# Implementation of Islamic Educational Philosophy in University Teaching and Learning: A Case Study of the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya

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**Abstract**

This study aims to examine the conceptual foundations and implementation of Islamic educational philosophy in the teaching and learning process at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya (UM Surabaya), as well as to analyze its role and relevance in shaping students' character in the modern era. Islamic educational philosophy serves as an intellectual framework that integrates spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions within the educational system. The principles of tawhid (monotheism), human fitrah, and akhlakul karimah (noble character values) constitute the core foundations for developing students who are knowledgeable, faithful, and morally upright. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving lecturers, students, and university administrators. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and meanings emerging from the implementation of Islamic values in the learning process. The findings indicate that UM Surabaya has implemented Islamic educational philosophy through several key strategies: (1) the development of a curriculum grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, integrated with modern scientific knowledge; (2) the application of experiential learning approaches that internalize Islamic values through social activities and community service programs; (3) the cultivation of Islamic character through religious mentoring, da'wah activities, and exemplary conduct demonstrated by lecturers; and (4) a holistic educational approach that balances students' academic, emotional, and spiritual development. These findings highlight the continued relevance of Islamic educational philosophy in addressing contemporary challenges in higher education, particularly in character education.

**Keywords:** Islamic educational philosophy, character formation, higher education, University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational philosophy serves as an intellectual foundation that guides the direction, objectives, and methods of education in alignment with the values and principles of Islamic teachings. This philosophy emphasizes the integration of spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions throughout the educational process. Its primary goal is not merely to produce individuals who excel intellectually, but also to cultivate learners who possess noble character, strong faith, and a sense of social and spiritual responsibility. In this regard, Islamic education seeks to develop human beings who are balanced in knowledge (*'ilm*), faith (*iman*), and practice (*'amal*).

In the context of higher education, the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy becomes increasingly significant to ensure that learning processes are not solely oriented toward academic achievement, but also toward character formation and spiritual development. Islamic higher education institutions are expected to function as centers for knowledge development grounded in Islamic values and universal human principles, thereby producing graduates who are capable of responding to global challenges without losing their religious identity.

According to Danial (2020), Danial et al. (2022), and Rustam et al. (2022), education plays a central role as a primary means of shaping a competitive and excellent society. Through education, individuals are guided to understand their identity as creations of Allah SWT and to engage in learning processes that lead to intellectual, spiritual, and moral maturity. Thus, the essence of education lies not only in the acquisition of knowledge but also in the formation of holistic character and personality. In line with this perspective, Hidayat (2016) emphasizes that the ultimate goal of education is to produce future generations who are knowledgeable, ethical, and responsible toward themselves and their environment.

In the Indonesian context, education constitutes a shared concern and responsibility of all societal elements. The concept of education encompasses the entire system involving teachers, curriculum, instructional methods, educational objectives, and the role of government as both administrator and regulator (Baharun et al., 2017). Among these components, educational programs occupy a strategic position, as they serve as the primary guide for implementing teaching and learning activities across all levels of formal education. Such programs function not only as instructional references but also as strategic instruments for achieving national educational goals (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Bakar et al., 2024; Firmansyah, 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2023; Syah et al., 2023; Tobroni et al., 2023; Faridi, 2024; Romelah, 2023; Jamil, 2025; Idris, 2024).

Furthermore, an educational program should reflect the philosophical orientation and life direction of a nation, particularly concerning how Indonesian individuals are envisioned and how education is directed to enable them to respond to the dynamics of social change. Consequently, educational curricula must be designed dynamically, taking into account the evolving needs of society. As noted by Almuzani (2021), curriculum renewal and adaptation are inevitable to ensure that the education system remains relevant to the challenges and advancements of modern Indonesian society.

Islamic educational philosophy is fundamentally grounded in the concept of tawhid, namely the belief in the oneness of Allah SWT as the basis of all aspects of life. Within the educational domain, the value of *tawhid* affirms that every learning process and scientific development should be directed toward knowing, loving, and serving Allah. This principle functions as a moral and epistemological compass that guides educational objectives, directions, and methods so that they remain aligned with divine values (Ya'kub, Rama, & Mahmud, 2023). Islamic education does not merely equip learners with worldly knowledge but seeks to cultivate individuals who are balanced between worldly and hereafter oriented pursuits. Therefore, education must develop all human potentials spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social in a harmonious manner (Meyniar, 2023).

