



## CRISIS OF SPIRITUALITY AND RATIONALITY BALANCE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF K.H. AHMAD DAHLAN'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to philosophically analyze K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought as a solution to the crisis in balancing spirituality and rationality within Islamic education. This crisis originates from the dichotomy between religious sciences (ulum ad-din) and general sciences (ulum al-kaun), which leads to value disorientation and weak integration within the Islamic education system. The study uses qualitative methods with a library research design and a hermeneutic-philosophical analysis approach. Data is obtained from the works of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, biographical literature, and relevant previous research. Analysis is conducted through data reduction, thematic categorization based on ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions, and the interpretation of meaning using the framework of educational philosophy. The study reveals that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan developed an integrative educational philosophy that rejects scientific dualism and emphasizes the unity of revelation and reason. Ontologically, humans are viewed as spiritual-rational beings; epistemologically, knowledge derives from revelation and empirical reality; axiologically, knowledge must be realized in social practice. The novelty of this research lies in the systematic reconstruction of Dahlan's educational philosophy as a conceptual model relevant for the reform of modern Islamic education. This thought offers an integrative paradigm for developing value-based curricula, spiritual-digital literacy, and transformative social learning.*

**Key word:** K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, Islamic Educational Philosophy, Knowledge Integration, Spirituality and Rationality, Modern Education.

## A. Introduction

The discourse on global Islamic education has been historically characterized by latent tensions between the dimensions of spirituality and rationality. This problem of dualism, which sharply separates religious sciences (*ulum ad-din*) from general sciences (*ulum al-kaun*), continues to be a crucial discourse among contemporary Muslim thinkers<sup>1</sup>. The consequence of this dichotomy is the emergence of two unbalanced prototypes of graduates: on one side, individuals who possess spiritual depth but are alienated from scientific progress and critical reasoning; on the other side, individuals who are rational and master modern knowledge but experience value disorientation and spiritual emptiness.<sup>2</sup> This crisis ultimately hinders the realization of Islamic education's goal to form the perfect human being (*insan kamil*)<sup>3</sup> who is capable of performing their function as caliph holistically on earth.<sup>4</sup>

Specifically, this educational dualism crisis crystallized sharply in the Dutch East Indies at the beginning of the 20th century, a historical context whose analysis continues to be updated by historians.<sup>5</sup> Muslims were confronted with two diametrically different educational institutional models: the traditional *pesantren* system and colonial secular schools. *Pesantren*, as a fortress defending Islamic values, focused their curriculum on the transmission of classical religious sciences, which tended to emphasize the authority of texts and tradition.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, schools established by the colonial government offered modern education based on empirical rationality, but consciously separated the learning process from religious values, which many considered as a tool of westernization.<sup>7</sup> This condition created an acute dilemma for Muslim society who desired progress without having to sacrifice their Islamic identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Rahim Karim et al., "Exploring The Rationality of Religious-Rational Islamic Thinkers Towards The Compatibility of The Islamic Education System," Karim, A. R., Hasanuddin, M. I., Fuad, A. Z., Abu Bakar, M. Y., Muhaemin, M., & Arifuddin, A. (2024). Exploring The Rationality of Re," *Tarbiyah: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 13, no. 2 (2024): 187–208, <https://doi.org/10.18592/tarbiyah.v13i2.13638>.

<sup>2</sup> Septyana Tentiasih, Khozin Khozin, and Nur Hakim, "Analyzing KH Ahmad Dahlan's Ideas on Progressive Islamic Education within the Muhammadiyah Framework," *Potret Pemikiran* 27, no. 2 (2023): 201, <https://doi.org/10.30984/pp.v27i2.2779>.

<sup>3</sup> Maraulang Maraulang, "KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement," *International Journal of Asian Education* 6, no. 1 (2025): 164–75, <https://doi.org/10.46966/ijae.v6i1.427>.

<sup>4</sup> Basri Asyibli et al., "Epistemological Dimensions in Islamic Educational Philosophy: A Critical Analysis," *Journal of Islamic Education Research* 6, no. 1 (2025): 69–84, <https://doi.org/10.35719/jier.v6i1.464>.

