

# PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ALI AHMAD MADKUR: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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## Abstract

*This article employs a critical analysis method to elucidate Ali Ahmad Madkur's views on the philosophy of Islamic education. In this study, we delve into an in-depth analysis of his writings and thoughts, focusing on philosophical concepts he deems controversial. Madkur's seemingly antipathetic stance toward the philosophy of Islamic education is expounded, emphasizing the potential deviation of pure Islamic values through the application of philosophical concepts. The research method encompasses literature review and analysis of Madkur's primary texts. We also consider the practical consequences of Madkur's views on the implementation of Islamic education. In the context of constructive dialogue and continuous reflection, this article provides space for understanding different perspectives and encourages profound considerations regarding the integration of Islamic values with contemporary educational needs.*

**Keywords:** *Ali Ahmad Madkur; Philosophy of Islamic Education; Critical Analysis.*

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is a domain that continues to experience development and transformation along with the dynamics of the times. In the face of various contemporary challenges, the ideas underlying the philosophy of Islamic

education are very important to be reviewed and updated. One of the figures who made a major contribution in this context is Ali Ahmad Madkur, a contemporary Islamic thinker known for his critical and progressive thinking.

Madkur's thinking in Islamic educational philosophy offers a fresh and relevant perspective in facing the complexities of the modern world. His works not only discuss theoretical aspects but also provide direction for practical implementation in the Islamic education system. Therefore, this article aims to conduct a critical analysis of Islamic educational philosophy thought from Madkur's point of view.

In this study, the general context of Madkur's thought, the background of the significance of Islamic educational philosophy thought, and the conceptual framework on which this research is based will be presented. A deep understanding of Madkur's contribution in overcoming the problems of contemporary Islamic education is expected to make a valuable contribution to further development in this field.

By detailing Madkur's concepts, this study seeks to open up new insights into how Islamic educational philosophy can be implemented in a more effective and relevant way in the face of changing times. Therefore, through a critical analysis of Madkur's thought, it is hoped that solutions and recommendations can be found that can improve the quality of Islamic education in this modern era.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a library research design to explore and analyze the philosophy of Islamic education from the perspective of Ali Ahmad Madkur. The data used in this study were obtained from various written sources such as books, journal articles, conference papers, and other written works relevant to the research topic. Data analysis was conducted through the content analysis method, which allows the researchers to identify the main themes and key concepts in Madkur's thought. This analysis process involves the

stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In collecting data, the researchers conducted a comprehensive literature search to identify Madkur's main works as well as supporting literature that provided more context and understanding of his thoughts.

After the data is collected, the researchers reduce the data by sorting relevant and significant information from various sources. Information that is irrelevant or does not support the research objectives eliminated. Furthermore, the reduced data is presented in the form of a structured descriptive narrative to facilitate further understanding and analysis. Conclusions are then drawn by interpreting the main findings of the content analysis, as well as relating them to the context of contemporary Islamic education. The researchers also examine how Madkur's thinking can be implemented practically in the Islamic education system, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of his approach.

The validity of the data in this study is guaranteed through the source triangulation technique, which is by comparing and contrasting information from various different sources to ensure consistency and accuracy of the findings. The researchers also conduct a critical review of the existing literature to avoid bias and ensure that the analysis carried out is objective and valid.

With this methodology, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive understanding of Ali Ahmad Madkur's contribution to the philosophy of Islamic education and its relevance in facing educational challenges in the modern era.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Philosophy of Education in the View of Ali Ahmad Madkur**

In terms of language, there are many definitions of philosophy. In Arabic, it is referred to as *falsafah* whose root comes from the Greek language, namely *philosophia* which is interpreted as love of something wise. Philosophy is

basically intended as a radical desire to seek an essential truth so that those who find it will find a way to be wise (Tafsir, 2016:9-10).

Educational philosophy is a special group of philosophies in which it discusses an in-depth analysis of all educational concepts, comprehensively explored with the support of research, both quantitative and qualitative. The philosophy of education is in charge of examining education as a science. The philosophy of education is raised as a measure of the education system itself (Mudyaharjo, 2012:3-8). Philosophy of education is defined as a science whose existence is the answer to various problems in the world of education, whose task is to be a philosophical analyst for education and its devices (Barnadib, 2013:14-15).