In the context of modern education, Islamic educational philosophy faces significant challenges, particularly in adapting Islamic values to the rapid advancement of science and technology. This study aims to examine the concepts, objectives, functions, and roles of Islamic educational philosophy, while highlighting its relevance to the development of contemporary educational systems. The University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya (UM Surabaya), as one of the modern Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, is committed to integrating Islamic values into all academic and non academic activities. The university's vision is to produce graduates who are intellectually competent, professionally skilled, and deeply rooted in Islamic values. In realizing this vision, Islamic educational philosophy serves as the foundation for all learning processes, research activities, and community engagement programs. Through this approach, UM Surabaya strives to foster a synergy between knowledge, faith, and practice, reflecting the spirit of *Islam Berkemajuan* that characterizes the Muhammadiyah movement.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the conceptual foundations and implementation of Islamic educational philosophy in the learning process at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya. A descriptive qualitative design was adopted to capture meanings, values, and experiences related to the application of Islamic educational principles in a higher education context.

The research participants included lecturers, students, and university administrators who were directly involved in Islamic values based learning practices. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom and campus observations, and document analysis, including curricula, academic guidelines, and relevant institutional documents.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, involving systematic procedures of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify recurring patterns and themes. This approach enabled a comprehensive portrayal of how Islamic educational philosophy is implemented in teaching and learning activities and its influence on students' character formation at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Islamic educational philosophy plays a highly significant role in shaping students' character, as it is not solely oriented toward the mastery of knowledge but also toward the cultivation of morality and personality in accordance with Islamic values. From this perspective, education is not merely an intellectual process but also a spiritual and moral endeavor that guides human beings toward self-perfection as *khalifah* on earth. Islamic educational philosophy positions *tawhid* as the primary foundation of character formation, emphasizing that all aspects of life, including the learning process, must be oriented toward devotion to Allah SWT. Through a deep understanding of *tawhid*, students learn to balance rational intelligence with spiritual awareness, thereby developing integrity, honesty, and responsibility (Mahmudi & Solehuddin, 2023).

Furthermore, Islamic educational philosophy acknowledges human *fitrah* as the foundation of personal development. Each student possesses innate positive potential that must be guided and developed in accordance with Islamic values. Education thus functions to nurture, direct, and cultivate this *fitrah* through meaningful learning experiences enriched with moral values. In practical terms, the integration of Islamic values into the curriculum is essential. Learning activities are not limited to cognitive development but also incorporate affective and psychomotor dimensions through spiritually oriented approaches. Courses, campus activities, and lecturer student interactions are designed to reflect Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and social empathy (Mulyani, Azizah, & Faridi, 2024).

The role of lecturers is also crucial in this context. Within Islamic educational philosophy, teachers and lecturers are regarded not merely as instructors but as moral exemplars (*uswah hasanah*). Lecturers are expected to embody Islamic values through daily conduct, discipline, and compassionate interactions. Their attitudes and actions serve as concrete examples for students in internalizing Islamic character. Islamic educational philosophy further emphasizes the development of ethics and noble character as integral components of character formation. Students are encouraged to cultivate wisdom, justice, and honesty in all aspects of life. This process extends beyond the classroom to extracurricular activities, student organizations, and community service programs oriented toward Islamic humanitarian and social values.

Moreover, education in the Islamic worldview is regarded as an act of worship. Every learning activity performed with sincere intention is considered an act of devotion in the sight of Allah SWT. This perspective fosters strong intrinsic motivation among students to pursue knowledge with enthusiasm and responsibility (Lailia & Fauziah, 2024). Consequently, Islamic educational philosophy plays a vital role in forming students who are morally upright, intellectually competent, and spiritually grounded. Through the application of *tawhid*, *fitrah*, exemplary leadership, and the integration of Islamic curricula, Islamic education is expected to produce a generation that is intellectually capable, spiritually mature, and morally resilient ready to face contemporary challenges without losing its identity as faithful individuals.

