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# “Prominent” Epistemology in Reference Books of Islamic Education at Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia: Retracing Justificative Reasoning

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## Abstract

The reference books used influence academic and learning activities at the university. Consequently, reference books are vital in determining the various types of epistemological content. Accordingly, reference books serve epistemic and authoritative functions for academic actualization and instructional activities. In such cases, reference books are perceived as ideal and influential texts. Through literary research that applies textual analysis and is confirmed by interviews with lecturers who use reference books, it can be known that the selected reference books that Indonesian writers have written are generally still characterized by normative-reproductive nuances. The normative nuances are indicated by textual, analogical, and declarative reasoning, while the reproductive nuances are shown by their poor contextual relevance and justificatory model. Additionally, these books cannot endorse significant intellectual discourses because of their repetitive tendencies. However, in that case, a slight shift was found. Its implication, the concept of Islamic education still tends to remain stagnant or in static motion as there is no firm endorsement made by empirical research, critical paradigms, and progressive formulation. The lecturers also affirm that tendency through their critical evaluation, and they hope that existing reference books can encourage empirical studies, critical reasoning, and contextual response.

**Keywords:** Reference Books, Epistemological Content, Justificative Reasoning, Stagnation, Lecturer’s View

## 1. Introduction

The Islamic world is, currently in the worst situation it has ever been in history (Iqbal [ed.], 2012). That situation, which has led to a multidimensional crisis, has been exacerbated by the inability of the Muslim intellectual elites to revive and mobilize the Muslim community to address fundamental issues through their role of *ijtihad*

(independent reasoning). Hence, the ongoing crisis can essentially be considered a crisis of the intellectual elite (Hasnah, 2004; Chaney, 2016; Ashimi, 2016). Most of the energy of intellectual elites is spent on the struggle to protect texts and transmit them so that their authenticity is preserved and maintained. *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and *ijtihad* (intellectual endeavors) have experienced a shift of orientation from efforts to understand Shariah's main purpose and intent toward efforts to understand technical provisions and products.

In such context, according to Umar Hasnah (2004), education, as an effort to understand the development of the ideal human being, needs to be the first and top priority to consider gravely. Unfortunately, there are still some fundamental weaknesses in contemporary Islamic education, among them include: (1) many intellectual elites are toiling with Islam's past legacies as they consider education reform would only be made possible by revisiting past models; (2) some intellectual elites are inclined to compare between materials acquired via Islamic sources and those acquired via Western sources by starting with the assumption that anything acquired from Islamic sources is much better; and (3) the absence of a futuristic horizon within Islamic education discourse (Usman, *et al.* 2022; Ismail Ali, 2004; Ismail Ali, 2014).

As a manifestation of academic study and "ijtihad" in Islamic education, several reference books can be used to analyze the conceptual features of Islamic education and their practical implications. According to Said Ismail Ali (2014), academic study is part of the "education modality" (*ra'su al-mâl al-tarbawî*) required to support efforts in nurturing students/learners, including those enrolled at Islamic higher education institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam – PTKI*) (Amin Abdullah, 2017). Once academic studies are produced as reference books, then they will most likely be included within the category of "the ideal text", namely: texts that the readers consider a perfect revelation relating to a true perspective (Gracia, 1995) or authoritative perspective, which is then reproduced continuously. On this basis, Irsan al-Kilani (1987 & 1988) considers that many education study models are more likely to be limited to being characterized as descriptive, normative, and adoptive (Al-Qurtuby, 2021; Saparudin, 2013 & 2018). Reference books are part of the curriculum that presents cognitive and non-cognitive learning experiences (C. Ornstein *et.al.* 2011), and at the same time, contribute to the direction of students' intellectual preferences.

On that basis, the opinion suggesting that books play an extremely crucial role in affecting the mindset and behavior of their readers is quite reasonable, as we can see in (1) a historical study by way of a literature review about the significant role that references books have in Indonesia (Kosim, 2006), (2) a study on reference books to question issues of humanism and Islamic education (Usman, *et al.* 2017), and (3) a study on the use of reference books by students greatly affects the quality of the writing or work they produce. Reference books are considered a source of information that has high accuracy and accountability (Prajawinanti, 2020). The study of reference books is useful for photographing the general trend of scientific reasoning in the field of Islamic education. Based on that, it can be projected the direction of the dynamics in the future and can be analyzed the influence of Islamic scientific tradition behind it. However, reference books are one of the anchors of the development of Islamic educational disciplines in a region.

