

Modernization of Islamic Education in Indonesia Karel A Steenbrink's Perspective Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This research aims to review the Modernization of Islamic Education in Indonesia, the challenges, and how the modernization of Islamic Education develops. The method used in this study is a literature review, the data of which was obtained by reviewing several database sites, namely Google Scholar. The study results show that traditional educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools that initially only taught religious knowledge have opened themselves up by carrying out general education for students. However, the dualism of the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education is a problem that must be solved. The researcher argues that these two institutions must synergize well and have synchronization in terms of education policies. Kiyai, who became a teacher in the traditional era, now has to collaborate with modern teachers to build a modern Islamic education civilization. The existence of kiyai and teachers is not to be separated but must be synergized to create better competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitude) in the young generation of Islam.

Keywords: *Modernization, Islamic Education, Karel A Steenbrink*

Introduction

Indonesia has more productive human resources than non-productive resources.(Pestaria et al., 2022). These indicators predict that Indonesia will become a developed country by 2045.(Masrom et al., 2023). However, many challenges will be faced, namely how to improve existing human resources. Therefore, Islamic education, as part of the national education system, has an important role and must play a part in realizing competent human resources.

The existence of Islamic education has existed since Islam entered Indonesia.(Suyadi et al., 2022). Since the Dutch colonial era, Indonesia has developed an Islamic education system based on Islamic boarding schools.(Ansori et al., 2023). It was hoped that the presence of Islamic education at that time would be able to bring change and a spirit of jihad to the nation.(Syukur et al., 2024). As times change, the Islamic education model in Indonesia has evolved following political, social, and economic changes and the influence of global conditions.(Utami et al., 2024). The social history of Islamic education in Indonesia has been written by many experts, but the most interesting is one of the researchers in this field, namely Karel A. Steenbrink. He devoted his thoughts and spent his time researching Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia and tried to observe the transformation process of Islamic Educational Institutions in the modern era in Indonesia.(Buskens & van Sandwijk, 2021). The discussion in his work (Pesantren, Madrasah, School: Islamic Education in the Modern Period) focuses on the development of Islamic educational institutions, especially Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and schools.(Jaenullah et al., 2022). The development of Islamic educational institutions is caused by internal factors that require a change in the traditional scientific paradigm to a modern one.(Junaedi & Wijaya, 2021). Then from the external side, the development of other Islamic study institutions has been more advanced than Islamic boarding schools.(Roqib, 2021).

Karel A. Steenbrink's research took samples on the islands of Java and Sumatra. (Steenbrink, 2021). Even though it was not carried out in all regions of Indonesia, in general, it describes the condition and development of Indonesian Islamic education as a whole. The research can be a reference for future researchers to conduct further research. Therefore, researchers want to review the results of Steenbrink's research regarding Modern Islamic Education in Indonesia. This discussion is hoped to provide input and increase knowledge about the history of institutional development and the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia.

There has been a lot of research on the development of Islamic institutions and education in Indonesia. It is necessary to attach several studies that discuss this matter as starting material and comparison, also as a stepping stone in this research. Among them, First, Mohammad Al Farabi in the Modernization Model of Indonesian Islamic Education: The Case of Adabiyah School in 2020. Adabiyah School is listed as the "first" educational institution which acts as a madrasa (religious school) not only in Minangkabau but also the "first" throughout Indonesia.(Al Farabi, 2020). This educational institution was founded in 1907, by Abdullah Ahmad, a moderate cleric born in Minangkabau.(Effendi, 2021). Adabiyah School is the first modern Islamic school that adheres to the classical education system.(Aulia et al., 2023). Adabiyah shows new characteristics that are different from other traditional Islamic educational institutions which do not use classrooms, benches, tables, blackboards, modern curricula, and diplomas.(Farida et al., 2024). Adabiyah School aims to combine the Dutch model of general education characterized by an Islamic education system.(Arrovia, 2021). Therefore, the curriculum implemented by Adabiyah is integrated.(Hidayati et al., 2024). In the field of general studies which was deemed to need quality improvement, 4 professional teachers from the Netherlands were presented.(Effendi, 2021). All of this is done to increase the effectiveness and quality of the goals and education system being implemented. The modernization efforts that he had made were eventually followed by Islamic educational institutions that emerged later, both before independence and after.

