

INTEGRATING HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY FOR THE OBJECTIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION NARRATIVES BASED ON AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of educational historical methodology in reconstructing Islamic education narratives in a more objective and contextually grounded manner. While Islamic educational historiography has often been shaped by normative and descriptive approaches, this research argues that a systematic historical-critical framework is necessary to ensure analytical rigor and epistemological transparency. Employing qualitative library research, the study applies classical stages of historical inquiry heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiographical synthesis combined with hermeneutical and discourse-oriented analysis. The findings reveal that Islamic education constitutes a dynamic historical construction shaped by the interaction of text, authority, institutions, and socio-political transformation. Core elements such as 'ilm, ulama authority, transmission networks, and the institutionalization of madrasah and pesantren developed through processes of negotiation and adaptation rather than linear progression. By critically verifying sources and situating concepts within their historical horizons, the integrated methodology minimizes ideological bias and avoids normative reductionism. The originality of this study lies in its systematic synthesis of historical criticism, hermeneutics, and discourse analysis into a unified methodological framework for Islamic educational historiography. The research contributes theoretically by strengthening methodological discourse in Islamic education studies and practically by providing a reflective foundation for context-sensitive educational reform in contemporary Muslim societies.

Keywords: Educational Historical Methodology; Islamic Historiography; Narrative Reconstruction; Authoritative Sources; Scientific Objectivity

A. Introduction

The Islamic education constitutes both an epistemological entity and a social praxis that evolves through a dialectical interaction between religious texts, scholarly authority, and historical context. The conceptualization of Islamic education cannot be separated from the broader debate concerning Islam as both a normative and a historical category. Ahmed (2014) argues that Islam represents a complex and multilayered tradition of meaning; therefore, educational practices as part of this tradition must be understood within a dynamic historical and hermeneutical framework. From this perspective, Islamic education functions not merely as the transmission of doctrine but also as a process of constructing authority and shaping religious identity. Rosenthal (2007) demonstrates that the concept of

'ilm in Islamic civilization possesses profound theological and social dimensions, positioning educational activity as a central arena for the legitimation and reproduction of knowledge. Consequently, the study of Islamic education requires an analytical framework capable of comprehensively examining the relationship between text, intellectual tradition, and social transformation.

Historically, Islamic educational institutions and networks developed through dynamic and transregional social processes. Berkey (1992) explains that knowledge transmission in the classical period operated primarily through personal teacher-student relationships, forming authority grounded in *sanad* and scholarly reputation. Makdisi (1981) contends that the emergence of the madrasa as a formal institution marked a significant phase in the institutionalization of knowledge, exerting broad influence on both Islamic and Western civilizations. In the context of the Malay-Indonesian world, Azra (2004) highlights the scholarly networks linking the Middle East and the Nusantara archipelago, which played a pivotal role in disseminating reformist ideas and shaping educational systems. Hallaq (2009) further argues that legal and educational authority in Islam was constructed through layered and continuous scholarly traditions. These studies collectively demonstrate that Islamic education evolved through complex intellectual, social, and political interactions.

Despite this rich historiographical tradition, significant methodological challenges remain. Much of Islamic educational historiography continues to adopt descriptive-narrative and normative approaches, often emphasizing institutional development or intellectual genealogy without sufficient methodological transparency regarding source criticism, contextualization, and epistemological positioning. Although theoretical contributions from Foucault (1972; 1980), Gadamer (1975; 2004), and Koselleck (1985; 2004) offer powerful tools for discourse analysis, hermeneutical interpretation, and conceptual history, these perspectives are rarely integrated systematically into the reconstruction of Islamic educational narratives.

This reveals a critical research gap: while numerous studies discuss the history of Islamic education, few explicitly formulate a coherent methodological framework that integrates classical historical research procedures with hermeneutics and discourse analysis to ensure objective and contextually grounded reconstruction.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address this gap by proposing an integrated methodological model for reconstructing Islamic education narratives based on authoritative sources. The novelty of this research lies in its methodological synthesis, which moves beyond descriptive historiography toward a structured epistemological framework that enhances objectivity, critical source evaluation, and contextual sensitivity. By doing so, this study contributes not only to Islamic educational historiography but also to broader discussions on methodological rigor in the humanities.