Philosophy in education has various schools, namely realism, pragmatism, and idealism. When equated with general philosophy, it is found that the schools of philosophy of education and general philosophy are the same. Thus, there is a general school of philosophy, and its own school of educational philosophy. Just as there is a philosophy of general pragmatism, there is also a philosophy of educational pragmatism (Madkur, 2002:36).

The philosophy of education reflects the various schools that exist in general philosophy. Each school in general philosophy can be applied and adapted in the context of education, creating a unique approach in educational philosophy. Some of the main schools in general philosophy that are often adapted in educational philosophy include realism, pragmatism, and idealism (Habibah, 2018:41).

Realism in education focuses on objective and observable reality. This school emphasizes the importance of facts and direct connections with the real world in the teaching and learning process (Yulianti, et al., 2023). Realism-based education prioritizes hands-on experience, experimentation, and fact-based learning (Syarifah, 2018:305). Teachers are expected to act as facilitators who help students understand the real world through a scientific and empirical approach (Rahmawati & Suryadi, 2019). In the context of Islamic education, realism can be

realized through teaching that emphasizes *kauniyah* verses (signs of nature) interpreted from the Qur'an and combined with modern science (Hasan, 2001:51-60).

Pragmatism in education emphasizes on the results and effectiveness of educational practices in real life. This school emphasizes the importance of practical experience and action as the basis of knowledge (Cholid, 2018). Pragmatic education aims to produce individuals who are able to adapt and solve problems in daily life (Kosasih, 2022:98). Pragmatic curricula tend to be flexible and student-centered, with an emphasis on project, group work, and problem-based learning (Nidawati, 2022:423). In Islamic education, pragmatism can be applied by integrating Islamic values in daily practical activities and the development of life skills relevant to Islamic teachings (Saidah, 2020: 16-28).

Idealism in education emphasizes the importance of universal ideas and values that are considered higher than physical reality. This school focuses on the moral, ethical, and intellectual development of students. Idealism-based education seeks to shape students' character and disposition in accordance with noble values and high spiritual goals (Nurmalina & Wahab, 2024:580). Teachers serve as mentors who help students reach their maximum potential through a deep understanding of truth and beauty (Mufidah & Sholehuddin, 2023:64). In Islamic education, idealism is reflected in teaching that emphasizes noble morals, spirituality, and the cultivation of deep Islamic values (Mahfud, 2019:618).

In the application of these schools of philosophy, it is important to consider the cultural and social context in which education takes place. Each school has its own advantages and disadvantages, and a combination of different schools is often necessary to create a balanced education system (Al-Azri, 2020). Islamic philosophy of education, for example, can integrate elements of realism, pragmatism, and idealism to create a comprehensive approach that focuses not only on mastery of science but also on the development of students' character and spirituality (Al-Momani, 2019:256).

By understanding the different schools of philosophy in education, we can develop a more adaptive and relevant education system in the face of contemporary challenges. Ali Ahmad Madkur's thought, which is critical and progressive, can make a significant contribution in developing a philosophical approach to Islamic education that is relevant to the needs of modern times. A critical analysis of Madkur's thinking can help identify effective ways to implement Islamic educational philosophy in an ever-changing global context, ensuring that Islamic values remain relevant and effective in shaping future generations with competence and noble character.

One of the functions of philosophy in education is to explore various theories of education itself. Theory in a general perspective is the interpretation of a number of problems that occurred in the past, present, and future based on beliefs that are fixed or may change according to conditions and situations (McMurray, 1955:129). Theoretical description in a deeper sense is an attempt to explain a number of hypotheses or laws of nature by placing them in a general frame of mind (Cornford, 1991:200). The theory of education is defined as a collection of interrelated principles in carrying out the educational process and regulating teaching practices (Iskandar, 2013:13).

