# THE CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION BY ABUDDIN NATA: RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC EDUCATION

**Ina Machla Asafila**[1]**, Maragustam**[2]
[1,2]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta
Email: 23204012029@student.uin-suka.ac.id

## Abstract

This research delves into the comprehensive and adaptable concept of Islamic education as articulated by Abuddin Nata. The study aims to explore Abuddin Nata's biography, his perspectives on Islamic education, and their relevance to contemporary Islamic educational practices. Employing a qualitative approach, specifically library research, this study draws from primary sources—books authored by Abuddin Nata—and secondary sources, including relevant books and journals. The analysis method employed is descriptive-analytical. The findings reveal that Abuddin Nata's proposed Islamic education aligns with perennialist principles, emphasizing universality, balance, clarity, realism, and dynamism. These principles ensure that Islamic education remains steadfast in its core values, objectives, and distinctive features, despite societal changes. Abuddin Nata's concept underscores a holistic and comprehensive approach grounded in divine values, making it relevant across different epochs. This study also highlights the alignment of Abuddin Nata's principles with modern educational frameworks, such as character education and competency-based curricula, showcasing their continued relevance.

**Keywords:** Islamic Education, Abuddin Nata, Contemporary Education

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep pendidikan Islam yang komprehensif dan adaptif sebagaimana diartikulasikan oleh Prof. Dr. Abuddin Nata, M.A. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi biografi Abuddin Nata, perspektifnya tentang pendidikan Islam, dan relevansinya dengan praktik pendidikan Islam kontemporer. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, khususnya penelitian kepustakaan, penelitian ini menggunakan sumber primer—buku-buku yang ditulis oleh Abuddin Nata—dan sumber sekunder, termasuk buku dan jurnal terkait. Metode analisis yang digunakan adalah deskriptif-analitis. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa pendidikan Islam yang diusulkan oleh Abuddin Nata sejalan dengan prinsip-prinsip perenial, menekankan universalitas, keseimbangan, kejelasan, realisme, dan dinamisme. Prinsip-prinsip ini memastikan bahwa pendidikan Islam tetap teguh pada nilai-nilai inti, tujuan, dan ciri khasnya, meskipun terjadi perubahan sosial. Konsep Abuddin Nata menekankan pendekatan holistik dan komprehensif yang didasarkan pada nilai-nilai ilahi, menjadikannya relevan di berbagai zaman. Penelitian ini juga menegaskan keselarasan prinsip-prinsip Abuddin Nata dengan kerangka pendidikan modern seperti pendidikan karakter dan kurikulum berbasis kompetensi, menunjukkan relevansinya yang terus berlanjut.

**Kata Kunci**: Pendidikan Islam, Abuddin Nata, Pendidikan Kontemporer

## A. Introduction

Education is the locomotive of life that directs humans towards quality. Education also serves as an effort to develop human personality both spiritually and physically, continuing until the end of life. Modernism, which brings the famous slogan that knowledge is value-free or neutral (Sutrisno Suyatno 2015), has created a dichotomy within the Muslim community between Islamic knowledge and general knowledge. The advantages brought by modernism are more favored than the education that forms one's identity or religious (Islamic) education. If this continues unchecked, Islamic education cannot exist within the paradigm of society.

The current era, often referred to as the millennial era, where everything is easy and advanced due to technological developments, brings both positive and negative values. The advancement of technology leads to behavioral imbalances in life caused by cultural shock when directly facing technological sophistication. Moreover, many students lose their moral compass due to being absorbed in technological developments (Mahyuddin Barni 2019). In such a societal context, the world of education must anticipate by providing superior education. Therefore, a suitable education concept is needed for the modern global industrial society and the millennial community.