Based on this background, this article seeks to examine the integration of educational historical methodology as a scientific instrument for reconstructing Islamic education

narratives in an objective and contextual manner grounded in authoritative primary and secondary sources. The study positions historical methodology through the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography as the principal analytical framework for assessing data validity and argumentative coherence. In the contemporary context, the dynamics of Islamic education are closely intertwined with issues of authority, democracy, and the formation of global Muslim identity (Hefner, 2009; 2019; Tan, 2020; Sahin, 2018). Therefore, the integration of educational historical methodology is expected to provide both theoretical and methodological contributions to strengthening Islamic education studies in ways that are more critical, academically rigorous, and responsive to contemporary challenges.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative library research approach grounded in historical-critical analysis to reconstruct Islamic educational narratives based on authoritative sources. The selection of this approach is determined by the nature of the inquiry, which seeks to reinterpret written historical materials systematically and contextually rather than to generate empirical field data. The research follows the classical stages of modern historical methodology heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiographical writing as widely recognized in historical scholarship (Shodiq, 2022; Pulungan, 2019). At the same time, the study integrates the socio-historical perspective of Islamic education, as emphasized by Nata (2014) and Nizar (2013), who argue that the historiography of Islamic education must move beyond chronological narration toward critical analysis of intellectual dynamics, institutional transformation, and scholarly authority.

The heuristic stage is not treated merely as a process of collecting references but as a critical and selective engagement with sources. Primary sources include classical manuscripts, foundational works of recognized Muslim scholars, archival documents, and contemporaneous historical texts directly related to the development of Islamic education. These materials are selected based on their historical proximity to the period under examination, their recognized scholarly authority often reflected in established transmission traditions and their substantive relevance to institutional, epistemological, and intellectual developments. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed academic books, indexed journal articles, and reputable historical studies. Works such as those by Berkey (1992), Makdisi (1981), and Azra (2004) are used to contextualize broader institutional and transregional educational developments. The inclusion of secondary literature is guided by considerations of methodological rigor, academic credibility, and historiographical relevance. Through this filtration process, the heuristic stage ensures that the evidentiary foundation of the study rests on authoritative and contextually appropriate materials.

To ensure source validity and reliability, the research applies both external and internal criticism. External criticism examines the authenticity, authorship, textual integrity, and historical provenance of documents, including verification of publication background

and manuscript transmission where relevant. Internal criticism focuses on analyzing argumentative coherence, rhetorical structure, conceptual usage, and the socio-political context surrounding the production of the text. Recognizing that historical texts are embedded within particular configurations of authority and discourse, the study also draws on Foucault's (1972; 1980) power-knowledge perspective to remain critically attentive to underlying discursive formations. To minimize narrative bias and avoid reliance on singular accounts, the analysis employs systematic cross-referencing and comparative reading across multiple independent sources. This triangulation strategy strengthens credibility and reduces the risk of reductionism or uncritical reproduction of inherited narratives.

The interpretive stage is guided by a multi-layered analytical framework that integrates historical criticism, philosophical hermeneutics, and conceptual history. Gadamer's (1975; 2004) hermeneutical approach informs the dialogical engagement between the interpreter and the historical horizon of the text, acknowledging that understanding emerges through interaction between past meaning and present inquiry. At the same time, Koselleck's (1985; 2004) perspective on conceptual history is employed to trace semantic shifts in key educational terms across temporal contexts, thereby preventing anachronistic projections of contemporary categories onto earlier periods. Through this integrated framework, interpretation is anchored in temporal specificity while remaining critically aware of the researcher's positionality.

