



Reconstructing the Philosophical Foundation of Education : A Three Tiered Integrative Model in the Contemporary Era

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, modern educational systems are heavily challenged by a utilitarian paradigm that overemphasizes cognitive and technical achievements, leading to a pervasive dichotomy of knowledge and moral degradation among students. This study aims to address these deficiencies by reconstructing the fundamental philosophy of education through a systematic conceptual synthesis. Employing a qualitative method with a library research approach, this study critically analyzes authoritative texts specifically focusing on the seminal works of Ramayulis and Abuddin Nata as primary benchmarks to establish rigorous conceptual criteria for educational philosophy. The findings introduce a novel, three tiered integrative matrix that redefines the relationship between general thought and educational policy. In this hierarchical framework: (a) General Philosophy serves as the foundational baseline for critical thinking; (b) Philosophy of Education operates as the functional instrument for curriculum development; and (c) Islamic Philosophy of Education acts as the overarching transcendental value system that anchors the ultimate goals of education. By shifting the paradigm from a purely rational-empirical domain to a comprehensive framework that integrates divine revelation, reason, and human experience, this model offers a distinct methodology to reconstruct the concepts of *Insan Kamil* and *Ulul Albab* within modern schools. This study concludes that the three tiered model provides a robust, non-dichotomous framework necessary to cultivate an education system that balances intellectual competence with profound spiritual and character development.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy as a discipline has a fundamental role in shaping human perspectives on reality, knowledge, and values. In its development, philosophy not only stands as a theoretical study but also serves as a foundation for various fields of science, including education. Nevertheless, in the modern context, philosophy is often seen as being caught between practical needs and reflective depth. On one hand, philosophy is considered the main foundation in building critical awareness and the direction of civilization. On the other hand, a pragmatic view has developed that tends to regard philosophy as less relevant because it is considered unable to provide instant solutions to technical educational problems (Zuhairini, 2019).

This tension also affects the direction and practice of education. Modern educational systems are often faced with a choice between emphasizing practical skills and developing the reflective and philosophical dimensions of learners. As a consequence, education frequently becomes oriented toward short-term academic achievement and labor market demands, while the dimensions of values, meaning, and the ultimate purpose of education receive less attention.

In the context of Islamic education, the issue becomes more complex. Quantitatively, Islamic educational institutions continue to grow significantly. However, qualitatively, various problems remain evident, such as weak moral internalization and the emergence of character degradation among students. This condition indicates that the educational process still emphasizes the transfer of knowledge rather than the transfer of values (Nata, 2016). Consequently, education has not yet fully functioned as a process of forming holistic human beings intellectually, spiritually, and morally.

Conceptually, the philosophy of education emerges as an effort to provide direction, foundations, and objectives for educational practice. Jalaluddin (2020) explains that the philosophy of education serves as a framework of thought that determines the direction of comprehensive human development. Meanwhile, Islamic educational philosophy provides a more specific dimension by placing revelation as the primary foundation for constructing an educational system oriented toward the formation of an integrated human personality (Ramayulis, 2018). Therefore, education from an Islamic perspective is not merely rational and empirical, but also transcendental.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of philosophical foundations in education. Barnadib (2017) focused on the role of philosophy in providing consistency and direction for educational practice, but his discussion remained within the scope of general educational philosophy and did not specifically analyze its relationship with Islamic educational philosophy. Muhaimin (2015) examined the dichotomy between religious and general sciences in Islamic education; however, his study primarily addressed

the issue of curriculum integration and did not comprehensively elaborate the conceptual relationship between philosophy, philosophy of education, and Islamic educational philosophy as an integrated framework. Likewise, other studies generally discuss these concepts separately and tend to emphasize practical or institutional aspects rather than constructing a systematic philosophical relationship among them.