Muslims view education as a process to prepare their generations to live effectively and efficiently (Rahmat Hidayat 2016). This aligns with the characteristic of Islamic teachings, which are suitable for all times and places (solihun li kulli zaman wa makaan). Islamic education, besides adhering to past traditions that are still relevant, also embraces new traditions that are more relevant, balancing continuity with change (Abuddin Nata 2020). One of the scholars of Islamic education who frequently publishes works on this theme is Abuddin Nata, who has significantly contributed to the field of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Abuddin Nata sees education as a process of exploring, directing, and nurturing all human potentials so that students can become apparent entities. In his view, Islamic education provides a broad and comprehensive picture, as illustrated in his books, which discuss the concept of Islamic education based on field phenomena, offering solutions for future education. Another of his works, "Islamic Education in the Millennial Era," addresses current era issues. Based on these explanations, this research aims to present

the concept of Islamic education according to Abuddin Nata and its relevance in the current era.

## B. Method

This research employs a qualitative approach, specifically library research, which involves a series of activities related to data collection methods (Mahmud 2011). Therefore, this study requires sources related to the discussion. The reference sources are divided into primary and secondary sources. The primary sources in this study are the books written by Abuddin Nata, while the secondary sources include supporting books and journals related to Abuddin Nata. The data processing method used is descriptive-analytical, where collected data is classified according to related issues, analyzed, interpreted, and concluded. The researcher acts as the main instrument to collect, analyze, and conclude data.

## C. Result and Discussion

## 1. Abuddin Nata

Abuddin Nata was born in Cibuntu Kulon Village, Ciampea District, Bogor Regency, on August 2, 1945. His father, Muallim Nata, was an alumnus of Balai Rombeng Salafiyah pesantren in Banten, working as a Quranic teacher, imam, trader, and farmer. His mother, Siti Aisyah, though illiterate, was very devout and supportive of her husband's work. Abuddin Nata is the third of six siblings, married to Elisah Angriani, and has two children.

Abuddin Nata started his education at Madrasah Diniyah Jati Pinggir Tanah Abang (1961-1965), continued at Madrasah Wajib Belajar (1965-1968), and studied at Pondok Pesantren Nurul Ummah, graduating in 1972. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Education (B.A. and Drs.) in 1981, a Master's degree (M.A.) in Islamic Studies in 1991, and a Doctorate (Dr.) in Islamic Studies in 1997 from IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. He also participated in a Visiting Post Doctorate Program at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada (1999-2000).

During his time at PGA, Abuddin Nata was the student body president. As a university student, he was active in various organizations, such as the Islamic Student Association (HMI) Ciputat branch (1978-1979), the Student Senate of the Faculty of

Tarbiyah at IAIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (1978-1979), the Student Activities Development Board (BPKM) (1980-1981), and the Chairman of the Regional Research Council (2006).

Abuddin Nata has authored several books, including "Philosophy of Islamic Education" (1995), entries for the Encyclopedia of Islam (1989), "Education in the Perspective of Hadith," "Modernization of Islamic Education in Indonesia," "Towards Successful Certification of Teachers and Lecturers," "Spiritual Education in Islamic Tradition" (2001), "Islamic Perspective on Learning Strategies" (2011), "History of Islamic Education" (2004), and "Selected Topics in Islamic Education: Contemporary Issues in Islamic Education" (2012).

## 2. The Concept of Islamic Education by Abuddin Nata

According to Abuddin Nata, Islamic education is defined as education based on Islamic values as stated in the Quran and Hadith, as well as the thoughts of religious scholars and the history of the Muslim community (Nata 2002). It is an effort to provide guidance, direction, and nurturing for students consciously and systematically so that Islamic values are embedded in their personalities. The sources of Islamic education include the Quran, the Sunnah, sayings of the companions (mazhab al-ashabi), public interest (mushalih al-mursalah), tradition or custom (al-urf), and the results of ijtihad (independent reasoning) by experts (Rosalia Putri 2022).

The essence of Islamic education, as conveyed by Abuddin Nata, is to guide, direct, and nurture humans to develop personalities aligned with Islamic values and to possess noble character based on the Quran and Sunnah. This essence aims to create a beneficial impact on society.

