Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Classification of Islamic Educational Philosophy and Its Practical Implications: A Case Study of TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak

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Abstract

This study examines Seyyed Hossein Nasr's classification of Islamic educational philosophy and its practical implications for Qur'anic learning at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak. Contemporary Islamic education faces the challenge of balancing classical intellectual traditions with the demands of modernity, particularly at the grassroots level of informal religious education. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that Nasr classifies Islamic educational philosophy into four major traditions: the Peripatetic tradition, which emphasizes rational reasoning; the Hermetic Pythagorean tradition, which integrates esoteric and exoteric meanings; the Illuminationist tradition, which prioritizes spiritual intuition and illumination; and Transcendent Theosophy, which synthesizes the three preceding approaches into an integral metaphysical framework. However, the learning practices at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak remain predominantly conventional and technical, focusing on repetitive reading skills and drillbased methods, with limited integration of philosophical reflection, spiritual depth, and holistic transformation as emphasized by Nasr. This study proposes the integration of rationaldialogical methods, esoteric reflection, and spiritual practices into Qur'anic learning, as well as the development of a holistic curriculum that reunifies intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions. Such an approach is expected to restore Qur'anic education to its balanced and integrative position within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education faces complex challenges in maintaining a balance between classical intellectual traditions and the demands of modernity. Amid the forces of globalization and secularization, Islamic educational institutions are required not only to transmit religious knowledge normatively, but also to cultivate a deep philosophical understanding of the nature, objectives, and methods of Islamic education itself. In this context, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's classification of Islamic educational philosophy offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the diversity of Muslim intellectual traditions that may serve as a foundation for developing authentic and relevant Islamic education.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth and twentyfirst centuries, classifies Islamic educational philosophy into four major traditions: the Peripatetic (Mashsha'i), the HermeticPythagorean (Ismaili), the Illuminationist (Ishraqi), and Transcendent Theosophy (alḤikmah alMuta'aliyah). This classification is not merely a historical categorization, but rather a representation of

epistemological and methodological diversity within the Islamic intellectual tradition, each with distinct implications for concepts of human nature, knowledge, and learning processes.

The Peripatetic tradition emphasizes rationality and Aristotelian logic; the HermeticPythagorean tradition integrates esoteric and exoteric dimensions of knowledge; the Illuminationist tradition prioritizes intuitive experience and spiritual illumination; while Transcendent Theosophy seeks to synthesize these approaches within an integral metaphysical vision. Despite the richness of this philosophical heritage, its implementation in Islamic educational practiceparticularly at the grassroots levelremains limited.

This limitation is evident in Qur'anic educational institutions such as Taman Pendidikan AlQur'an (TPA). Many TPAs in Indonesia continue to rely on conventional, behavioristic approaches focused on memorization and technical reading skills, with primary attention given to correct recitation (*tajwid*) rather than philosophical understanding and spiritual depth. From Nasr's perspective, authentic Islamic education should integrate intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions into a holistic unity.

TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak reflects similar challenges. Preliminary observations indicate that learning methods are dominated by drillandpractice approaches in teaching Qur'anic literacy, with minimal exploration of philosophical reflection and spiritual meaning. This situation raises an important question: how can Seyyed Hossein Nasr's classification of Islamic educational philosophy be applied practically to Qur'anic learning in TPAs to create a more comprehensive and meaningful educational experience?

Previous studies have largely focused on theoretical analyses of Nasr's thought or its application in higher education, while research connecting his philosophical framework with educational practice at the TPA level remains scarce. Given the strategic role of TPAs as informal Islamic educational institutions with broad social reach in Indonesia, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how the principles of Nasr's four philosophical traditions can inform the development of more holistic learning strategies at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study design conducted at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak. The qualitative approach was selected to enable an indepth understanding of Qur'anic learning practices and their relationship to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's classification of Islamic educational philosophy.