<sup>5</sup> Irwandi Siregar et al., "The Impact of Colonialism on the Islamic Education System: Changes in Education Systems in Colonized Regions Such as Indonesia, India, and North Africa," *Mauriduna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2024): 398–406, <https://doi.org/10.37274/mauriduna.v5i2.1201>.

<sup>6</sup> Awang Ringgit Elyza Devi Reno Andika, "Education System in Indonesia," *Education System in Indonesia* 1 (2009), [http://www.indonesianembassy.org.uk/education/education\\_system1.html](http://www.indonesianembassy.org.uk/education/education_system1.html).

<sup>7</sup> Siregar et al., "The Impact of Colonialism on the Islamic Education System: Changes in Education Systems in Colonized Regions Such as Indonesia, India, and North Africa."

Although K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational thought has been extensively studied, recent studies show a shift in focus.<sup>8</sup> While previous research tended to focus on the historical-sociological aspects of his movement or the institutional impact of Muhammadiyah, newer research has begun to explore the relevance of his ideas in the context of contemporary challenges.<sup>9</sup> This research takes a different position by offering in-depth educational philosophy analysis as the main analytical tool.<sup>10</sup> The novelty of this article lies in the effort to deconstruct the ontological, epistemological, and axiological framework of Dahlan's thought, rather than merely describing his educational products.<sup>11</sup> Thus, this research aims to fill the academic gap by dissecting how philosophically Dahlan built a conceptual bridge between spirituality and rationality, as a fundamental solution to the educational crisis of his time.<sup>12</sup>

To analyze this thought, this article uses the theoretical framework of educational philosophy as the analytical foundation. Educational philosophy is an approach that examines the nature, purposes, and fundamental problems in education, a field that continues to develop to address modern issues. The analysis will focus on three main branches of philosophy<sup>13</sup>: ontology, to examine Dahlan's view of the nature of the ideal human being and the purpose of their creation; epistemology, to trace his view of the sources, validity, and classification of knowledge; and axiology, to explore the fundamental values and ultimate goals to be achieved through his educational system, which are manifested in the concepts of scholarly practice (*amal ilmiah*) and practical knowledge (*ilmu amaliah*).<sup>14</sup>

The main objective of writing this article is to dissect and systematically formulate the structure of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy as an integrative model in addressing the crisis of balance between spirituality and rationality. More specifically, this research aims to (1) identify the philosophical roots of educational dichotomy during Dahlan's era, (2) reconstruct the ontological, epistemological, and axiological arguments

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<sup>8</sup> Alimuddin Ali, "Islamic Education Thoughts of Kh. Ahmad Dahlan At the Yamisa Islamic Boarding School in 1968," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.22373/ijihc.v4i1.1449>.

<sup>9</sup> Maraulang, "KH. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement."

<sup>10</sup> Muaddyl Akhyar and Iipi Zukdi, "Ahmad Dahlan's Thoughts on Education as a Means of Empowering the People," *World Journal of Islamic Learning and Teaching* 2, no. 1 (2025): 1–12.

<sup>11</sup> Ratna Etikasari Agus, "Islamic Education According to Ahmad Dahlan's Perspective: Contribution and Implementation in A Modern Social Context," *MA'ALIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2024): 232–43, <https://doi.org/10.21154/maalim.v5i2.9896>.

<sup>12</sup> Ali, "Islamic Education Thoughts of Kh. Ahmad Dahlan At the Yamisa Islamic Boarding School in 1968."

<sup>13</sup> Lynette Pretorius, "Demystifying Research Paradigms: Navigating Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Research," *Qualitative Report* 29, no. 10 (2024): 2698–2715, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2024.7632>.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Smith, Trish McCulloch, and Maura Daly, "Being, Knowing and Doing: Aligning Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology to Develop an Account of Social Work as Practice," *Social Work Education* 44, no. 3 (2025): 522–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2024.2330598>.

offered by Dahlan, and (3) formulate the synthesis of his thought as a complete and coherent educational system.