Another research is a literature study by Muhammad Heriyudanta in 2022 regarding "Modernization Models of Islamic Education in Indonesia". The research carried out at the Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School can conclude many points. First, in matters of governance and institutional management, the Darussalam Gontor Islamic Boarding School entrusts the institutional and organizational management of the Islamic boarding school to the congregation. By donating Islamic boarding schools to the people, it is hoped that Islamic boarding schools will not lack successor cadres because Islamic boarding school caregivers do not have to be descendants of the founders and will have many progressive breakthroughs because they have received ideas from various parties. Second, Gontor has an internally created curriculum called the KMI curriculum (Kulliyatul Mualimin Al-Islamiyah). The Gontor curriculum teaches 100% general knowledge and 100% religious knowledge, which places special emphasis on mastery of foreign languages. The methods used by the Gontor Islamic Boarding School are classical methods and other modern methods. Meanwhile, the media uses classrooms, books, tables and chairs, whiteboards, markers, and various other modern media.(Heriyudanta, 2022).

While numerous studies have explored the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia, this research offers a unique contribution by providing an in-depth analysis of Karel A. Steenbrink's perspectives on the transformation of Islamic educational institutions in the context of modernization. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on specific institutions or general modernization trends, this research examines Steenbrink's comprehensive framework for understanding the evolution of Islamic education in Indonesia. Additionally, this study distinctively explores the interplay between global influences and local traditions in shaping Indonesian Islamic education, offering valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between

traditional and modern Islamic education systems. This approach not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also provides a theoretical foundation for understanding contemporary challenges in Islamic education transformation.

Method

The method for writing this article is a literature review. In the initial stage, articles were filtered with a time limit of the last 5 years (2020–2024) and free full text. Literature was searched in the Google Scholar database using the keyword Karel A Steenbrink. A literature search in related keyword databases yielded a total of 1,540 studies. However, some studies were found to be the same article or were indexed in two or more databases, so they were excluded. Next, the articles were screened based on the title and content of the abstract, leaving 7 articles. Of the 7 pieces of literature, 4 articles were excluded from the review, because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, the remaining 3 articles consist of original articles read in full and included in the review by the researcher.