Given that complete neutrality is unattainable in historical interpretation, objectivity in this study is pursued through methodological transparency, reflexive awareness, and evidentiary accountability. Interpretive bias is minimized by explicitly situating analytical claims within verified textual evidence, maintaining consistency between argument and source material, and continuously testing interpretations against alternative readings. Reflexivity is exercised by acknowledging the contemporary standpoint of the researcher and avoiding presentist assumptions. Each analytical conclusion is thus derived from converging evidence and contextual reasoning rather than from normative or ideological preference.

The historiographical stage synthesizes verified and interpreted materials into a coherent and argumentative narrative. The reconstruction situates Islamic educational developments within their social, intellectual, and political contexts while engaging contemporary scholarly discussions on religious authority and educational transformation (Hefner, 2009; 2019; Zaman, 2002; Tan, 2020; Sahin, 2018). In doing so, the study produces a historically grounded and analytically rigorous account that aspires to balance contextual sensitivity with critical objectivity. Through the integration of classical historical procedures, hermeneutical reflection, and discourse awareness, this methodological framework strengthens the credibility and scholarly contribution of Islamic educational historiography.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

Based on heuristic analysis, systematic source criticism, and contextual historical interpretation of both primary and secondary materials, this study identifies several substantive findings regarding the integration of historical methodology in reconstructing Islamic educational narratives. Rather than presenting Islamic education as a monolithic and uninterrupted tradition, the findings reveal its historically layered, discursively constructed, and institutionally dynamic character.

First, the conceptualization of Islam within educational discourse emerges not as a singular normative doctrine but as a historically constructed tradition of meaning. While conventional narratives often portray Islamic education as a unified system derived directly from scriptural foundations, critical examination of intellectual traditions demonstrates internal plurality and contestation. For example, heuristic comparison between classical theological works and later institutional curricula reveals shifts in emphasis from primarily ethical-spiritual cultivation in early learning circles to more formalized jurisprudential and scholastic orientations in madrasa settings. Through historical contextualization, these variations appear not as deviations from an original ideal but as adaptive responses to changing socio-political realities. Thus, methodology reshapes the narrative from a static doctrinal model into a dynamic historical process.

Second, the concept of *'ilm* (knowledge) is shown to function not merely as a spiritual virtue but as a source of socio-religious legitimacy. Source criticism applied to biographical dictionaries (*tabaqāt*) and legal manuals demonstrates that scholarly authority was constructed through recognition of transmission chains (*sanad*), institutional affiliation, and reputational capital. Rather than assuming that authority derived solely from textual mastery, the historical-critical approach reveals the embeddedness of knowledge production within social structures. This refines earlier romanticized portrayals of purely meritocratic scholarship by situating intellectual authority within concrete networks of patronage and communal validation.

Third, in examining the transmission of knowledge, the integration of historical methodology clarifies how teacher-student relationships structured educational authority. Close reading of medieval sources, when cross-referenced with social-historical analyses such as those of Berkey (1992), indicates that authority operated through decentralized scholarly networks rather than centralized institutional hierarchies. This challenges modern assumptions that equate educational legitimacy with bureaucratic structure. The methodological reconstruction therefore reframes Islamic education as a network-based epistemic community sustained by interpersonal bonds and mobility across regions.

A particularly concrete illustration emerges in the institutionalization of the madrasa. While earlier narratives often describe the madrasa as a uniform and standardized institution from its inception, comparative source analysis reveals significant regional and temporal variation in curriculum, patronage patterns, and governance structures. By

applying external and internal criticism to historical accounts of institutions such as the Nizamiyya madrasas, the study demonstrates that institutional consolidation was closely linked to political stabilization and state patronage. Thus, the madrasa appears not as a timeless educational archetype but as a historically contingent response to administrative and theological needs. This methodological shift transforms the narrative from essentialist institutional continuity to contextual institutional evolution.

Similarly, the examination of Middle Eastern–Nusantara scholarly networks provides a further example of how methodological integration refines historical understanding. Through cross-referencing archival materials, travel accounts, and intellectual genealogies, it becomes evident that reformist ideas in Southeast Asia were not mere imitations of Middle Eastern thought but were selectively appropriated and localized. This finding complicates simplistic diffusionist models and instead highlights processes of intellectual negotiation and adaptation. Here, the historical-critical method prevents reductionism by demonstrating reciprocal rather than one-directional influence.