Therefore, this article argues that the solution offered by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan to the Islamic education crisis was not merely a pragmatic compromise between two existing systems, but rather a fundamental philosophical synthesis. He consciously redefined the nature of knowledge (epistemology) as a manifestation of Allah's verses, both *qauliyah* (textual) and *kauniyah* (natural), which must be studied in balance. This synthesis is based on the ontological view that humans are caliphs, who need reason and revelation simultaneously, and is directed by axiological purposes where rationality becomes a tool to actualize spirituality in the form of righteous deeds that are transformative for society.

## B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach,<sup>15</sup> specifically guided by Creswell and Poth using a library research design that focuses on the analysis of the thoughts of prominent figures.<sup>16</sup> In accordance with this design, the research data sources are entirely derived from literature<sup>17</sup>, consisting of primary sources such as the writings and speech transcripts of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, as well as secondary sources, including biographies, scientific journals, and dissertations examining his thought. The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic documentation study. The collected data is then analyzed using content analysis methods<sup>18</sup> in combination with a philosophical hermeneutic approach to extract deeper meanings from the text. This analytical process interactively involves three main stages: data reduction by codifying key ideas into ontological, epistemological, and axiological frameworks; narrative and structured data presentation; and drawing conclusion.<sup>19</sup> To ensure data validity and the credibility of the analysis, source criticism techniques are applied, consisting of external criticism to verify the authenticity of the sources and internal criticism to assess the validity of their content.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Stefan Rädiker Udo Kuckartz, *Sage Research Methods Qualitative Content Analysis : Methods , Practice and Software*, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> Creswell W. J. and Creswell J. D., *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Research Design Qualitative Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches, Research Design*, vol. 5 (New York: SAGE Publications, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Mariette Bengtsson, "How to Plan and Perform a Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis," *NursingPlus Open 2* (2016): 8–14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001>.

<sup>18</sup> Bengtsson.

<sup>19</sup> a. Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles, "Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook," *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Sourcebook* 47, no. Suppl 4 (2014): 3–16, <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/books/Book239534?siteId=sage-uk>.

<sup>20</sup> K A L Vieira<sup>1</sup> and G M De Queiroz<sup>2</sup>, "Hermeneutic Content Analysis: A Method of Textual Analysis," *Www.Ijbmm.Com International Journal of Business Marketing and Management* 2, no. 8 (2017): 2456–4559, [www.ijbmm.com](http://www.ijbmm.com).

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Philosophical Foundation of Islamic Education The philosophical foundation of Islamic education is centered on realizing the insan kamil (perfect human being) through the processes of tarbiyah (nurturing), ta'lim (teaching), and ta'dib (moral refinement). Philosophically, the primary goal of this education is to foster monotheistic consciousness (tauhid) and the ability to integrate knowledge. Historically, however, educational dualism often emerged, separating religious sciences (naqli) from general sciences (aqli). As a philosophical response, the concept of Integration of Knowledge (Wahdatul Ulum) arose. This concept emphasizes that all knowledge originates from the same source, namely God, and therefore, such a dichotomy should not exist. Education must thus be capable of producing individuals who master both.<sup>21</sup>

Spirituality and Rationality Spirituality in Islamic Education Spirituality (ruhiyah) in Islamic education refers to the inner dimension connected to faith, divine consciousness, and the formation of noble character (akhlak) are the key concepts. This dimension is actualized through moral education and profound acts of worship, which serve to purify the soul (tazkiyatun nufus). The spiritualist perspective emphasizes that the most beneficial knowledge is that which brings one closer to God, making the naqli dimension (revelation/sacred texts) the fundamental basis of knowledge. Failure to strengthen this spiritual dimension can result in intellectually bright individuals who are poor in ethics and faith. Rationality in Islamic Education Rationality ('aqliyah) refers to the use of intellect, logical reasoning, and the scientific method as means to understand reality, encompassing both the universe and the dictates of Sharia. In Islamic tradition, rationality is encouraged through the concept of Ijtihad, where the mind is utilized to find solutions to contemporary problems. Rationality is manifested through the teaching of general sciences (science, mathematics, social studies) with the aim of creating individuals who possess worldly competence ('ulum al-kauniyah) and can contribute to civilizational progress. Without the rational dimension, education can become trapped in dogmatism without the ability to adapt.<sup>22</sup>