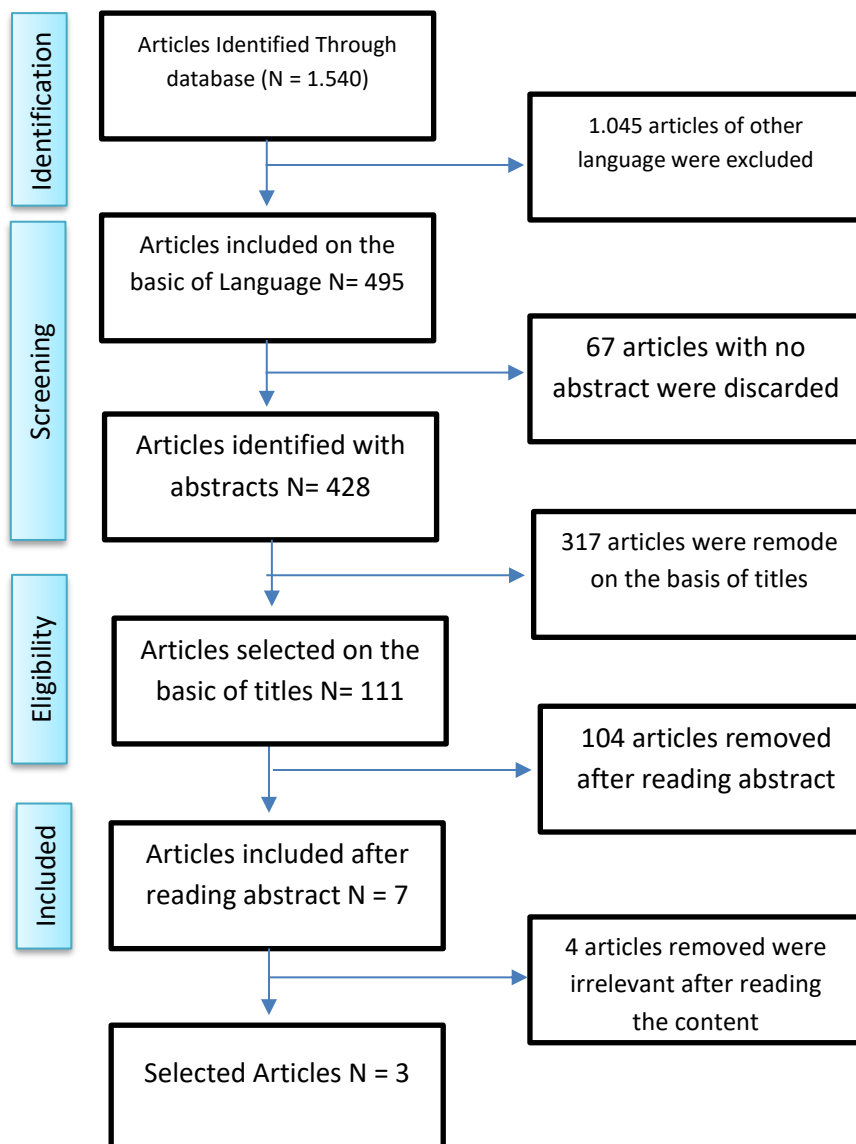


Figure 1 PRISMA Systematic Literature Review

Results

This study examines the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia through the perspective of Karel A. Steenbrink, highlighting the transformation of Islamic educational institutions from traditional systems to more modern and integrated frameworks. Modernization in this context not only involves changes in teaching methods but also the integration of religious and general sciences, as well as the evolving roles of pesantren, madrasahs, and schools in shaping Islamic education. The research explores various studies discussing these developments, the challenges faced, and proposed solutions to address the dualism in the education system. Below are the results of the literature review analyzed in this study.

Table 1. Literature Review Study Results

No	Author and Year	Author and Year	Author and Year	Author and Year
1.	Rahmat Effendi, 2021	Indonesian Islamic Studies: Modern Islamic Education (Historical Study Perspektif Karel A Steenbrink)	Literature Review	The development of Islamic education in Indonesia, both terms of institutions, facilities, and infrastructure, has progressed. This progress is to face the inevitability of modernity. The development of Islamic education is in order to educate Indonesian Muslims. There is no dichotomy between sciences. There is a need for a convergence and integration movement between religious knowledge and general science. Because both are important in life.
2.	Agus Miswanto, 2021	Transformation of Islamic Education in Indonesia: Considering Karel A. Steenbrink's Study Model	Literature Review	Islamic education seeks its path as an exclusive identity that is different from colonial education. Islamic reformers at the beginning of the 20th century tried to carry out hybrid education, namely combining Islamic and Western education, giving rise to a new model of educational institution. And this system is the embryo of the madrasa system in Indonesia.
3	M. Zainal Akhyar & Umar Samsudin	Islamic Education in the Modern	Literature Review	As an educational institution, madrasah is a synthesis of

Period (Study of Karel A Steenbrink's writings)	the religious education system and the general education system. Islamic boarding schools as traditional educational institutions that initially only taught religious knowledge have also opened up to implementing general education for students
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Concept of Islamic Education Modernization according to Steenbrink

Steenbrink views the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia as a complex transformation process. Based on the analysis of his works, this modernization is characterized by the integration of religious and general education. According to Steenbrink, modern Islamic education must be able to maintain traditional values while adopting modern educational methods and systems. His research shows that pesantren as traditional educational institutions have opened themselves to general lessons without losing their Islamic character.

History of Islamic Education in Indonesia

The historical development of Islamic education in Indonesia according to Steenbrink can be divided into several important phases. In the early 19th century, Islamic education was still traditional and centered in pesantren. Entering the 20th century, a renewal movement emerged pioneered by Minangkabau scholars and organizations such as Muhammadiyah. Steenbrink noted that the Adabiyah School, established in 1907, became an early model of modern Islamic education that integrated the Dutch education system with Islamic values.