The integration of discourse analysis also reshapes interpretation of power relations in educational development. Applying Foucault's power–knowledge framework to historical texts reveals how curricular prioritization and scholarly recognition were embedded in broader political configurations. For instance, shifts in emphasis from rational sciences (*'ulūm 'aqliyyah*) to transmitted sciences (*'ulūm naqliyyah*) in certain periods corresponded to theological and political contestations. Rather than interpreting these shifts as purely theological developments, the methodology situates them within struggles over orthodoxy and legitimacy. This contextual reading refines the narrative by exposing structural dimensions often overlooked in purely descriptive historiography.

Finally, engagement with contemporary scholarship on globalization and democratization demonstrates that Islamic education continues to evolve through negotiation with modern state structures and global discourses. Historical reconstruction thus becomes analytically relevant to present conditions. By tracing conceptual transformations diachronically, the study avoids presentism while illuminating continuities and discontinuities between classical and contemporary educational formations.

Taken together, these examples illustrate that integrating educational historical methodology does more than enhance technical rigor; it substantively reshapes the narrative of Islamic education. The findings demonstrate that Islamic education developed through dialectical interactions among tradition, authority, institutional power, and socio-political change rather than through linear or static progression. Critical source verification, hermeneutical contextualization, and discourse-sensitive interpretation collectively enable a reconstruction that is analytically grounded, historically nuanced, and epistemologically transparent. In this way, methodological integration strengthens not only historiographical credibility but also the explanatory depth of Islamic educational studies.

2. Discussion

Based on heuristic analysis, systematic source criticism, interpretive examination, and historiographical reconstruction of classical and contemporary literature, this study finds that Islamic education constitutes a complex, dynamic, and discursively constructed historical formation. Rather than developing through a linear or static trajectory, Islamic education has evolved through a dialectical interaction among text, authority, institutional structures, and socio-political change. This empirical reconstruction directly substantiates Ahmed's (2014) thesis that Islam is a multilayered tradition of meaning rather than a monolithic doctrinal system. By critically examining variations in curricula, scholarly authority, and institutional structures across periods, the findings demonstrate how educational practices represent historically contingent interpretations rather than timeless uniform prescriptions.

The analysis of the concept of *'ilm* further illustrates the integration between empirical findings and theoretical foundations. Rosenthal (2007) emphasizes that knowledge functions as a source of socio-religious legitimacy, while Hallaq (2009) highlights the interpretative continuity of Islamic scholarly authority. Through comparative source criticism of biographical dictionaries, legal manuals, and institutional records, this study confirms that scholarly authority emerged not solely from textual mastery but from recognition within structured intellectual networks. This empirical observation reinforces Foucault's (1972; 1980) power-knowledge paradigm, demonstrating concretely how educational legitimacy is embedded within configurations of authority. Thus, the theoretical framework does not remain abstract but operates as an analytical lens clarifying historical patterns of knowledge production.

Institutionally, the findings reveal that Islamic education developed through transregional socio-intellectual networks rather than centralized bureaucratic systems. Berkey's (1992) analysis of teacher-student transmission and Makdisi's (1981) account of madrasa institutionalization are empirically revisited through cross-referenced historical sources. The madrasa emerges not as a uniform archetype but as a historically adaptive institution shaped by patronage, theological contestation, and political stabilization. Moosa (2015) further demonstrates that madrasas functioned as arenas for negotiating identity and authority. The present study strengthens these arguments by applying hermeneutical contextualization, following Gadamer (1975; 2004), to situate institutional evolution within shifting historical horizons. This integration clarifies that institutional transformation was neither purely theological nor purely political but historically dialogical.