## 2. Methodology

This article is the result of a literature study that requires philosophical and theoretical analyses. Philosophical and theoretical analyses were conducted through textual analysis, then confirmed via in-depth interviews with the users (lecturers) in order to identify and analyze the typology of Islamic education reference books written by experts in Indonesia, by focusing on reference books on Islamic Education Science (IES) and Islamic Educational Philosophy (IEP). In the current research, the Islamic education books analyzed were written by Ramayulis, Tafsir, Abuddin Nata, and Abd. Rachman Assegaf. Their selection was based on: (1) the use of those books in lecturers' semester learning plan (*rencana pembelajaran semester – RPS*) (IEP & IES *RPS Documents*, 2021). and (2) whether the reference books are referred to by other Islamic education literature. Textual analysis was conducted by using the following stages: (1) fixating (determining) the definition of texts, (2) restricting the influence of self-subjectivity, (3) text interpretation in its entirety by understanding the inherent interconnection of meanings, and (4) exploring the possibility of multiple interpretations of texts (Moustakas, 1994). In addition to textual analysis,

data were also explored by conducting interviews during focus group discussion (FGD) sessions with lecturers in charge of IE/IEP courses at PTKI and comparing them to the RPS documents.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. *The Spectrum of Islamic Tradition of Knowledge in Indonesia*

In Indonesia, there are at least three Islamic traditions of knowledge, namely the normative, the ideological, and the scientific (Kuntowijoyo, 2001). The normative tradition may include declarative and apologetic. The declarative normative tradition is oriented toward efforts to showcase Islam's superiority and *da'wah* zeal, while the apologetic normative tradition is oriented toward defending a discredited Islam caused by misunderstandings. However, since the Muslim community remains troubled by an inferiority complex, a prominent proclivity observed in this tradition of knowledge is its reactive and finalistic character, wherein the logic/ reasoning developed is more toward *jadali* (dichotomy, normative-deductive, justification, dogmatic) instead of *bahtsî* (dialogical, empiric-inductive, verification, rational-critical) logic. As for the ideological tradition of knowledge, it is meant to bring Islam forth as an alternative ideology. Islam is considered complete, final, and comprehensive, keeping in mind that all that is required to create a society or even a civilized nation, wherever and whenever, can be found within Islam in various formulas and solutions.

The scientific tradition is a trend in Islamic traditions of knowledge that applies the empirical or philosophical approach, thereby resulting in products of studies that are deemed compatible with scientific findings and modernity. The concept of circular relations between *hadlârat al-nash* (civilization of text), *hadlârat al-'ilm* (civilization of scientific knowledge), and *hadlârat al-falsafah* (civilization of philosophy) is a concrete manifestation of the scientific tradition (Amin Abdullah, 2020). In the context of education, this tradition can be seen in the manifestation of progressive Islamic education that seeks to bridge the gap between Islam, Indonesianness, and modernity, like the Muhammadiyah Islamic Organization (Suyatno *et al.* 2021). As an expanded realization of the scientific tradition, the prophetic science tradition, which is committed to humanization, liberalization, and transcendency, has been developed (Kuntowijoyo, 2001; Ahimsa-Putra, 2017). This tradition carries the following key agendas: theorization, structurization, and transformation. According to al-Mustiri (2014), one of the most crucial elements required by the Islamic tradition of knowledge and thoughts today is a comprehensive perspective that allows Islam to accurately identify various contemporary issues, for overcoming the epistemological crisis, i.e., the tradition of inquiry fails to make progress through original standards of rationality (Ernst and Martin [eds], 2010).

#### 3.2. *A Sketch of the Contents of Islamic Education Reference Books*

##### 3.2.1 *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* by Ramayulis

Regarding the foundations of Islamic education, Ramayulis (2002) mentions two types of bases, the ideal and the operational. The ideal basis of Islamic education refers to the basis of Islamic teachings, which are sourced from the Qur'an, the hadith of the Prophet, opinions of the Companions, and Ijtihad. The sequence of ideal basis he asserts, has numerous similarities with the basic formulation of Islamic law agreed upon by the majority of the ulama of *ushûl al-fiqh* (the scholars of Islamic jurisprudence). In other words, the development of Islamic education science has a similar pattern to the development of *ushûl al-fiqh*.