Role of Islamic Education in National Identity Formation

Steenbrink emphasizes the strategic role of Islamic education in shaping Indonesia's national identity. His research reveals how pesantren and madrasah not only function as religious educational institutions but also play a role in character building and nationalism. This is evident from the curriculum that integrates Islamic values with the spirit of nationalism.

Challenges in the Modernization of Islamic Education Curriculum

In his analysis, Steenbrink identifies several main challenges in modernizing the Islamic education curriculum: (1) Dualism of the education system between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, (2) Stagnation in Arabic language teaching, (3) The need to balance between religious and general sciences, (4) Transformation of the teacher's role from traditional kiai to modern teacher.

Analysis of the three articles reviewed (2020-2024) shows that Steenbrink's thoughts on the modernization of Islamic education remain relevant today. The transformation of Islamic education from a traditional to a modern system has produced an integrative educational model, where there is no longer a dichotomy between religious and general sciences. This modernization process is inseparable from the role of reformist figures in West Sumatra, the Muhammadiyah organization, and Nahdlatul Ulama.

Discussion

Dualism of the Education System

Educational dualism in Indonesia originated from discriminatory colonial government policies in the 19th and 20th centuries.(Mokodenseho et al., 2024). The Dutch colonial government did

not want to adjust Islamic boarding schools to become part of general education.(Aly et al., 2023). The government prefers to establish village schools rather than merging existing Islamic schools (Aly, 2019). This was because the colonial government considered that the Islamic boarding school's didactic and methodical system was very bad. Finally, Islamic education took its path which was completely different from the Western education model. Because Islamic boarding school education is considered unimportant, reports on Islamic education are almost incomplete, in fact since 1927 they are no longer included in official government reports.

Regarding the origins of Islamic boarding schools, Soegarda Poerbakawatja indicated that Islamic boarding schools are an educational system adopted from the Hindu education system in India. For example, this can be seen in the handing over of land by the government for religious purposes in the Indian Hindu tradition. Steenbrink became interested in this educational institution by trying to explore it more deeply.

There are many findings in the world of Islamic boarding schools. First, Traditional Koran Education. The initial education of a Santri when studying at an Islamic boarding school is the knowledge of the Koran. This science is the basic science in studying Islam. The education system is traditionally based on the form of basic Al-Quran lessons including introduction to letters, recitation, and rhythm, and interspersed with Arabic. Arabic is urgent here. Because Arabic is the language most widely used in conveying Islamic teachings. Apart from that, various basic Islamic worship practices are also taught, such as ablution procedures, prayer, and fasting (Steenbrink, 1991). Al-Quran education is usually aimed at students who have just entered at a relatively young age. At that time, parents sent their children to Islamic boarding schools rather than schools provided by the colonial authorities for the reason that their children knew their religion. The goal is to be useful in later life after completing education at the Islamic boarding school. The background of children who were students at that time were mostly from the lower class with the predominance of farmers. So their intellectual abilities only have to be adjusted to religious knowledge.

Second, the Book Education System. After completing basic Al-Quran education, a student who is declared Passed by his teacher can continue to the next level. At this level, a person gains knowledge through the yellow book. The mention of this yellow book existed and started when the scholars returned from the Middle East, especially Mecca, bringing knowledge. With the basis of a lot of knowledge and many books, they spread the teachings of Islam. Called the yellow book, Karela at that time the Arabic books used yellow paper. So, any book that uses Arabic text is called the yellow book. The range of knowledge is wider, including tafsir, hadith, fiqh, sirah, mantik, balaghah, faraidh, and Sufism. All of these Islamic sciences are taught to students who have become adults. The length of time a Santri studies is under his ability to master existing knowledge and with the approval of his kiyai (Steenbrink, 1991). Some Islamic boarding schools, especially small Islamic boarding schools, cannot carry out this level of education. This is because there is a shortage of teaching staff and usually small Islamic boarding schools only provide basic education.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a new pattern of Islamic education, which was initiated by reforming ulama. The emergence of modern Islamic education at that time was not immediately accepted by the Muslim community but gave rise to pros and cons. Some who disagree consider it an imitation Western education. This is what Abdullah Ahmad experienced when he founded Adabiyah Schools. Ahmad is considered not to be a reformer, but to completely imitate the colonial system. Steenbrink calls Abdullah Ahmad a Modernizer who became a Hollandizer. Steenbrink gave a quite interesting review regarding the renewal of Islamic education in Indonesia, where West Sumatran ulama contributed greatly to the renewal of modern Islamic education in Indonesia, such as Abdullah Ahmad, Abdulkarim Amrullah,