According to Abuddin Nata, Islamic education is based on religious values found in the Quran and Hadith. The Quran and Hadith detail the foundational principles of Islamic education, which include:

1) *Religious Foundation*: Abuddin Nata states that the religious foundation is fundamental in Islamic teachings. It is humanistic-theocentric, respecting humans according to Allah's guidance, and should be the basis in formulating educational components.

2) *Philosophical Foundation*: This foundation involves deep and universal thinking, addressing issues of divinity, nature, humans, society, knowledge, and morality.

3) *Scientific Foundation*: This foundation emphasizes the usefulness and benefits of knowledge for education and the teaching-learning process.

Islamic education, according to Abuddin Nata, is closely related to the vision of Islamic teachings, which align with the prophetic mission of building a life obedient to Allah, aiming for mercy for all creation. Hence, the mission of Islamic education, as stated by Abuddin Nata, is based on the guidance and indications in the Quran and Hadith. He argues that the vision and mission of Islamic education are more comprehensive than those of Western education, which mainly emphasize rational and physical aspects, while Islamic education emphasizes spiritual, moral, and social aspects, aiming to achieve a holistic human life (Abuddin Nata 1997).

In setting the goals of Islamic education, Abuddin Nata focuses on achieving sincerity for Allah and progressing step by step from simple to higher objectives. He emphasizes that the goals are to nurture human talents and potentials in line with Islamic values, enabling individuals to function as Allah's caliphs on earth and serve God.

The goals of Islamic education can be viewed from different perspectives:

1) *Social Importance:* The goal of education from this perspective is to transform desired values of religion, state, ideology, and organizations into society. Education aims to convey religious, cultural, ideological, and organizational missions to society, focusing on creating well-being and happiness through religious obedience (Abuddin Nata 2010).

2) *Individual Importance:* Education here is about exploring, directing, and enhancing the talents and potentials of students, enabling them to grow and develop continuously. Abuddin Nata views education not as filling a glass with water but as igniting a lamp or creating energy, emphasizing student-centered activities.

3) *Convergence:* This perspective combines the internal and external aspects of education, encouraging students to express their talents and embrace global values. This approach aligns with the "system among" principle proposed by Ki Hajar Dewantara: *ing ngarso sung tulodo* (teacher-centered*), ing madya mangun karsa* (student-centered), *tut wuri handayani* (student-centered).

According to Abuddin Nata the goal of Islamic education is to nurture and guide humans to have the potential to do good, have faith, and obey Allah. It aims to shape

individuals with good character, where noble character reflects Quranic values. In the digital era, Islamic education also aims to guide students in using technology appropriately, enhancing moral and spiritual values (Kambali et al. 2019).

Abuddin Nata outlines principles that serve as the foundation for conducting educational activities, differentiating Islamic education from non-Islamic education in its development and benefits to society. These principles form the character of Islamic education:

1) *Universality:* Aims to develop various aspects of human personality, contribute to societal problem-solving, and preserve history and culture.

2) *Balance and Moderation:* Ensures a balance between the growth and needs of individuals now and in the future, based on positive energy.

3) *Clarity:* Provides clarity and decisiveness in resolving issues.

4) *Realism and Realization*: Achieves objectives easily and practically, in accordance with natural dispositions, and can be implemented optimally.

5) *Dynamism:* Continuously innovates and develops curricula and methods, responding to individual, social, and societal changes, and adopting innovations from other countries (Abuddin Nata 2011).

Abuddin Nata concludes that the principles of Islamic education essentially mirror the principles of Islamic teachings, serving as a guide to achieving educational goals that characterize Islamic education.