Consequently, as part of religious sciences, this implies that Islamic education science is developed under the three scientific frameworks, i.e., *aqidah* science (theology), *sharia* science, and *akhlâq* science (al-Amilî, 2005). Since Islamic education science largely deals with human behaviors, it is classified under the framework of *Sharia* science and *akhlâq* science (Ethics). According to Wahbi al-Amili (2005), religious sciences can be developed through reasoning or texts that produce true knowledge about religion or its basic principles. Given such a development model of religious sciences, Islamic education science is not considered much different from educational exegeses (*tafsir tarbawi*) and educational hadith (Roqib, 2009).

Ramayulis' book, which is still much cited (Eka Damayanti *et.al.* 2021), contains fifteen chapters of discussion with various other scientific disciplines such as education history, education management, and educational psychology. Given such topics of discussion, it seems that Islamic education science is elaborated as an "eclectic" field of science, which is a field that combines various relevant and functional elements of other diverse scientific disciplines. On account of its assumably eclectic feature, (Islamic) education science is often considered an indefinite field or a scientific discipline that has yet to mature. Actually, the eclectic feature is not only found in (Islamic) education science, it can also be found in other scientific disciplines, e.g., sociology, anthropology, psychology, and so forth. However, an eclectic feature unaccompanied by clarity in its scientific formulation, on account of being satisfied by merely *citing quotes here and there*, may often obscure its status as an independent scientific discipline.

### 3.2.2 *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam dengan Pendekatan Multidisipliner* by Abuddin Nata

In the introduction chapter, Abuddin Nata (2010) admits that Islamic Education Science (IES) is a newcomer in the Islamic Studies cluster. Its presence was brought to the forefront at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when a strong awareness of the importance of the development of quality Islamic education and all its aspects started to emerge. As a new field of Islamic studies, IES still continues to be revised and perfected toward a robust and comprehensive construction that can be accounted for by the scientific community. In the early 2000s, academic studies on IES and all its aspects began to be conducted by experts using various perspectives of knowledge. As a newcomer, the presence of IES still had its weaknesses which among them include its scope of discussion, analyses, and systematics. Additionally, there is still incoherence in looking at the foundational concept for developing IES, i.e., between the concept of education and the concept of pedagogy (Nata, 2010). Under the former concept, the development of (Islamic) Education Science would lead to a scientific discipline that is open, flexible, and needs to be continuously redefined. Whereas under the latter, the development of (Islamic) Education Science would head toward a scientific discipline that is limited, concentric, and requires constant deep explorations. Nata's book was developed from a combination of the concept of education and pedagogy.

In brief, Islamic Education Science (IES) is defined as a study of educational processes that are based on the philosophical values of Islamic teachings grounded on the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (Nata, 2010). Given this definition, Nata underscores three key aspects, namely (1) the development of IES based on the combination of the concept of education and the concept of pedagogy, (2) its alignment with the noble values of the Qur'an and Hadith, and (3) IES is not an exclusive and static scientific knowledge (Nata, 2010). IES's scope of discussion covers: (1) theories and concepts required to formulate Islamic education design and all its various aspects and (2) theories and concepts required for the interest of education practices. As an applied science, the development of IES theories originates from philosophical, theoretical thoughts, and empirical studies in education practices (Nata, 2010).

### 3.2.3 *Filsafat Pendidikan Islami* by Ahmad Tafsir

Unlike typical philosophy books, descriptions of Tafsir's book are presented using simple language, making it relatively easy to digest. Based on the title of the book, it is apparent that the author prefers to use the term Islamic (*Islami* in Indonesian), instead of Islam to refer to its values and nature) educational philosophy because what he wrote was indeed originally from the results of his reflections guided by the teachings of Islam (Tafsir, 2012). The content covers ten chapters of discussion, and it was not arranged in a similar structure to discussions of educational philosophy. At the beginning of the book, the author outlines the differences between the discursive scope of education science and that of educational philosophy. Education science relates to studies on rational education issues that are supported by empirical evidence, while educational philosophy refers to studies of rational or abstract issues about education (Tafsir, 2012).