Basically, theory is descriptive and serves as the basis for a plan and evaluates the final results received after its work. Scientific theory and educational theory according to Paul Hertz should be separated, because the basis of these two aspects is different. If scientific theories are based on experience and planning tested, then educational theories are based on philosophy (Adnan & Hamim, 2014:54).

This difference is important to understand because the approach taken in developing and applying these theories will greatly affect their results and implementation in the field (Pusic, et al., 2018). Educational theory, with its philosophical foundation, requires us to reflect on the fundamental values and goals that we want to achieve in the educational process (Baquero, 2023). It

includes ethical and moral aspects that are often not seen in scientific theories that are more focused on empirical data and facts. For example, in the context of Islamic education, educational theories should consider the spiritual and moral values taught by religion, which aim not only to improve academic knowledge but also to form good character (Al-Farabi, et al., 2023). By understanding and appreciating these differences, we can be more thoughtful in designing curricula and teaching methods that are not only scientifically effective but also philosophically and ethically meaningful.

Referring to Moore (1974), Ali Ahmad Madhkur likened the relationship between philosophy and educational theory to a building that has three floors. On the first floor, there are various kinds of teaching and learning activities that are real practices of daily education. The second floor is filled with educational theories that function as organizers and planners of activities under it, providing a framework and guidance for the implementation of educational activities. On the third floor, the philosophy of education is present as an analyst and limiter of what happens on its lower two floors, ensuring that all activities and theories applied are in accordance with fundamental principles and values (Madkur:37).

The analogy shows how the philosophy of education provides the foundation and direction for educational theory, which in turn guides educational practice (Siwak, 2021:156). This means that any action in education cannot stand alone without a strong theoretical foundation and in-depth philosophical analysis. In this context, Islamic education, for example, must be based on a philosophy that pays attention to the spiritual and moral values taught by the religion, ensuring that every theory and practice applied is in line with the teachings and principles of Islam (Zakariyah, 2022:20-39). Thus, a deep understanding of the relationship between philosophy and educational theory allows us to design and implement education that is not only effective but also deeply meaningful, encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects.

From the above opinion, Ali Ahmad Madkur argues that the concept of western education is actually based on theories that lead to the correct flow of education according to them, and philosophy is used as the highest reference for the direction of education. If that is the case, then, in his view, it is not appropriate if Islamic education is equated with the concept of western-style education (Supriani, et al., 2021:698).

Islamic education has a different foundation, where religious values and spirituality play a major role. In Islamic education, the main goal is not only to transfer knowledge, but also to form a good character and develop spiritual awareness (Alirahman, et al., 2023). Therefore, the theory and practice of Islamic education must be based on the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, as well as the thoughts of scholars who have interpreted these texts according to the context of the times. This approach emphasizes that education is not only seen as an academic process but also as a process of forming a whole human being (Aflisia, et al., 2021:60). As such, it is important to design a curriculum and teaching method that not only imparts knowledge but also instills strong moral and ethical values.

It also means that Islamic education must be flexible and adaptive to the changing times, without sacrificing its basic principles (Hasanah & Abbas, 2023:98). The integration of multicultural values and Islamic education, for example, is an important step to face the challenges of globalization. Islamic education must be able to open itself to cultural diversity and global thought, while still maintaining the identity and basic values taught by the religion (Bahri, et al., 2024:115). In this way, Islamic education can make a significant contribution in creating a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also of noble character and ready to face global challenges wisely and responsibly.

In essence, western education and Islamic education cannot be paralleled. This is because the references between western and Islamic scientists are clearly different. Philosophy is the pinnacle of western civilization thought, while Islam



has the Quran and Hadith as a guide and guideline for life. this is what makes Ali Ahmad Madkur refuse to accept every western theory, because he sees that everything that is not returned to the main reference of Islam will be rejected.

"أما هم قد قطعوا كل صلاحهم بالدين, فلم يبق لهم غير الفلسفة النظرية.