The Crisis of Balance is a condition where Islamic education fails to achieve a harmonious integration between the spiritual and rational

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<sup>21</sup> I al-Ghazali et al., *Ringkasan Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Akbar Media Eka Sarana, 2008), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=WT3TDAAAQBAJ>; M.Pd Drs. Muhaimin, MA., Dra. Suti'ah dan Drs. Nur Ali, *Paradigma Pendidikan Islam: Upaya Mengefektifkan Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Sekolah*, PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, vol. 5 (Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=OwGSAAAACAAJ>.

<sup>22</sup> Sa'Dullah Assa'idi, "Religious Education Curriculum in Indonesian Islamic University in the Digital Age: Incepting Thematic Alquran of Fadlur Rahman," *Journal of Social Studies Education Research* 12, no. 3 (2021): 294–311.

dimensions. This crisis manifests in two extreme forms: Literalism/Traditionalism, which tends to neglect the role of intellect and modern science, and Secularism/Materialism, which focuses solely on rational sciences for worldly gain, abandoning spiritual values. This crisis creates incomplete graduates: religious scholars who are clumsy in dealing with modern issues or scientists who have lost their moral compass. The philosophical analysis of this crisis requires a review of the failure of dichotomous educational systems to present a holistic and functional curriculum.<sup>23</sup>

K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's thought emerged as a concrete response to the Crisis of Balance in the Dutch East Indies. His educational philosophy can be understood through two main pillars: Purification (purifying teachings from superstitions and innovations) and Modernization (adopting the rational and organized Western educational system). This effort aimed to produce cadres who were pious ritually (spiritual) and competent professionally (rational). The philosophical implementation is clearly seen in the Muhammadiyah school system, which integrates religious lessons (Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh) with general subjects (mathematics, history, science). The concept of Al-Ma'un serves as the peak of this integration, where spiritual worship (prayer) must be translated into practical, rational social action (education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation), demonstrating that spirituality without practical rationality is incomplete.<sup>24</sup>

## D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Ontological Analysis: The Human as a Complete Caliph

An ontological analysis of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's thought demonstrates that, in his view, humans are spiritual-rational beings who serve as both *abdullah* and *khalifatullah*. These are not two separate roles, but two facets of a single, whole human existence.<sup>25</sup> Dahlan rejected the existential dichotomy between the spiritual and physical dimensions; for him, these aspects coexist and complement each other.<sup>26</sup> Spirituality serves as a source of meaning for rational activities, while rationality acts as the instrument for the actualization of spirituality. Accordingly, the ideal human

<sup>23</sup> Zhenya Ji et al., "A Bilevel Zonal Dispatch Strategy Considering Electric Vehicle Users' Demand Response," *International Journal of Renewable Energy Development* 14, no. 4 (2025): 646–56, <https://doi.org/10.61435/ijred.2025.61159>.

<sup>24</sup> Tentiasih, Khozin, and Hakim, "Analyzing KH Ahmad Dahlan's Ideas on Progressive Islamic Education within the Muhammadiyah Framework."

<sup>25</sup> Wahyu N.Eka Saputra et al., "Social Sensitization with the Teachings of KH Ahmad Dahlan as a Counselor Strategy to Create Peace in School: A Systematic Literature Review," *Pegem Egitim ve Ogretim Dergisi* 13, no. 1 (2022): 135–44, <https://doi.org/10.47750/pegegog.13.01.16>.