Tafsir sees Islam as a system affirming that the teachings of Islam are perfect (comprehensive) and integrated so that there is no room for criticisms and revisions. There are at least 3 (three) principles he suggests regarding gender in Islam, namely (1) the concept of pairs, (2) the concept of gender may change, and (3) the concept of justice (Tafsir, 2012). The view of Islam as a system has been voiced by many other Muslim figures, among them

include Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Qutb, Said Hawwa, and Muhammad Imarah. However, their elaborations regarding the system concept have some differences. By using the system concept, some figures intended to affirm the exclusivity of Islamic teaching's perfection, even pushing the othering concept (F. Akhtar Lubis and Zohkarnain, 2023), which is ready to be applied entirely, not partially. The issues confronted by the Muslim community have not been properly resolved because they are only willing to carry out Islamic teachings regarding rituals (worship).

### 3.2.4 *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam Madzhab Multidisipliner* by Abd Rachman Assegaf

As asserted by the author at the beginning, this book is a follow-up to his previous work titled *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam: Paradigma Baru Pendidikan Hadhari Berbasis Integratif-Interkonektif* (Assegaf, 2019). In the previous book, the author discusses the development of integration-interconnection-based Islamic educational philosophy. While in this book, the author discusses the development of Islamic education based on the paradigm of multidisciplinary science, which is a follow-up to the integration-interconnection paradigm (Assegaf, 2019). There are two interesting points to consider, namely (1) this Islamic Education Science book is written as a follow-up to the Islamic Educational Philosophy book, and (2) the multidisciplinary paradigm is used as a more advanced development of the integration-interconnection paradigm.

Regarding the number of pages, *Ilmu Pendidikan Islam Madzhab Multidisipliner* consists of more than five hundred pages, enabling it to provide extensive discussions and making it worthy as a follow-up to the previous book, which has fewer pages. However, placing the book on Islamic Education Science as a follow-up discussion to the book on Islamic Educational Philosophy seems to be a bit erratic. This is because it indicates overlapping discussions or unclear distinctions between the scope of study in Islamic education science and Islamic educational philosophy. Accordingly, it is not uncommon for lecturers in charge of the Islamic education science/philosophy course to argue that "so far, the discussions in Islamic educational philosophy (IEP) and Islamic education science (IES) are considered nearly similar, so they should just be combined" (*Interview* during FGD 13-14 Oct 2021). Nonetheless, the paradigmatic development from integration-interconnection toward multidisciplinary is something that should be appreciated. Here, Assegaf suggests a critical discourse that is corroborated by various acute issues confronted by the Muslim community, such as secularization and dichotomization of science.

### 3.3. *Views of Lecturers at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) on the Reference Books*

The significance of these reference books is defined by their extensive use and benefit in lectures and scientific writing. Several reasons underlie the utilization of these books, which broadly cover: practical and academic reasons. Some lecturers have their reason for using the reference books based on the consideration that they have encyclopedic discussions, i.e., covering nearly all the topics of discussion in the course, albeit only with briefly elaborated discussions (*Interview* during FGD 13-14 Oct 2021). This practical reason shows that lecturers are in need of a "guide" in delivering the topics of their course materials so that they are more structured and systematic. Hence, these reference books play a role in constructing the logical sequence of IEP/IES course materials (*Lesson Plan Documents* of UIN Surakarta, IAIN Salatiga & UNIDA Lamongan).

Another practical reason is that the discussions in the reference books are easy to understand. This is considered a crucial point, bearing in mind that philosophical contents are commonly perceived as being cumbersome and complicated and that they need to be simplified. As references for students, simplification is indeed deservedly required. But as references for lecturers, simplification should be less necessary as it may lead to reduction and cutting down of the perspectives. One of the simplifications observed is the lack of clear limitations between the scope of materials in Islamic educational philosophy and Islamic education science (*Interview* during FGD 13-14 Oct 2021). When the scope of Islamic educational philosophy (IEP) study also includes the scope of materials in Islamic education science (IES), it is more likely for IEP to simplify discussions on fundamental issues into operational issues, and theoretical issues into technical ones.