Based on these limitations, there remains a gap in studies that comprehensively examine the conceptual boundaries, interrelationships, and integrative roles of philosophy, philosophy of education, and Islamic educational philosophy within a unified educational framework. Therefore, this study focuses on a conceptual analysis of those three dimensions and their interconnections within the educational system. The issues addressed include: (1) how the boundaries and characteristics of each concept are defined, (2) how the relationship between philosophy, philosophy of education, and Islamic educational philosophy is structured, and (3) how these relationships contribute to the development of an integrated educational system. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to clarifying the philosophical framework of education and to offering a more comprehensive and systematic understanding in building education oriented toward holistic human development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, focusing on a deep, critical analysis of authoritative text sources. Data sources are divided into primary and secondary categories. The primary data consists of seminal and contemporary literature in the field of Islamic educational philosophy. To ensure academic rigor, the selection of primary literature followed three strict criteria:

1. Authoritative Heritage: The literature must be recognized as a standard academic reference within Islamic higher education in Indonesia.
2. Conceptual Comprehensiveness: The text must explicitly map out the tripartite philosophical framework (ontology, epistemology, and axiology).
3. Relevance to Modernity: The work must address contemporary educational challenges, including the dichotomy of knowledge and moral crises.

Based on these criteria, the works of Ramayulis (*Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*) and Abuddin Nata (*Ilmu Pendidikan Islam*) were specifically selected as the primary benchmarks for this study. Ramayulis's work provides a comprehensive metaphysical foundation, systematically structuring how divine revelation serves as the ultimate axiological and ontological guide in education. Meanwhile, Abuddin Nata's work offers a sharp, socio-philosophical critique of modern educational practices, making it the ideal benchmark to contrast contemporary technical-utilitarian flaws with integrative Islamic values.

Secondary data were selectively gathered from peer-reviewed scientific journals, international proceedings, and relevant academic databases (such as Google Scholar, Moraref, and Mendeley) to provide complementary perspectives and contemporary critiques. The gathered data were analyzed using content analysis and conceptual-comparative techniques to distill patterns, differences, and integration points within the education system.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results of this study indicate that philosophy, philosophy of education, and Islamic educational philosophy are closely interconnected and form an integrative hierarchy within the educational system. Philosophy functions as the conceptual foundation, philosophy of education as the operational framework, and Islamic educational philosophy as the value-oriented dimension that directs education toward holistic human development.

The findings further show that the main differences among these concepts lie in their epistemological and axiological foundations. General philosophy is primarily based on rationality and empiricism, whereas Islamic educational philosophy integrates revelation as the highest source of truth alongside reason and experience (Khasanah et al., 2024). This integrative approach enables Islamic educational philosophy to combine intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions in education.

In addition, the study found that the ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives of Islamic educational philosophy provide an important framework for addressing contemporary educational problems, particularly moral degradation and the dichotomy between religious and general sciences. The integration of these dimensions supports the development of an education system that is not only knowledge-oriented but also character-oriented.

Another finding of this study is the formulation of an integrative conceptual model that positions: (1) philosophy as the foundation of thought, (2) philosophy of education as the operational instrument, and (3) Islamic educational philosophy as the guide of values and ultimate educational goals. This model emphasizes that educational systems require a balanced integration of these three dimensions in order to maintain both intellectual and moral orientation.

Furthermore, the study highlights that the concept of *insan kamil* in contemporary education should not only refer to spiritual excellence, but also include intellectual competence, ethical responsibility, and adaptability to technological and global developments (Pramudya, 2025). The findings also reveal that dialogical approaches in philosophy are closely aligned with Islamic educational traditions such as *hiwar* and *mudzakarah*, which can support critical and reflective learning while maintaining ethical values.

Discussion

A. Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, and Islamic Educational Philosophy: Conceptual Interpretation

1. Philosophy as the Foundation of Educational Thought

The findings confirm that philosophy remains an essential foundation for education because it provides direction regarding the nature, goals, and values of human development. This supports the argument of Biesta (2015), who emphasizes that education should not merely produce skilled individuals but also responsible and reflective human beings. In this context, philosophy functions not only as theoretical reflection but also as a critical framework for evaluating educational aims and practices.