<sup>26</sup> Nur Azizah Lubis et al., "Islamic Education in Middle School Perspective KH. Ahmad Dahlan (1868 – 1923 M)," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 20, no. 2 (2021): 111–23, <https://doi.org/10.24014/af.v20i2.13076>.

in Dahlan's perspective is the *insan kamil*, who balances both aspects in social action. This ontological view forms the basis for Dahlan's critique of traditional educational systems that focus solely on ritual worship without social orientation, and at the same time of secular colonial systems that deny the divine dimension in the educational process.<sup>27</sup>

Dahlan emphasized that spirituality is the source of meaning for rational actions, while rationality is the means for the realization of spirituality in the real world. At 1991, this aligns with Al-Attas's view that Islamic education aims to shape *insan adabi* individuals who know and position all things proportionally.<sup>28</sup>

Table 1. Ontological Concept of Humans in K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Thought

Ontological Aspect	Explanation	Educational Implication
Nature of humans	Spiritual and rational beings (caliph and servant of Allah)	Education must foster a balance between intellectual and moral intelligence
Purpose of life	Worship Allah through social action	The curriculum should guide students to become <i>insan kamil</i> playing a social role
Relationship of reason and revelation	Coexistential (complementary)	Learning methods should integrate rationality and spiritual values

Dahlan's ontological approach also serves as a critique of the two extremes of educational systems at the dawn of the 20th century: text-oriented traditional pesantren and secular colonial schools.<sup>29</sup>

### Epistemological Analysis Result: Integration of Qauliyah and Kauniyah Knowledge

Epistemologically, K.H. Ahmad Dahlan presents an original synthesis between revelation and reason.<sup>30</sup> He understands knowledge as the manifestation of Allah's verses in two forms: qauliyah verses (revelation in

<sup>27</sup> Anam Sutopo, Zaki Setiawan, and Harun Joko Prayitno, "Progressive Learning with a Prophetic Approach at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta," *Proceedings of the International Conference of Learning on Advance Education (ICOLAE 2021)* 662, no. Icolae 2021 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220503.133>.

<sup>28</sup> Lubis et al., "Islamic Education in Middle School Perspective KH. Ahmad Dahlan (1868 – 1923 M)."

<sup>29</sup> Sutopo, Setiawan, and Prayitno, "Progressive Learning with a Prophetic Approach at SMA Muhammadiyah PK Surakarta."

<sup>30</sup> Nur Sahlul Mubarak, Muhammad Wildan Shohib, and Hafidz KH Konsep Pendidikan Islam Perspektif Ahmad Dahlan dan Buya Hamka, "AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies Konsep Pendidikan Islam Perspektif KH. Ahmad Dahlan Dan Buya Hamka (Studi Komparatif)," *AL-AFKAR: Journal for Islamic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2024): 970–82, <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v7i3.1574.Concept>.

the Qur'an and Hadith) and kauniyah verses (phenomena in the universe).<sup>31</sup> As a result, all forms of knowledge—be it religious or scientific—hold a sacred status when directed for the collective good.<sup>32</sup>

Dahlan's epistemology rejects the dichotomous view that positions general sciences outside of the religious domain. Instead, he advocates for the learning of modern sciences as part of practicing Islamic teachings, as seen in the policy of Muhammadiyah schools which blended Qur'anic interpretation with modern scientific subjects and the adoption of more systematic Western educational methods.<sup>33</sup>

This approach demonstrates religious rationality, where reason becomes the tool for interpreting revelation and simultaneously serves as an instrument for social transformation. Through this epistemological integration, Dahlan sought to eliminate the barrier between madrasah and (secular) schools as two previously separate systems of knowledge.<sup>34</sup> This epistemology has become the foundation for Muhammadiyah's educational model, which merges religious subjects with modern sciences. Here lies Dahlan's philosophical strength: he successfully bridged the two knowledge systems without losing the core Islamic values.<sup>35</sup>

### **Axiological Analysis Results: Scholarly Practice and Practical Knowledge as Educational Goals**

Dahlan's educational axiology centers on the reciprocal relationship between knowledge and practice. According to him, the aim of education is not merely to produce knowledgeable individuals, but to form human beings who actively apply their knowledge for the benefit of the community.<sup>36</sup> The concepts of *ilmu amaliyah* (practical knowledge) and *amal ilmiah* (scholarly practice) represent the praxis of Islamic values, emphasizing the integration of morality, rationality, and social engagement.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, value orientation in Dahlan's educational system is transformative-social: knowledge must result in actions that benefit society.