Ibrahim Musa, Jamil Djambek. Steenbrink calls these Minangkabau ulama the first center of renewal in Indonesia and Muhammadiyah is called the second center of renewal. Muhammadiyah was founded by Ahmad Dahlan in Jogjakarta on November 18, 1912. This Muhammadiyah reform movement was more focused on urban communities. Previously, on December 1, 1911, Ahmad Dahlan was able to establish the first private Islamic school that met the requirements for obtaining subsidies from the government. The school was founded in the Jogjakarta palace area and received full support from the palace.

Nahdlatul Ulama is also carrying out reforms in the field of education. The renewal was born from two students of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, namely K.H. Moh. Ilyas and K.H. Wahid Hasyim. With the approval of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, Moh. Ilyas included general subjects such as reading and writing Latin letters, earth sciences, history, and Malay in Islamic boarding schools. In the learning process Moh. Ilyas imitated the Dutch language teaching system that he received when he was studying at HIS. In the 1920s to 1930s, Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School became the most famous Islamic boarding school in all of Indonesia with more than 6,000 students. (Steenbrink, 1991)

When Indonesia became independent, the dualistic education system in the colonial era was inherited by the newly independent Indonesian government. General education is managed by the Islamic Education and Education Department, which consists of madrasas and Islamic boarding schools managed by the religious department. So, the problem of dualism inherited from colonialism is not easy to resolve because the two existing departments have their policies. According to Steenbrink, the religious department is positioning itself to carry out convergence, namely minimizing differences in educational patterns in general educational institutions and religious education.

Traditional Versus Modern Religion Teachers

In ancient times, a person's lineage greatly influenced him or her to become a figure, teacher or kiyai. (Wafa, 2022). For example, in traditional Islamic boarding schools, the element of heredity plays an important role (the kiyai for Islamic boarding schools may be the child of the kiyai. When a kiyai (religious teacher) dies, the management/management of the educational institution left behind will automatically become the responsibility of the son of the deceased kiyai. Even if the If a kiyai doesn't have a son, then the kiyai must have prepared his successor from the start, for example by appointing a relative to take care of an educational institution, marrying his daughter to the son of a local kiyai, or to a considered santri qualified.

Even though religion doesn't teach such things, this is the reality that happens. There is an opinion that the results of the kiyai's work in the form of educational institutions or similar will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment. The source of the reward will be handed over to someone you trust, and who else if not the kiyai's relatives. This is what then caused many Islamic boarding schools to withdraw after being abandoned by the founder. The descendants of the founder of the institution were unable to maintain the authority and knowledge that existed in the previous generation.

However, there are several objections to this hereditary principle, including marriage between close relatives can cause weak offspring. (Setiawan et al., 2023). The continuity of educational institutions is also not guaranteed because it is not certain that the descendants of the kiyai will be able to carry out their duties well. Apart from that, the distribution of Islamic boarding schools is less evenly distributed due to the gathering of people in Islamic boarding school environments and the reluctance of religious teachers to open Islamic boarding schools in new environments. In addition, there are objections to the existence of a cult of personality if the principle of descent is maintained. Although the principle of heredity is often found in Islamic boarding school educational institutions, this is increasingly fading. This is due to the lack of basis in religious

teachings. Apart from that, it is also caused by improvements in the curriculum and the developing education system. This is where changes occurred in terms of teaching staff, from those who originally had the title of sheikh, ajengan, or something else, they began to be shifted to religious teachers who graduated from higher education institutions with BA or Drs degrees. In this way, the element of heredity is no longer the main determining factor, but the element of knowledge is strengthened in the Indonesian Islamic education system.