فما يجوز عليهم لا يجوز علينا"

Western educational approaches are often rooted in a philosophy that emphasizes rationality and empiricism, while Islamic education is grounded in divine revelation that includes spiritual and moral dimensions (Kania, et al., 2017). Ali Ahmad Madkur emphasized that Western educational theories are not always in accordance with Islamic values and principles. Therefore, it is important for Muslims to develop educational theories that are rooted in Islamic teachings and in accordance with the cultural and social context of Muslims (Saifudin, 2021:314).

Islamic education emphasizes the formation of noble character, the development of good morals, and the understanding and practice of religious teachings. Meanwhile, Western education focuses more on the development of intellectual and technical skills (Syakhrani, 2021:84). This does not mean that Islamic education ignores the intellectual aspect, but rather emphasizes the balance between intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. By rejecting Western theories that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings, Ali Ahmad Madkur encourages the development of educational theories based on the Qur'an and Hadith. It aims to ensure that the education provided to the young generation of Muslims not only produces academically intelligent individuals but also has strong moral and spiritual integrity (Setiawan & Suhartini, 2024:173).

In facing the challenges of globalization, Islamic education must be able to adapt to the changing times without sacrificing its basic principles (Saada, 2023). The integration of multicultural values in the Islamic education curriculum is one way to prepare the young generation to interact with the global world, while still

maintaining Islamic identity and values (Samsuri & Marzuki, 2016). Thus, Islamic education can contribute to shaping individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also of noble character and ready to face global challenges wisely.

Ali Ahmad Madkur quotes Ibn 'Abdil Barr in his book, *Jami'u bayanil 'ilmi wa fadhlih* that indeed philosophers divide science into higher science, intermediate science, and lower science, and then philosophy is made the highest science because it is considered to cover all aspects of life, by not quoting anything from the book of Allah and the words of His prophets. Here is the excerpt:

"إن أهل الفلسفة قد قسموا العلوم إلى علم أعلى وعلم أوسط و علم أسفل وجعلوا الفلسفة هي العلم الأعلى لأن هذا العلم عندهم يرتبط بأمور قد أغنت عن الكلام فيها كتاب الله الناطقة بالحق المنزلة بالصدق وما صح عن الأنبياء صلوات الله عليهم."

Ali Ahmad Madkur straightforwardly states that this is a common thing in the West, but it is not relevant to the concept of Islamic life. In fact, Madkur opposes the opinion of some Islamic thinkers who have been in the western environment for a long time, which he says insists on expressing the opinion that Muslim scholars should also philosophize as the west does, and that we should theorize as they should.

Ali Ahmad Madkur adds that Muslims should not touch philosophy and free theory. This is because he clung to previous generations of Muslims who were actually able to rule the world without philosophy and theory. His opinion is also strengthened by the words of Allah in the Qur'an surah ali 'Imran: 110, al-isra: 9, and the words of the Prophet (*pbuh*) about him leaving us the Quran and the Sunnah as a way of life. Madkur added that Muslim philosophers who emerged

later were too bold to follow the Greece model of philosophy which was considered very far from the purity of Islamic teachings.

Madkur asserts that Muslim philosophers who emerged later were too bold to follow the Greece model of philosophy, which ultimately led them away from the pure teachings of Islam. He reminded that the superiority of Islamic civilization in the past was achieved without relying on philosophy or free theories that are not based on the Quran and Sunnah.

Education and science in Islam must adhere to the main sources of Islamic teachings, which have been proven to produce a strong, knowledgeable, and noble generation (Azhari, et al., 2022:1). Madkur invites Muslims to return to the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah as the main guidelines in all aspects of life, including in education and scientific development. According to him, only in this way can Muslims achieve true glory and still maintain the purity of Islamic teachings.

In facing the challenges of globalization, it is important for Muslims to stick to the basic principles of religion and not be influenced by concepts that are contrary to the teachings of Islam (Beribe, 2023:54). Islamic education must be designed in such a way that it is able to produce individuals who are not only intellectually competent, but also have strong moral and spiritual integrity, and are ready to face various challenges wisely (Zuhaeriah, et al, 2020). Thus, Islamic education can continue to make a significant contribution to the development of human civilization based on the values of truth and justice.