Compared with contemporary pragmatic approaches that prioritize technical efficiency and

labor-market outcomes, the philosophical perspective offers a broader orientation by emphasizing meaning, ethics, and humanity. This finding is consistent with Noddings (2016), who argues that education without philosophical reflection risks losing its moral and humanistic dimensions. Thus, the current educational crisis can be interpreted not only as a technical problem but also as a crisis of philosophical orientation.

2. Philosophy of Education as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice

This study demonstrates that philosophy of education acts as a conceptual bridge connecting abstract philosophical ideas with educational practice. The findings reinforce Jalaluddin's (2020) argument that philosophy of education provides the basis for curriculum development, learning methods, and educational objectives. However, this study extends previous discussions by emphasizing that philosophy of education should not only function administratively or pedagogically, but also critically examine the assumptions underlying modern educational systems.

This interpretation is aligned with Carr (2021), who views philosophy of education as a form of critical inquiry rather than merely a theoretical branch of philosophy. In many contemporary educational systems, educational practice tends to focus heavily on measurable achievement and standardization. From a philosophical perspective, such tendencies may reduce education into a technical process while neglecting moral formation and reflective consciousness. Therefore, integrating philosophical reflection into educational practice becomes increasingly important in maintaining the humanistic purpose of education.

3. Islamic Educational Philosophy and the Integration of Revelation and Reason

One of the major findings of this study is that Islamic educational philosophy offers a more integrative epistemological framework by combining revelation, reason, and empirical experience. This finding supports Al-Attas (2018), who argues that Islamic education is fundamentally aimed at integrating knowledge and values. Unlike secular educational paradigms that often separate religion from scientific inquiry, Islamic educational philosophy views all forms of knowledge as interconnected within a divine framework.

This integrative perspective is particularly relevant in responding to the dichotomy between religious and general sciences. Muhaimin (2015) discussed the problem of educational dualism in Islamic institutions, yet his analysis focused primarily on curriculum integration. The present study expands this discussion by demonstrating that the issue is not merely curricular, but deeply philosophical and epistemological. Without reconstructing the philosophical foundations of education, curriculum integration alone may remain superficial.

Furthermore, the concept of *insan kamil* identified in this study can be interpreted as an educational ideal that balances intellectual achievement, spirituality, morality, and social responsibility. This interpretation differs from reductionistic models of education that measure success mainly through academic or economic productivity. In this sense, Islamic educational philosophy contributes a holistic conception of humanity that is highly relevant in the era of globalization and technological transformation.

4. Ontological, Epistemological, and Axiological Integration in Education

The discussion of ontology, epistemology, and axiology reveals that these three dimensions are inseparable in building a comprehensive educational system. Ontologically, Islamic educational philosophy understands human beings as both physical and spiritual entities, which implies that education should develop all human potentials in a balanced way. This interpretation contrasts with materialistic educational paradigms that prioritize cognitive and economic aspects over spiritual and moral development.

Epistemologically, the inclusion of revelation as a source of knowledge broadens the framework of modern education, which is often dominated by rational-empirical approaches. This finding supports Halstead's (2018) argument that Islamic epistemology provides an alternative to secular educational paradigms by integrating ethical and transcendental dimensions into knowledge production.

From an axiological perspective, this study confirms that education must be oriented toward values and ethical responsibility. Knowledge is not value-neutral, but should contribute to human welfare and moral development. This interpretation is consistent with Huda et al. (2020), who emphasize that Islamic education has strong potential for character formation when supported by a philosophical foundation rooted in ethical values.

5. Implications for Contemporary Educational Systems

The findings suggest that the integration of philosophy, philosophy of education, and Islamic educational philosophy has significant implications for contemporary educational reform. First, it supports the development of value-based curricula that integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Second, it strengthens character education by placing ethics and responsibility at the center of learning. Third, it provides a philosophical framework for overcoming the dichotomy between religious and general sciences.