Meanwhile, the academic reason that underlies choosing these reference books is that they contain discussions on globalization, Indonesian-ness, and contemporary issues (*Interview* during FGD 13-14 Oct 2021). IEP/IES should

not only contain studies on the thoughts of Muslim figures, but they should also have analyses and reflections on various actual issues relating to Islamic education (*Lesson Plan Document* of IAIN Salatiga). Conceptually speaking, the five pillars of Islamic educational philosophy, as suggested by Jalaludin (2017), seem to drive IEP studies to be more Islam-minded, i.e., developing deductive-normative reasoning by starting out with Islamic perspectives as postulates of study. The five pillars include (1) Islam's view of the universe, (2) Islam's view of the human being, (3) Islam's view of human knowledge, (4) Islam's view of society, and (5) Islam's view about morality. Given these five pillars, IEP studies become less open to external thoughts and less responsive to the dynamics of actual issues that constantly demand *tajdid al-fahm* (renewal of perception/understanding) in a continuous manner instead of *tajmid al-fahm* (a closed standardization of understanding).

Why have these five pillars of Islamic views made IEP less open? The reason is that, commonly, the five pillars of Islamic views assume a fixed and exclusive frame of mind when discussing issues relating to education. This is the relevance of the criticisms given by Haidar Bagir and Abshar Abdalla (2020) concerning the idea of Islamization and that they appreciate reintegration more, bearing in mind that the five pillars of Islamic views are more in line and closer with the perspective of Islamization that tends to prioritize the distinction (exclusiveness) of Islam and criticize external perspectives. This differs from reintegration, which attempts to engage Islam (views) in dialogue with other thoughts, including philosophy and science. Through reintegration, IES/IEPs are more open since their development is based on a mutually complementing nature between Islam, philosophy/science, and education, or the triadic concept, which refers to revelation, mind, and reality mutually complementing one another (Arif, 2019).

Specifically, regarding IES references, lecturers consider that the contents are still too general or still tend to be normative (*Interview* during FGD 14 Oct 2021). In order to address this gap, when using reference books, the lecturers encourage students to conduct case studies and write simple articles about actual issues occurring at school. This assessment is quite reasonable, keeping in mind that existing reference books on education sciences are often situated as being tugged back and forth between religion and science. The solid bases of normative arguments in the form of citations from Qur'anic verses and the hadith of the Prophet for elaborating on each topic of discussion indicate that Islamic education science is no different from religion. Nevertheless, theoretical analyses, along with the support of empirical data obtained from research results for explaining the certain topic of a discussion place Islamic education science as a scientific discipline that meets the scientific criteria.

### 3.4 Justificatory Reasoning of Islamic Educational Philosophy/Science Reference Books

#### 3.4.1 The Normative Tradition in Islamic Education Reference Books

Despite all their advantages and disadvantages, reference books are acknowledged as one of the main sources of learning. When using reference books, the lecturers usually go through an adaptation process, i.e., they try to take, select, develop, and correlate them with various other references (*Interview* during FGD 13 Oct 2021). Upon closer observation, the adaptation process shows that the reference books have at least been proven to contribute to defining the scope of discussions in course materials, selection of analytical methods, and appreciation of the developed scientific perspectives. This is the significance of the analytical preference of the contents in the reference books, which is for examining practical and theoretical actualizations.

The features of the contents in some of the IEP/IES reference books analyzed above can be elaborated in correlation to the inclination of Islamic thoughts in Indonesia. The reason for this is that the preference for the contents of the reference books is an expression of ideas led by the current spectrum of collective consciousness that affects the production of knowledge and individual thoughts. Kuntowijoyo (2001) suggests three traditions of knowledge in Indonesia: normative, ideological, and scientific. The normative tradition may include the declarative and the apologetic. The normative-declarative tradition is oriented toward efforts of showcasing Islam's excellence and a spirit of da'wah, while the normative-apologetic tradition is oriented toward a spirit of defending Islam that is cornered by "outsiders." The normative tradition follows an approach to knowledge that is textual, analogical, and externalization of Islam. Textual is defined as an approach that is *haul al-nash* (focused on texts), constantly starting with texts, toward texts, and within textual frames.

Upon analysis of the IEP/IES reference books described above, the main approaches (methods) they use broadly include (1) approach to revelation and (2) historical approach (Jalaluddin and Said, 1994). Based on that, it is quite reasonable for some lecturers to conclude that the reference books generally, apply a religious-rational approach (*Interview* during FGD 13/10/2021). Concerning the approach to revelation, all of the reference books we examined place the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (revelations) as bases/sources (Nata, 2010). Why is the approach to the revelation that important? It is because thoughts/concepts derived from revelations are deemed to be absolute truth, regardless of time and space (Jalaluddin and Said, 1994; Tafsir, 2001). However, the approach model applied slightly differs; some places the Qur'an and hadith (revelations) as the "sole" source/basis because they argue that a source/basis should be something permanent, constant and because everything can be guided by the Qur'an dan hadith (Marimba, 1989; Nata, 2005), while some others place both (Qur'an and hadith) as the main source out of several other sources that need to be selectively considered (Nata, 2010; Tafsir, 2001; Assegaf, 2011).