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<sup>31</sup> Linda Marlini, Fakhrurazi, and Siti Shofiyah, "The Concept of Islamic Education Reform KH. Ahmad Dahlan and Its Implementation in Modern Islamic Education," *ATTARBIYAH: Journal of Islamic Culture and Education* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.18326/attarbiyah.v9i1.1-14>.

<sup>32</sup> Amelia Nia Pradipa Asih Suwarsih et al., "Relevance of Ahmad Dahlan's Concept of Renewing Islamic Education To Today's Education," *Andragogi: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Agama Islam* 6, no. 1 (2024): 44–54, <https://doi.org/10.33474/ja.v6i1.21764>.

<sup>33</sup> Ahwan Fanani, "Ahmad Dahlan's Perspective about the Model of Modern Integration Islamic Education," *Nadwa* 1, no. 1 (2019): 95, <https://doi.org/10.21580/nw.2019.1.1.3624>.

<sup>34</sup> Hardika Saputra, Istiqomah, and Mustoto, "The Relevance of Islamic Educational Thoughts of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in the 4.0 Era," no. 3 (2024).

<sup>35</sup> Fanani, "Ahmad Dahlan's Perspective about the Model of Modern Integration Islamic Education."

<sup>36</sup> Miftahul Jannah, "Analysis of Muhammadiyah Educational Concepts: A Historical and Philosophical Review," *ATTARBIYAH: Journal of Islamic Culture and Education* 8, no. 1 (2023): 31–46, <https://doi.org/10.18326/attarbiyah.v8i1.31-46>.

<sup>37</sup> Azaki Khoirudin and Ari Anshori, "Al-'Asher School: The Philosophical of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Character Education," *ISEEDU: Journal of Islamic Educational Thoughts and Practices* 2, no. May (2018): 17–45.

Islamic values do not end as doctrine, but are manifested in work ethic, professionalism, and social responsibility. This axiological concept explains why Muhammadiyah education not only prepares religious scholars, but also doctors, engineers, and teachers, all empowered to contribute to the advancement of the community while safeguarding spiritual integrity.<sup>38</sup>

Table 2. Educational Axiology in K.H. Ahmad Dahlan’s Thought

<b>Value Aspect</b>	<b>Main Principle</b>	<b>Educational Implementation</b>
Value goal	Knowledge for action (practical knowledge and scholarly practice)	Learning should orient to social engagement, not mere cognition
Educational ethics	Scientific truth is inseparable from morality	Teachers and students act as ethical subjects
Social orientation	Knowledge for the benefit of the community	Education must produce agents of social change

When associated with contemporary educational axiology theories, this idea parallels Paulo Freire’s concept of education in 1970 as an act of social liberation.<sup>39</sup> The difference is that Dahlan places the spiritual dimension as the basis for this liberating value. According to Dahlan, Islamic educational values do not stop at individual morality, but extend to transformative social ethics.<sup>40</sup>

Table 3.K.H. Ahmad Dahlan’s Educational Axiology and Theoretical Relevance

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Dahlan’s Concept</b>	<b>Modern Theoretical Counterpart</b>	<b>Educational Implication</b>
Fundamental value	Knowledge must produce righteous deeds	Freire (liberation education)	Social-oriented education
Knowledge ethics	Scientific truth subject to moral revelation	Habermas (communicative rationality)	Integration of ethics and rationality
Ultimate goal	Well-being of the community and devotion to God	Al-Attas (adab as educational goal)	Humanistic-transcendent education

<sup>38</sup> Tabah Sulistyono, “Muhammadiyah’s Philosophy of Education,” *Interdisciplinary Social Studies* 1, no. 6 (2022): 766–72, <https://doi.org/10.55324/iss.v1i6.154>.