The transregional dimension of Islamic education is further confirmed in the Malay-Indonesian context. Azra (2004) documents the intellectual networks linking the Middle East and the Nusantara archipelago, while contemporary research by Rahman (2021), Fauzi (2022), and Sirozi (2020) demonstrates how these historical networks continue to shape epistemological reform and curricular adaptation in Indonesia. By integrating Koselleck's (1985; 2004) conceptual history approach, this study traces semantic shifts in educational

terminology across periods, revealing how reformist discourse adapts inherited concepts to modern institutional frameworks. Here, theoretical insights into semantic transformation directly illuminate empirical findings concerning curricular modernization and intellectual renewal.

Recent international scholarship further reinforces this integrative interpretation. Bano (2020) shows that Islamic educational reform movements possess strong internal intellectual roots rather than merely reacting to Western modernity. Dallal (2018) similarly argues that reform discourses were embedded within long-standing interpretive traditions. More recent journal-based studies, such as Tan (2020) on global Muslim identity formation, Hefner (2019) on democratization and pluralism in Southeast Asian Islamic education, and Sahin (2018; 2022) on critical Islamic pedagogy, confirm that Islamic education continuously negotiates between authority, identity, and modern governance structures. In addition, Aziza, Zuhdiyah, and Karolina (2025) emphasize the transformative dimension of Islamic education grounded in theological-philosophical integration, while Sibron et al. (2025) demonstrate empirically how pesantren-based curricula are harmonized with national educational policy through collaborative management models. Ammar, Soraya, and Jamanuddin (2024) further illustrate methodological rigor in pedagogical implementation through systematic planning and evaluative analysis, reflecting broader scholarly commitments to evidence-based reconstruction.

The inclusion of these recent studies strengthens the empirical-theoretical integration of the present research. The historical-critical methodology applied here does not merely describe institutional change; it analytically explains how shifts in authority, curriculum, and intellectual orientation correspond to transformations in political power, globalization, and democratization. In doing so, it concretely operationalizes Foucault's discourse theory, Gadamer's hermeneutics, and Koselleck's conceptual temporality within the field of Islamic education historiography.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that integrating educational historical methodology substantially enhances objectivity, contextual sensitivity, and analytical depth. Objectivity is maintained through systematic source triangulation and critical verification, while contextual understanding is strengthened through hermeneutical and discourse-based analysis. By explicitly linking empirical historical findings with theoretical interpretive frameworks, this study contributes meaningfully to methodological discourse in Islamic education research. It shows that historiographical rigor is not merely technical but epistemological: it enables Islamic education to be understood as a continuously reconstructed tradition shaped by negotiation among text, authority, institutions, and changing social realities.

Consequently, this integrative methodological approach not only refines historical narratives but also provides a reflective framework for analyzing contemporary transformations in Islamic education in the contexts of globalization, democratization, and evolving religious authority. Through this strengthened empirical-theoretical synthesis, the

study advances both historiographical scholarship and methodological clarity within Islamic education studies.

E. Conclusion

The integration of educational historical methodology is crucial for reconstructing Islamic educational narratives in an objective and contextually grounded manner. By applying heuristics, source criticism, hermeneutics, and historiographical synthesis, this study demonstrates that Islamic education is not a static doctrinal system but a dynamic historical construction shaped by interactions among text, authority, institutions, and socio-political change. Core elements such as *'ilm*, ulama authority, transmission networks, and the institutionalization of madrasah and pesantren developed through processes of negotiation and adaptation rather than linear progression. This integrative approach minimizes normative reductionism and strengthens analytical rigor through evidentiary verification and contextual interpretation.

Theoretically, the study contributes an integrated epistemological framework that positions historical methodology as both analytical tool and interpretive architecture in Islamic education studies. Practically, it offers a reflective foundation for contemporary educational reform by emphasizing historical awareness in curriculum and institutional development. Future research should expand comparative regional historiography, deepen archival-based investigations of local educational networks, and incorporate interdisciplinary and digital humanities approaches to enhance methodological precision. Strengthening collaboration across history, education, and social theory will further advance Islamic educational historiography as a critical and context-sensitive field.

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