According to the conclusion Muhaimin (2003) made, Islamic education thoughts have commonly, been categorized into two groups/streams, namely (1) the stream of critical thinking in education or the progressive school of thought and (2) the stream of conservative-traditional thinking. The implementation model of the two approaches constitutes one of the measures or benchmarks used to identify whether an Islamic education thought is included in the critical-progressive or conservative-traditional category. When applying an approach to revelations, the critical-progressive stream does not simply stop at a "textual" understanding that positions revelations (the Qur'an and Hadith) as authoritative references without the support of interpretation expansions based on critical analyses and empirical verifications. Contrastingly, the conservative-traditional stream tends to focus on preserving existing interpretations of the revelations (the Qur'an and Hadith); it even considers developing new interpretations unnecessary. So, not only are Qur'anic verses and Hadith considered authoritative references, but the ulama's interpretations are also considered sealed off from reanalysis.

The focus of (Islamic) education attention is the treasure of past thoughts. Still, it is not seen as a manifestation of historical-critical awareness but as a manifestation of an idealistic attitude instead. The centre of Islamic education's attention is the world of "text", both primary and secondary texts because the prescriptions for *anything* can be found in the texts without being aware of their limitations and making it less sensitive to empirical-contextual reality. Such tendency can be analyzed by using the argument posited by Ali Harb (2001), which states that one of the obstacles in the dynamization of thoughts is a human's "utopic" character, which can be observed when one judges a complex and dynamic empirical reality with a single perspective or with "lofty" values. Concerning the application of the historical approach, the critical-progressive stream does not limit itself to "Islamic history" as it also includes "non-Islamic" history. This stream also has no idealistic view of Islamic history, but it has an appreciative-critical view instead. Such a point of view considers Islamic history as a cultural phenomenon with its positives and negatives and that it should be examined.

The normative tradition is also characterized by Islamic externalization, which is the desire to showcase the superiority and excellence of Islamic teachings (doctrine), as observed in the clarification orientation (Ramayulis, 2002; Marimba, 1989; Jalaludin, 2017). The reasoning being used is clearly derived from the perspective of the "believer," not the perspective of the "analyzer," keeping in mind that the arguments and elaborations remain limited to the framework of building internal understanding (among the Muslim community), which occasionally seems apologetic or declarative (Silfia Ilma *et al.* 2022). Internally, IES/IEP reference books oriented toward Islamic externalization are generally no more than a form of Islamic indoctrination, both explicit and implicit. One of the lecturers in charge of the course asserted, "The references being used very rarely refer to Muslim philosophers, but more to the Qur'an and hadith" (*Interview* during FGD 13/10/2021). While externally, some of the reference books have a more a priori nuance against non-Islam, or at least that there is no "common ground" between Islam and non-Islam.

### 3.4.2 Reproductive Reasoning in IES/IEP Reference Books

The applicative model of Islamic education tends to be oriented toward standardization and immobilization of understanding (*tajmîd al-fahm*) and upholds a particular-exclusive Islam historicity. To date, such traditional pedagogy is considered the most dominant in affecting the development of education in Indonesia. It is apparent



from the conceptualization and theorization of Islamic education lacking empirical perspectives and practical orientations due to its strong textual-normative approach, as affirmed by one of the lecturers in charge of the courses that the topics discussed in IES books are still overly general and simply perusing the outer layers (*Interview during FGD 13 Oct 2021*). According to Ali Harb (2001), the dominance of the textual-normative approach is a part of the manifestation of the cultural narcissism that still plagues the Muslim community.