<sup>39</sup> Tania Ramalho, “Paulo Freire, Communication, and Conscientization for Liberation,” in *The Handbook of Global Interventions in Communication Theory* (Routledge, 2022), 269–83.

<sup>40</sup> Sulistyono, “Muhammadiyah’s Philosophy of Education.”

### Synthesis of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Philosophy of Education

An analysis of the three branches of philosophy shows that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan built an integrative educational philosophy system which rejects epistemic and practical dualism.<sup>41</sup>

Table 4. Synthesis of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Philosophy of Education

Dimension	Focus of Study	Essence of Dahlan's Thought	Educational Orientation
Ontological	Nature of human being	Humans as spiritual-rational beings	Forming <i>insan kamil</i>
Epistemological	Sources and classification of knowledge	Unity of revelation and reason (integration of <i>qauliyah</i> and <i>kauniyah</i> knowledge)	Integrated religion–science curriculum
Axiological	Value and morality goals	Knowledge as the means for action and social benefit	Social ethics and scholarly practice

This synthesis demonstrates Dahlan's vision of a holistic education system, bridging spirituality, rationality, and social responsibility into a unified educational practice.<sup>42</sup>

### Implications of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought in the Modern Era

K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational ideas possess strong relevance within the context of modern education, which is characterized by technological advancement, globalization, and crises of humanity and values. Dahlan's integrative ideas—harmonizing spirituality, rationality, and social praxis—provide an alternative paradigm to modern educational systems that often emphasize only material and cognitive aspects.

Ontologically, Dahlan views humans as spiritual-rational beings who possess both moral and intellectual responsibilities as caliphs on earth. This notion requires a reorientation of modern educational objectives toward producing not only market-competitive individuals but also people of character and virtue. Modern education should integrate the development of spirituality and ethics into every aspect of learning, not merely as an add-on. Character education programs, spiritual intelligence training, and the strengthening of academic ethics are concrete forms of the ontological ideas

<sup>41</sup> Maraulang, "K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and the Muhammadiyah Movement"; Fanani, "Ahmad Dahlan's Perspective about the Model of Modern Integration Islamic Education."

<sup>42</sup> Amir Hamzah and M. Yunus Abu Bakar, "Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Legacy: Answering Education Challenges in Era 4.0," *IJE: Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 3, no. 1 (2025): 23–36, <https://doi.org/10.61277/ije.v3i1.170>; Saputra, Istiqomah, and Mustoto, "The Relevance of Islamic Educational Thoughts of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in the 4.0 Era."

of Dahlan.<sup>43</sup> This approach aligns with the concepts of holistic education and education for sustainable development, which place humanity at the center of moral and ecological balance.<sup>44</sup>

Epistemologically, Dahlan rejects the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences. He asserts that all knowledge originates from God, whether through revelation or the phenomena of nature. This view is a vital critique of the fragmentation of modern sciences, which tend to separate science from moral values. Thus, education in the digital era should develop an interdisciplinary curriculum that connects science with spiritual and social ethics.<sup>45</sup> For example, in technology and environmental studies, concepts like eco-theology or Islamic ethics in digital technology can serve as bridges between faith and knowledge.

Axiologically, Dahlan's thought affirms that true knowledge is that which is practiced for the benefit of society (*ilmu amaliah* and *amal ilmiah*). This principle demands that modern education should not stop at academic achievement but must also foster social care and a spirit of service. This concept is highly relevant amid increasing individualism and social empathy crises in the age of globalization. Education inspired by Dahlan's axiology should aim for social justice through the application of service learning, community engagement, and social entrepreneurship.<sup>46</sup>

Dahlan's thought also has significant implications in the context of modern technology. Amid digital disruption and the rapid flow of information, people often lose spiritual depth and meaning in life. Dahlan's ideas can serve as a basis for developing spiritual digital literacy, the ability to use technology ethically and morally. Islamic schools and universities need to instill principles of digital *akhlak*, emphasizing media ethics, informational responsibility, and human values within virtual worlds. This notion aligns with global trends in human-centered AI and ethical technology education that emphasize the balance between innovation and moral values.<sup>47</sup>

Socio-culturally, Dahlan's spirit of *tajdid* (renewal) and openness to change remains relevant in facing the pluralism of modern society. Contemporary Islamic education should cultivate a spirit of social *ijtihad*, tolerance, and religious moderation as an expression of Islam's compassion. These values are critical for addressing the challenges of radicalism,

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<sup>43</sup> Fanani, "Ahmad Dahlan's Perspective about the Model of Modern Integration Islamic Education."