## 3. Teaching and Learning Process According to Abuddin Nata

According to Abuddin Nata, the essence of the teaching and learning process is a form of communication between educators and students, mutually influencing each other to achieve educational goals. In line with the principles of learning in Islam, the teaching and learning activities should be conducted with diligence and be well-organized to ensure an effective learning process. He also emphasizes that the teaching and learning process is a fundamental and essential activity, as the success of teaching and educating relies on the implementation of these activities. He compares a teacher to a gardener who cannot hasten the growth of plants or force them to bear fruit prematurely. A good gardener knows the characteristics, nature, and tendencies of the plants, just as a teacher should understand the nature, character, and tendencies of their students. The important

task for a teacher is to create situations and conditions that allow students to grow and develop beneficially (Nata 2011).

Abuddin Nata outlines several teaching methods commonly used in the learning process:

1) *Lecture Method:* The teacher presents lessons through direct explanations to students.

2) *Question and Answer Method:* The teacher poses questions that students must answer.

3) *Demonstration Method:* The teacher demonstrates or shows a process to students.

4) *Assignment Method:* The teacher gives tasks to students for practice.

5) *Problem-Solving Method:* Lessons begin with a problem that is analyzed and solved.

6) *Discussion Method:* Students discuss and debate a problem together.

7) *Simulation Method:* Students role-play certain situations to understand theories and concepts.

8) *Experiment Method:* Students conduct experiments to experience and prove concepts themselves (Poloso 2018).

The materials or lessons relate to aspects such as:

1) *Faith in God:* Pure belief in God, avoiding acts that could lead to polytheism.

2) *Respect for Parents:* Showing kindness to one's parents.

3) *Worship of Allah:* Performing acts of worship to Allah SWT.

4) *Environmental Awareness:* Encouraging good deeds and not allowing evil to flourish.

5) *Noble Character:* Exhibiting humility and building equal partnerships with others, avoiding egoism, arrogance, and the tendency to underestimate others (Widiani 2018).

The implementation of Islamic education aims to achieve the goal of producing graduates with a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, who can apply these teachings according to their age and the times. The key aspects of implementing Islamic education include:

1) *Avoiding Romanticism:* Steering clear of overly idealized models that can trap one in excessive romanticism.

2) *Integrating Empirical Issues:* Incorporating practical, real-world problems into teaching materials.

3) *Developing Emancipatory Insights:* Promoting liberation from the constraints of globalization trends in the teaching-learning process.

4) *Utilizing Educational Environments:* Adapting the educational environment to meet the needs of students.

In discussing students, Abuddin Nata identifies three terms: murid, al-tilmidz, and al-mudarris. These terms are used for elementary-level learners and advanced-level classes. He states that murid refers to beginners in learning who lack knowledge and rely entirely on the educator. The term "educator" applies to those who engage in activities to provide knowledge, skills, education, and experiences, which can take place anywhere. At home, parents are responsible for education as it is the primary educational environment for every individual. Education there is initially parental, where parents serve as guides (teachers) and leaders (role models). At school, teachers take responsibility, while in the community, educational organizations perform this role. Society provides not only material needs but also spiritual aspects, including knowledge, experience, skills, and so on. Thus, educators include parents, teachers, religious leaders, community figures, and others. According to Abuddin Nata, the task of teachers in achieving educational goals is an act of worship and devotion to God, prioritizing God's commands. He emphasizes that education is a form of worship and self-devotion in carrying out Allah's commands.

## 4. Relevance of Abuddin Nata's Thoughts to Contemporary Islamic Education

The term "relevance" in education refers to the alignment or harmony between education and the demands and conditions of life. Education is considered relevant if its outcomes benefit life, reflecting commonality or relatedness. The relevance of Abuddin Nata's perspective on Islamic education to contemporary Islamic education is as follows:

1) *Relevance of the Essence of Islamic Education to the 2013 Curriculum:* The essence of Islamic education according to Abuddin Nata is education based on Islamic values found in the Quran and Hadith, and the thoughts of religious scholars and the history of the Muslim community. He states that Islamic education aims to provide guidance, direction, and nurturing to students consciously and systematically so that Islamic values are embedded in their

personalities. Islamic education, rooted in the Quran and Hadith, manifests in character education, maintaining integrity amidst globalization to avoid negative influences. The 2013 curriculum, based on character and competency, aims to achieve a balance between hard skills and soft skills, focusing on character education and competency-based education. The character-based curriculum equips students to meet the demands of the times (Mulyasa 2017).