Similar to other established scientific disciplines, Islamic education stands as a top-verified scientific foundation and reflection of critical thoughts. Efforts to place Islamic education within the frame of epistemological relevance are by developing “discursive logic” (*al-manthiq al-bahtsi*), i.e., Islamic education, both in theory and practice, is required to be willing to accept to be subject to reexamination, verification, study, and development, it is even required to be capable of promoting discursive activities. Discursive logic is a “right-wrong” logic, which is a mindset that is grounded on the ethos of seeking truth, but it must also deal with the fact that well-established *old traditions/paradigms* must be discarded when they are proven to be weak. This is different from the “dichotomy logic” (*al-manthiq al-jadali*), which is oriented at “winning-losing” or “friend-foe”. An ethos based upon such logic constitutes a desire to emerge as superior and a winner. However, it often gives the impression of being laden with truth claims, apologetic or even negating “others.” Meanwhile, sociological relevance implies the alignment of Islamic education with social demands; Islamic education is able to play a role in addressing social issues because Islamic education is not only a religious obligation, but it is also a social demand (S. Ismail Ali, 2014).

Islamic education needs to place the paradigm of critique as a basis of study and development not to lose its relevance. It seems that this paradigm has not been significantly appreciated by some of the Islamic education reference books examined (Ramayulis, 2002; Nata, 2010; Tafsir, 2012). The tendency to cite the opinions of numerous figures without any comparative or critical analysis implies that there is still a strong desire to reproduce existing thoughts. That, undoubtedly, goes against the philosophical reasoning model that requires critical analysis or even a radical analysis by deconstructing well-established thought constructs. Furthermore, there is a tendency to merely elaborate various opinions as if they were an authoritative reference, so the author hardly tried to contextualize or compare them with actual needs, which also reflects the mindset of the author who intends to maintain these various opinions without attempting to sort which elements remain “constant” and which elements change. The reference books still largely develop reproductive reasoning, which is commonly characterized by: (1) a lack of balance between cultural heritage along with the tradition of thoughts and their reformation; (2) dominance of the explanatory-reproductive method over the analytical-critical method; and (3) strong inclination toward the status quo (Hanafi, 2000).

In his book, Assegaf (2019) criticizes the problem of acute knowledge dichotomy experienced by the Muslim community. This critique is intended to function as an entry point to identify the weakness of the Islamic tradition of knowledge, which has been left behind in the development of science and technology due to its lack of appreciation for empirical-experimental studies. According to Assegaf, given an integrative-interconnective basis, it is high time that the deductive-legalistic and theological-normative model is combined with or supplemented by the inductive-empirical model so that scientifically speaking, Islamic education not only relies on textual interpretations but on results of empirical-experimental research as well. The integrative-interconnective basis actually has no desire for polarization or dichotomization in the development of Islamic education because, in reality, polarization and dichotomization will, in fact, restrict the development of Islamic education.

In his book, Nata (2010) elaborates on Islamic Education Science (IES) by using a legal approach. One of the sub-discussions is about the relationship between Education Studies and Legal Studies. However, the explanations seem to only look at the issue from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), supplemented by citations of Qur’anic verses, hadith, and opinions of *fiqh* experts. It was not at all associated with any applicable judicial aspects (positive law), except in the closing section of the book, which mentions legislations issued by the government, such as the National Education System Law, Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, and Governmental Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on the National Standard of Education (Nata, 2010), which regulates education provisions. Meanwhile, his descriptions of IEP and the philosophical approach (Nata, 2010) are more about the opinions of philosophers/streams of educational philosophy in the West and the Islamic world.

#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude, the advent of reference books serves as a primary benchmark concerning the extent that intellectual endeavors continue to progress. The reference books we examined are a part of the general trend of Islamic education literature that has not progressed much from the shadows of normative-reproductive reasoning, albeit in varying degrees. This is indicated by strong features of *textual*, *analogical*, and *declarative* discourses, leaving nominal room for empirical-contextual relevance, considering that the center of attention is on texts, past opinions/references, and the spirit to elaborate the superiority of Islamic norms. Consequently, the existing reference books have little appreciation for critical paradigm and empirical research, which is indicated, at the very least, by (1) a justificatory relationship model among reference books, (2) a normative approach to revelations, and (3) an idealistic historical approach. The views of some lecturers using the reference books affirm that these features are still found in the IES/IEP reference books as manifestations of shortcomings that need to be improved.

Given such tendencies, reference books are considered scarcely contributing to the process of Islamic education formulation and development. Innovative efforts to address stagnation have been done by some of the authors by responding to actual-Indonesian-related issues by strengthening an integrative-interconnective-based approach and multidisciplinary approach, which have started to encourage more endeavors for scientific development. However, they remain limited in generating a discursive chain effect. These innovative efforts are manifestations of growing awareness of various problems surrounding the Islamic education world.

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