Compared with previous studies such as Barnadib (2017), which mainly emphasized the importance of philosophical consistency in education, this study offers a more integrative model by explicitly connecting philosophy, educational philosophy, and Islamic educational philosophy into a unified framework. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies not only in conceptual clarification but also in proposing a holistic philosophical structure for contemporary education.

Table 1. Conceptual Analysis of Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, and Philosophy of Islamic Education

Aspects	Philosophy	Philosophy of Education	Islamic Philosophy of Education
Definition	A study of the nature of reality, knowledge, and values in general.	A branch of philosophy that examines education critically and in depth.	Systematic thinking based on the Qur'an and Hadith regarding education.
Ontological	Universal and rational reality.	The reality of education as a process of human	Reality encompasses the physical world and

		formation.	divinity (revelation).
Epistemological	Reason and sensory experience.	Reason and critical reflection on educational practice.	Revelation, reason, and experience.
Axiological	The value of truth and universal ethics.	Moral and human values in education.	The value of monotheism and noble character.
Purpose	Seeking ultimate truth.	Developing human potential.	Shaping Insan Kamil (perfect human).
Role	Foundations of fundamental thinking.	Fundamentals of educational theory and policy.	Integration of knowledge and Islamic values.
Characteristics	Critical and universal.	Applicable and reflective.	Integrative (revelation + reason).

Table 2. Relationships in the Education System

Dimension	Filsafat Philosophy	Philosophy of Education	Islamic Educational Philosophy
Ontological	The nature of reality and existence.	The essence of education as a process of formation.	Divine dimension, education based on spiritual values.
Epistemological	Sources and methods of knowledge.	Reflective thinking methods in education.	Integration of revelation and reason, integrative curriculum.
Axiological	Ethical and aesthetic values.	The value of education and human development.	Islamic values, moral/character education.
Functional	Foundations of basic thinking.	Educational applications and policies.	Perfection of values, holistic education system.
Practical	Direction of general thought.	The learning process in schools.	Character formation/Generation of ulul albab.

CONCLUSION

Based on the conceptual analysis that has been carried out, it can be concluded that philosophy, the philosophy of education, and the philosophy of Islamic education have an integral relationship within the education system. Philosophy functions as the basic foundation that provides ontological, epistemological, and axiological direction, while the philosophy of education serves as an applicative bridge in formulating educational theory and practice. Meanwhile, the philosophy of Islamic education perfects this framework by incorporating the values of revelation as a source of absolute truth.

The implications of this relationship indicate that the ideal education system is one that is able to harmoniously integrate these three aspects. Therefore, an educational reconstruction is needed that is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects, but also includes moral and spiritual dimensions. Thus, education is expected to produce individuals who are not only intellectually competent, but also possess character and are grounded in the values of monotheism.

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations can be proposed. First, educational institutions need to strengthen the philosophical foundation of curriculum development by integrating intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions in a balanced manner. Second, educators should apply reflective and dialogical learning approaches, such as critical discussion, *hiwar*, and *mudzakarah*, in order to encourage students' critical thinking while maintaining ethical and religious values. Third, policymakers should promote integrative educational policies that reduce the dichotomy between religious sciences and general sciences, particularly in Islamic educational institutions. In addition, character education should not merely function as a complementary program, but become an essential component embedded in all educational processes.

Furthermore, this study still has limitations because it is primarily conceptual and literature-based. Therefore, future studies are recommended to conduct empirical research examining the implementation of integrative philosophical models in schools, *pesantren*, and universities. Comparative studies between Islamic and Western educational philosophies are also important to explore the relevance of philosophical integration in responding to globalization and technological development. Moreover, future research may investigate how the concept of *insan kamil* can be operationalized in contemporary curricula and learning systems to create education that is holistic, adaptive, and value-oriented.

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