In modern religious teachers, the intellectual element is more important than the personality element and other elements. Piety, as stated by traditional religious teachers, is a bit of an exaggeration when applied to modern religious teachers in madrasas and schools. For them, it is the teaching requirements that are important. Even though it is still in a state of development, conclusions can be drawn from the tendencies that occur relating to the position of teachers in Muslims in Indonesia, namely: First, teachers are no longer the center of religious activities in their environment (being intermediaries between God and humans and independent interpreters of religion). Teachers are generally members of larger organizations, which determine the content of teachings and ensure the purity of religious teachings. Second, *kiyai* used to be multi-functional individuals. Now these functions have been divided. A person who is still serving in an organization or Department of Religion has limited duties. He must follow the specified materials and curriculum and receive a salary. Being a teacher in this modern era means earning a living and a salary. Meanwhile, he does other tasks as a volunteer in his free time. Third, the conflict between the *penghulu* and the *kiyai* is now no longer felt.

Development of the Religious Curriculum

The religious curriculum in the classical era was based on halaqah patterns and book studies taught by a *kiyai*. (Wardiyono, 2021). The halaqah model with the study of a book by a scholar from his teacher who previously studied with him, is hierarchical. In the modern era, the learning curriculum has developed, which no longer focuses on a figure with a particular book. About the study of traditional books taught in Islamic educational institutions, they can be divided into: Arabic language lessons and religious book studies. In the madrasa system, students are introduced to three subjects, namely: Arabic, religious studies, and general studies. Religious studies are dominated by fiqh lessons and interpretation of the Koran, although there is material on the science of *kalam*.

Steenbrink believes that there are subjects that are relatively failing in Indonesia, namely Arabic which is experiencing stagnation, where Arabic is only taught in Islamic boarding schools or Islamic school education environments. (Ijudin & Nenden Munawaroh, 2021). Even though Arabic is an important part of understanding Islam. According to Steenbrink, this is because of the colonial legacy, where the colonial education system did not provide a place for Arabic.

Another problem is the lack of social respect in society so that people do not feel compelled to learn it. Some objections even emerged from some parts of society, such as from *abangan* Islam. They consider that teaching Arabic is part of an effort to equate Indonesian Islam with Arabic Islam. Arabic language teaching is still limited to teaching worship and reading the Koran alone. Thus, graduates of educational institutions such as IAIN can only participate in the religious segment alone. Meanwhile, active Arabic conversation is only taught in a few boarding educational institutions.

Conclusion

Islamic boarding schools and madrasas are part of the general education system. The education system in Indonesia has adopted religious education which was initially only carried out in Islamic boarding schools as traditional educational institutions. Islamic boarding schools

as traditional educational institutions which initially only taught religious knowledge have also opened up to implementing general education for students. However, the dualism of the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education is a problem in itself that must be resolved. Researchers think that these two institutions must be able to synergize well and have synchronization in terms of education policy. There is a need for a special coordinating Ministry for Education so that it can act as a mediator to create this synchronization. Regarding Steenbrink's research which states that learning Arabic is experiencing stagnation or failure, it is necessary to think again, so that Arabic can become the main language in learning other than English, starting from elementary school to college, it would be better if it was able to become Compulsory subjects such as English on every campus. Arabic is not only the language of Muslims but is an international language recognized by the United Nations (UN). Kiyai, who were teaching figures in the traditional era, must now synergize with modern teachers in building a modern Islamic education civilization. The existence of kiyais and teachers is not to be separated but must be synergized to create competence (knowledge, skill, and Altitude) which is better for the younger generation of Islam. In the future, it is necessary to re-examine the role of modern Islamic Education in answering the problems of today's world.

For future researchers interested in studying the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia, several key areas warrant further investigation. First, studies examining the effectiveness of integrated religious and general education curricula in modern Islamic institutions are needed. Research should also explore solutions for bridging the administrative gap between the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education. Additionally, researchers could investigate effective Arabic language teaching methodologies and study successful collaboration models between traditional kiyai and modern educators. Finally, research on how Islamic educational institutions are adapting to digitalization and global competition would provide valuable insights for future development. These directions would enhance our understanding of maintaining religious foundations while meeting modern educational needs.

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