The research subjects include Qur'anic instructors (*ustadz*), TPA administrators, and students (*santri*). Participants were selected purposively based on their teaching experience and involvement in the learning process. Data were collected through three primary techniques: direct observation of learning activities, interviews with instructors and administrators, and documentation analysis of curricula, lesson plans, and supporting materials.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages, including data reduction, data categorization, data display, and interpretative analysis. Observational, interview, and documentary data were classified according to Nasr's four philosophical traditionsPeripatetic, HermeticPythagorean, Illuminationist, and Transcendent Theosophyto identify the extent to which learning practices align with their respective epistemological principles. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checking with research participants.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Nasr's classification represents a profound mapping of epistemological and methodological diversity within Islamic intellectual history. Each philosophical tradition embodies a distinct approach to knowledge, human development, and education.

The Peripatetic (Mashsha'i) Tradition emphasizes rational inquiry and Aristotelian logic, as developed by thinkers such as alFarabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd. In educational terms, this tradition views reason as the highest human faculty to be cultivated through systematic, analytical thinking and discursive learning.

The HermeticPythagorean (Ismaili) Tradition integrates esoteric and exoteric dimensions of knowledge, emphasizing symbolic interpretation (*ta'wil*), numerology, and the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm. Learning is understood as a gradual initiation into deeper layers of meaning under the guidance of a spiritually knowledgeable teacher.

The Illuminationist (Ishraqi) Tradition, developed by Suhrawardi, prioritizes intuitive knowledge and spiritual illumination (*ishraq*). True knowledge is attained through inner purification, contemplation, and direct presence (*'ilm hudhuri*), rather than conceptual representation alone.

Transcendent Theosophy (alḤikmah alMuta'āliyah), systematized by Mulla Sadra, synthesizes rational reasoning, esoteric interpretation, and spiritual intuition into a comprehensive metaphysical framework. Education, from this perspective, is an ontological journey involving the substantive transformation of the learner toward human perfection (*insan kamil*).

Findings indicate that learning practices at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak are predominantly conventional and technically oriented. The curriculum focuses on Qur'anic literacy using the *Iqra'* method, emphasizing correct pronunciation, memorization, and repetition. Teaching methods are largely onedirectional and behavioristic, with limited dialogical interaction, critical reflection, or exploration of deeper meanings.

Instructors generally perceive the primary goal of TPA education as ensuring students' ability to read the Qur'an correctly for ritual purposes. Although instructors acknowledge the importance of spiritual and philosophical dimensions, they report difficulties integrating these aspects due to curriculum demands and time constraints.
The learning environment is structured and orderly, yet it provides limited opportunities for contemplative practices or spiritual deepening beyond routine prayers. Consequently, Qur'anic learning tends to emphasize external technical mastery rather than internal spiritual transformation.

From Nasr's philosophical perspective, current learning practices at TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak have not yet fully integrated the four traditions of Islamic educational philosophy. Qur'anic learning remains focused on technical skills rather than holistic intellectual, spiritual, and moral development.

Practically, the integration of the Peripatetic dimension may be achieved through dialogical and analytical learning methods that encourage students to understand logical structures, meanings, and ethical implications of Qur'anic verses. The HermeticPythagorean dimension can be introduced gradually through reflective interpretation of symbolic and spiritual meanings. The Illuminationist dimension may be developed through contemplative practices, remembrance (*dhikr*), and guided reflection. Finally, a Transcendent Theosophical approach requires a curriculum that views learning as a transformative journey integrating rationality, spirituality, and moral formation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Seyyed Hossein Nasr's classification of Islamic educational philosophy provides a comprehensive framework for reenvisioning Qur'anic education at the TPA level. While TPA Nurul Fajar Kampak currently employs conventional, technical learning approaches, Nasr's framework highlights the importance of integrating rational, esoteric, spiritual, and holistic dimensions into Qur'anic learning.

The practical implications of this classification include the development of dialogical and reflective teaching methods, the gradual introduction of deeper symbolic meanings, the incorporation of spiritual practices, and the formulation of a transformative curriculum oriented toward holistic human development. Implementing these strategies requires the enhancement of instructors' philosophical and spiritual competencies, curriculum reorientation, and the development of richer instructional materials. Despite the challenges involved, such efforts are essential for restoring Qur'anic education to its holistic vision within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

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