<sup>44</sup> Ahmad Dwi Khalim, "The Urgency of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan'S Thought and Its Relevance To Modern Education," *Sunan Kalijaga International Journal on Islamic Educational Research* 6, no. 1 (2025): 18–35, <https://doi.org/10.14421/skijier.2022.61.02>.

<sup>45</sup> Suwarsih et al., "Relevance of Ahmad Dahlan'S Concept of Renewing Islamic Education To Today'S Education."

<sup>46</sup> Hamzah and Abu Bakar, "Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Legacy: Answering Education Challenges in Era 4.0."

<sup>47</sup> Khalim, "The Urgency of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan'S Thought and Its Relevance To Modern Education."

intolerance, and identity polarization in the digital era.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, strengthening multicultural education, interfaith dialogue, and civic learning based on Islamic values represents the progressive spirit of Dahlan manifested in today's context.

Table 5. Implications of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's Educational Thought in the Modern Era

Philosophical Dimension	Focus of Dahlan's Thought	Implications in the Modern Era	Implementation Examples
Ontological	Humans as spiritual-rational caliphs	Reorienting educational goals from utilitarian to humanistic-spiritual	Character education and spiritual quotient programs in schools
Epistemological	Unity of revelation and reason	Integration of religious and scientific knowledge in modern curricula	Interdisciplinary curricula grounded in Islamic values
Axiological	Knowledge for social good	Education oriented towards social welfare and justice	Service learning, social entrepreneurship
Technological	Ethics in technology use	Digital literacy grounded in <i>akhlak</i>	Ethics in media and humanistic-AI programs
Socio-cultural	Progressive and open Islam	Education for moderation and multiculturalism	Interfaith education and civic Islam

## E. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that K.H. Ahmad Dahlan's educational philosophy offers a philosophical synthesis that harmoniously unites spirituality and rationality in Islamic education. Through ontological, epistemological, and axiological analysis, it was found that Dahlan views humans as spiritual-rational beings who function as caliphs on earth. He emphasized the unity of revelation and reason as sources of knowledge and positioned knowledge as a means of social action. Consequently, according to Dahlan, education is not merely knowledge transfer, but the formation of an ideal human (*insan kamil*) who has faith, sound reasoning, and noble character.

<sup>48</sup> Saputra, Istiqomah, and Mustoto, "The Relevance of Islamic Educational Thoughts of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan and K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari in the 4.0 Era."

These findings provide important conceptual implications for developing a modern paradigm of Islamic education. Dahlan's integrative model can serve as a foundation for strengthening interdisciplinary curricula that bring together religious sciences, natural sciences, and technology in a balanced manner. In the modern context, Dahlan's thought is also relevant for addressing digital disruption and value crises by fostering spiritual digital literacy, character development, and service-learning-based instruction. At the policy level, this paradigm can inspire Islamic educational reform to go beyond academic achievement, prioritizing moral integrity and just social responsibility.

As a next step, this research encourages collaboration between academics, education practitioners, and policymakers to actualize the educational values of K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in 21st-century practice. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical studies on the implementation of Dahlan's philosophy in Islamic educational institutions, especially within the Muhammadiyah movement. Meanwhile, teachers and school administrators are expected to integrate the values of faith, knowledge, and action creatively and contextually within the learning process. Through these steps, Islamic education can return to its role as a system for nurturing knowledgeable, faithful, and righteous human beings who also contribute to universal progress and humanity.

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