internationalization of Islamic Education

In order for Islamic education to remain relevant amidst the current of globalization, Islamic educational institutions need to actively establish strategic partnerships with international educational institutions. This effort allows the exchange of knowledge and experience, and opens access to global education standards without sacrificing the core values of Islamic teachings (Azra, 2012: 88). This collaboration can be realized through student exchange programs, joint research across countries, and the formulation of an integrated curriculum that combines religious aspects and general knowledge. This approach also supports the view that Islam is an inclusive religion and is able to adapt to the dynamics of the modern world. Saeed (2007: 23) underlines the importance of a contextual approach in Islamic education so that religious teachings remain relevant in a diverse global society. Meanwhile, Al-Attas (1991: 102) emphasizes that the internationalization process must maintain the integrity of Islamic values as the basis of education, while also being a bridge to convey Islam's contribution to world scientific civilization. Through these steps, Islamic education will not only produce a generation that

excels in religious understanding, but is also adaptive, open, and able to actively contribute to building a harmonious and civilized global civilization.

d. Optimization of Technology in Islamic Education

With the rapid advancement of digital technology, the use of technology in education is now very important. The integration of various digital media such as online learning applications, internet-based learning platforms, and social media can improve the quality of learning in a more interesting, interactive way, and can cover a wider range without being limited by time and place (Al-Attas, 1991: 102). Along with this development, Saputra (2021) stated that technology plays a key role in accelerating changes in the education system, providing opportunities for the development of a curriculum that is more adaptive and responsive to the demands of the times, and enabling the creation of a learning model that is more flexible and easily accessible.

Technology also greatly supports improving the quality of education by enabling distance learning that connects students and teachers even though they are in different locations. Saputra (2021: 23) explains that digital platforms, such as online learning applications, offer convenience in accessing materials, communicating interactively, and conducting evaluations in a more efficient manner. In addition, Heriyanto (2013: 142) stated that it is important for students to have digital literacy skills that enable them to utilize technology effectively, not only as consumers, but also as creators of educational content. Therefore, educational institutions need to integrate technology into their curriculum and teaching methodology. In this way, the learning process can be strengthened, while equipping students with digital skills that are important to face challenges in the digital era.

e. Strengthening Character Education Based on Islamic Values

Islamic education has an important role in shaping the character of students based on Islamic teachings. The educational process should not only focus on mastering cognitive or academic aspects, but also be directed to instill moral values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and justice in everyday life (Fauzi, 2018: 93). Muhaimin (2009: 218) explains that Islamic education must be directed at forming a complete human being, who excels spiritually, intellectually, and socially. This can only be achieved if Islamic values are not only taught in religious lessons, but also systematically inserted in all other subjects. Every discipline must be a means of instilling profound messages of Islamic ethics.

Hasan (2016: 44) adds that the application of Islamic values in character education must be carried out contextually, by adjusting the teaching materials to the reality of students' lives. In this way, Islamic values are not only memorized theories, but are also translated into real actions that reflect noble morals and responses to the challenges of the times. Islamic education has a crucial function in developing students' personalities holistically, including intellectual, spiritual, and social intelligence. The focus of education is not only on academic aspects, but must also include internalization of moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice in everyday life. To achieve the formation of a complete personality, Islamic principles should be applied comprehensively in all fields of

study, not limited to religious lessons alone. In addition, these values need to be conveyed with a contextual approach, adjusted to the environment and real experiences of students, so that they can be realized in concrete behavior that reflects an Islamic character that is adaptive to the development of the times.

D. Conclusion

Islamic education in the contemporary era is in a crucial position, where it faces various promising opportunities as well as challenges that are not simple. The increasing spiritual awareness of the global community, the advancement of digital technology, and the formation of a generation of Muslims who are adaptive to technology provide a large space for Islamic education to appear as an integral and meaningful education system. However, on the other hand, serious challenges have also emerged such as the crisis of religious identity, the influence of secularism, limited curriculum innovation, and the low capacity of educators in utilizing technology and contextual approaches. In the future, Islamic education needs to prioritize an integrative approach that unites the teachings of revelation and modern science. The curriculum must be directed not only to form academic abilities, but also to build character, morality, and social sensitivity of students. Strengthening the values of manners, critical thinking skills, and the ethical use of technology are the keys to the transformation of Islamic education that is able to answer the needs of the times. By strengthening curriculum design, increasing the capacity of educators, and using technology wisely, Islamic education can develop into a responsive, inclusive system that adheres to universal and eternal Islamic values.

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