## **Philosophy and Theory of Islamic Education**

In the sub-chapter of his writing, Ali Ahmad Madkur discusses about philosophers who tried to come up with the concept of Islamic education theory. His opinion is as follows:

As there are those who argue the importance of realizing the philosophy of Islamic education, there are also those who consider it important to create Islamic education theories. Although my Islamic orientation is clear, I have

not been able to escape the pressure of cultural remnants from foreign sources that obscure my sense of Islam, obscure my perception, and make me lose my clear vision. With God's help, the picture became clear, or so at least I imagined. There are those who try to build a theory of Islamic education similar to Western theory, but it is different from the theory which is fixed and irresistible. Some prominent scholars believe that this theory is based on wisdom, which is a set of interconnected principles that Islam brings to guide educational practice (Madkur:39)."

The theory of Islamic education is sought by Islamic thinkers to refer to at least four things, namely the Quran and Sunnah, past literature, scientific studies of previous thinkers, and empirical data from scientific research (Khodijah, et al., 2023:1593). First, the Quran and Sunnah are the main sources and the most fundamental foundation in formulating Islamic educational theories (Khaeroni, 2017:195). The Quran provides guidance on the ethical, moral, and spiritual values that should be taught, while the Sunnah of the Prophet provides practical examples of how these teachings can be applied in daily life (Aisiyah, et al., 2022:55). Second, the literature of the past which includes the works of classical scholars and Muslim scholars of the past contain knowledge and wisdom that have stood the test of time and provide valuable insights into how education can and should be carried out within the framework of Islam (Al-Areqi, 2016:682). Third, the scientific study of previous thinkers such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Khaldun have made significant contributions in the field of education by integrating science and religious teachings. The study of their works helps to enrich the theory of Islamic education with an in-depth and comprehensive perspective (Hassan, 2018:43). Fourth, empirical data from scientific research is also important in developing Islamic education theory. Empirical research provides concrete evidence about the effectiveness of teaching methods, child development, and various other aspects of education. This data helps to ensure that the educational theories developed are not only in accordance with Islamic teachings but also effective and relevant in the modern context.

However, Ali Ahmad Madkur is of the view that if the theory is forced to be present, there will be several risks that he describes as follows:

1. There will be a mixture of sources of teaching. The proposed theory combines the main sources of Islamic teachings (the Quran and the Sunnah) with the opinions of scholars and other things, or between God's revelation and the results of *ijtihad*. This is based on the opinion that God's revelation is fixed and true while human beings are where various errors arise.
2. It is impossible to make historical literature and educational studies from scholars as mandatory sources in developing the concept of Islamic education and all its aspects while the Quran is a perfect book.
3. It is impossible to make the opinions of Islamic leaders as an absolute reference for education. Their opinion is an *ijtihad*. How to anticipate problems during life is their way of educating, but it cannot be a standard reference.
4. The scientific approach with empirical research and proven to be good. But still we cannot refer to it as a guideline for Islamic education. The Qur'an is our grip. As has been explained, the understanding of Islam is very different from western philosophy (Madkur:39-40).

Ali Ahmad Madkur then quotes the opinion of Sayyid Quthb:

Let every believer of this religion know that this religion is the religion of God and how to carry it out should also be in the way of God. It is impossible to completely separate religion from daily activities. In short, let us return to the pure teachings of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, without the need for philosophy and theory."

This opinion emphasizes that Islam as a religion cannot be separated from daily life. According to Quthb, because Islam is the religion of God, the practice of its teachings must be in accordance with the way that God has determined, namely through the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Ibrahim, 2017:103). He emphasized that separating religion from daily activities is impossible and incompatible with the essence of Islam itself.

Madkur supports this view by pointing out that education and science in Islam must return to the main sources of Islamic teachings (Najili et al., 2022:310). Philosophy and theories that are not based on the Quran and Sunnah are considered unnecessary and can even be misleading. Madkur emphasizes that Islamic education must be based on the pure teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah to ensure that it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with Islamic values (Maman, et al., 2022).