The relationship between Abuddin Nata's Islamic education and the 2013 curriculum lies in the emphasis on character education. Islamic education, according to Abuddin Nata, implements character education based on the Quran and Hadith, while the 2013 curriculum integrates character education through values, attitudes, and the learning process. Both aim to instill character and capabilities to prepare students for the global era.

2) *Relevance of the Education System to Law No. 20 of 2003:* Abuddin Nata's educational system emphasizes a new paradigm that focuses on various aspects: improving human resources, managing educational institutions to transform Islamic teachings, realizing transformative Islam, promoting justice, and ensuring Islamic educational institutions position themselves to master competitive knowledge. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, Article 1, Paragraph 2, states that national education is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, adhering to religious values, Indonesian national culture, and responsiveness to changes (Junaid Hamzah 2012). Both aim to be beneficial, based on religious and cultural values.

3) *Relevance of Islamic Education to the Millennial Era:* The principles of Islamic education clearly support adaptation to the millennial era, including:

   - *Comprehensive Education Principle:* Viewing students as individuals with potentials granted by Allah, implementing multi-approach learning such as psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual, to create enjoyable learning experiences.

   - *Mandatory Education Principle:* This principle is relevant to the millennial era, as mandatory education drives students to adapt and understand millennial components, such as technology.

- *Global Insight Principle:* With millennial-era technology, global insight is easily accessible to anyone. Technology has positive impacts, such as facilitating work, encouraging experimentation, quick thinking, avoiding procrastination, and providing easy access to broader knowledge (Abuddin Nata 2020).

- *Relevance to Changing Times:* Islamic education will always be relevant to any era. As Prof. Abuddin stated, "Teach your children, for they are created for a time different from yours."

4) Humans consist of the essence of body and spirit, and both need guidance from adults or education. Education shapes both physical and spiritual aspects to actively glorify Allah SWT (Harahap 2016). Islamic education must be sensitive to social changes and must seriously attempt to shift from a bureaucratic mindset to a disruptive mindset that is more cooperative. It should be self-driving to innovate according to the demands of the 4.0 era. Islamic education must reshape or create aspects to remain contextual with demands and changes (Sigit Priatmoko 2018). The challenges faced by Islamic education in the new era, such as the industrial 4.0 era, have been anticipated by education experts like Abuddin Nata. He emphasizes the need for IT-based education management, which is natural given the current demands. Therefore, Islamic education must aim to produce creative, innovative, independent, and productive individuals ready to face a competitive world, aligning with Islamic teachings.

## D. Conclusion

Abuddin Nata views education as a lifelong process essential for guiding individuals to recognize and harness their potential, ultimately benefiting themselves, their families, and society. His concept of Islamic education integrates traditional values with contemporary needs, ensuring its relevance across different eras. This adaptability is rooted in the principles of universality, balance, clarity, realism, and dynamism, which collectively form a robust framework for an effective and holistic educational system.

The relevance of Abuddin Nata's educational principles is evident in their alignment with modern educational demands, such as the need for character education and competency-based curricula. His emphasis on integrating empirical issues and

developing emancipatory insights ensures that Islamic education remains responsive to societal changes. Additionally, his advocacy for utilizing digital-based learning methods and maintaining an integrative-convergent approach underscores the flexibility and forward-thinking nature of his educational model.

In conclusion, Abuddin Nata's contributions to Islamic education provide a timeless and adaptable framework that addresses both current and future educational challenges. By combining the principles of the Quran and Sunnah with the Indonesian context, his model of Islamic education promotes the development of creative, innovative, and independent individuals, well-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world. Future research should continue to explore the application of these principles in various educational settings to further validate and expand upon Abuddin Nata's foundational work.

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