Quoting Sayyid Quthb, Madkur warns Muslims not to get caught up in thoughts and theories that come from outside Islam, especially those that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings. He invited Muslims to return to pure teachings, which have been proven to be able to form strong, noble, and knowledgeable individuals and societies (Nurlaela, 2022:176). By returning to the pure teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, Islamic education can form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has strong moral and spiritual integrity (Sani & Hafidz, 2023:266). This generation will be able to face the challenges of the times wisely and stick to the essential principles of Islam.

## **Analysis of Ali Ahmad Madkur's Ideas**

When referring to the opinions of scholars, there are many opinions about the position of philosophy (Masang, 2020:30). Below are some of the points of view that are commonly expressed about philosophy:

1. **Full Acceptance:** Some Islamic scholars, such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (*Avicenna*), and Ibn Rushd (*Averroes*), advocate philosophical inquiry and consider it a tool to achieve a deeper understanding of reality. They see philosophy as a means of explaining certain aspects of truth that may not be attainable through scientific or religious methods (Zubaedi, 2012:22-23).
2. **Limited Acceptance:** Some scholars are more cautious about philosophy and find it useful as long as it does not contradict the teachings of Islam. They may accept philosophical concepts that conform to religious teachings and reject anything that is considered to be contradictory.

3. Total Rejection: Some scholars, especially in the Salafi tradition or those who adhere to a literal understanding of religious texts, may reject philosophy as unnecessary or even damaging to religious beliefs. They argue that the main source of knowledge and wisdom should come from the Qur'an and Hadith (Syam, 2017:125).
4. Synthesis: Some figures such as Al-Ghazali attempted to synthesize between Islamic philosophy and theology. Al-Ghazali, for example, wrote works such as *tahafut al falasifah*, which criticized the philosophical arguments of Aristotle, but at the same time he also recognized the value of philosophy in the search for knowledge.

Referring to the four divisions above, it can be identified that Ali Ahmad Madkur in this case can be included in the group that refuses completely. However, when examined further, his opinion is not in fact a total personal opinion, but also quotes from sources that in terms of Islamic thought are indeed in line with his opinion.

One example of the similarity of Ali Ahmad Madkur's thinking with other scholars can be seen in his statement quoted from the writings of Sayid Quthb:

"Islamic education is basically a positive transformation process. In the historical context, this transformation is considered the implementation of God's plan that began since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Islamic education, which is essentially linked to positive change, is often identified with da'wah activities. Da'wah is interpreted as an effort to convey Islamic teachings. Since the first revelation received, especially through the Iqra' (reading) program, Islamic education has practically emerged, developed, and become an integral part of the lives of Muslims (Quthb, 2005:38)."

The above quote is just one of many examples of Ali Ahmad Madkur's common opinion with fundamentalist Muslim scholars. If he referred to the opinion of Sayid Quthb, then he will have a linearity of opinion with Muslim Brotherhood thinkers such as Hasan al-Banna and other Muslim thinkers such as Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardhawi. On this basis, it is natural that his opinion seems antipathetic to the emergence of Islamic educational philosophy and all its devices.

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion of Ali Ahmad Madkur's thoughts above, the authors summarize as follows:

1. Ali Ahmad Madkur has consistently shown a critical attitude towards the philosophy of Islamic education. His view of philosophy may be based on his concern that philosophical aspects could lead to deviations from the fundamental values of Islam.
2. In Madkur's perspective, there seems to be a strong emphasis on the authenticity and purity of Islamic values. His disagreement with the philosophy of education may reflect his belief that these methods can affect the essence of Islamic teachings.
3. Madkur's antipathy to the philosophy of education can have consequences for the practice of Islamic education. His rejection of philosophical aspects may reflect the urge to preserve the authenticity and sanctity of Islamic teachings in the context of education.
4. Despite disagreement with philosophy, it is important to keep room open for constructive dialogue. This makes it possible to understand different viewpoints and creates a stage for new thinking that can enrich our collective understanding of Islamic education.
5. Ali Ahmad Madkur's thinking triggers constant reflection on the role of philosophy in Islamic education. This invites us to continue to explore and formulate educational approaches that are in accordance with religious values without ignoring contemporary developments.

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