The implementation of Islamic educational philosophy in higher education, particularly at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya, has significant practical implications for shaping students' personalities and competencies. This implementation is not limited to academic achievement but also emphasizes the internalization of Islamic values as guiding principles of life.

1. Qur'an- and Sunnah-Based Curriculum

   The university curriculum is designed with the Qur'an and Sunnah as its foundational references. All courses both general and professional are integrated with Islamic values to ensure that students understand knowledge as inseparable from religious teachings. Through this approach, students gain not only academic competence but also spiritual awareness to apply their knowledge in accordance with Islamic guidance.

2. Experiential Learning Approach

   Students are actively engaged in experiential learning activities that allow them to directly experience the application of Islamic values in real-life contexts. These include mosque-based community service programs, social initiatives, and Islamic entrepreneurship practices. This approach facilitates the internalization of Islamic values through concrete action rather than abstract theory.

3. Islamic Character Development

   The University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya emphasizes character development, including honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion. These values are cultivated through academic and non-academic programs such as Islamic mentoring, Qur'anic studies, and student organizations oriented toward *da'wah*. As a result, students are expected to become individuals of noble character who can contribute positively to society.

4. Holistic Learning Approach

   Islamic educational philosophy views human beings as holistic entities encompassing spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions. Accordingly, education at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya adopts a comprehensive approach that balances intellectual development with spiritual nurturing. Students are not only expected to excel academically but also to develop emotional and spiritual intelligence to navigate the complexities of modern life.

Despite positive outcomes, the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya faces ongoing challenges amid globalization, secularization of knowledge, and rapid digital transformation. These dynamics often lead to shifts in values and spiritual orientation among students, necessitating continuous strengthening strategies to ensure that Islamic educational ideals remain relevant and grounded.

1.  Curriculum Development Based on an Islamic Worldview
    Higher education curricula must continuously evolve to incorporate modern knowledge while remaining rooted in an Islamic worldview. This approach emphasizes that all knowledge originates from Allah SWT and should be utilized for the benefit of humanity. A dynamic curriculum enables students to integrate scientific advancement, Islamic values, and global challenges in a balanced manner.
2.  Continuous Professional Development for Lecturers
    Lecturers play a strategic role as moral and spiritual role models. Strengthening initiatives include continuous professional development through workshops on Islamic value integration in teaching, Islamic leadership training, and scholarly forums grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Such programs enable lecturers to foster a religious, inclusive, and inspiring academic environment.
3.  Digital Technology for Islamic Learning and Da'wah
    In the digital era, technology serves not only as a learning tool but also as an effective medium for disseminating Islamic values. The University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya can leverage digital platforms to strengthen campus da'wah, develop Islamic educational content, and support interactive, value-based learning. Through this strategy, students are encouraged to engage productively in digital spaces while adhering to Islamic ethics and principles.

Practically, Islamic educational philosophy provides direction, foundation, and solutions to various challenges in modern education, including globalization, moral crises, and shifts in spiritual values. It functions not merely as an abstract theoretical framework but as a concrete guide for developing a holistic educational system that integrates spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social dimensions.

Through philosophical reflection, Islamic education seeks to restore the essence of humanity in learning processes by guiding individuals to recognize their potential, understand the purpose of creation, and fulfill their roles as servants of Allah and khalifah on earth (Mulyani, Islamiyyah, & Sari, 2024).

1.  Critical Analysis of Educational Problems
    Islamic educational philosophy enables critical examination of educational challenges by addressing not only technical issues but also underlying paradigms, values, and orientations. Solutions are formulated through Islamic ethical lenses, ensuring comprehensive and sustainable outcomes.
2.  Defining Educational Goals Based on Human Nature
    Islamic education provides a clear orientation aligned with human nature, emphasizing balanced development of intellect, spirituality, and morality. In Islamic higher education, this balance is reflected in the integration of academic excellence and moral cultivation.
3.  Developing Human Potential as a Divine Trust
    Islamic philosophy views human potential (fitrah) as a divine trust that must be developed holistically. Education nurtures intellectual capacity, spiritual strength, and social responsibility, transforming learning into a process of becoming insan kamil.
4.  Character Formation Through Exemplification of Divine Attributes
    Human potential reflects divine attributes (asma' al-husna), such as compassion, justice, and wisdom. Education encourages students to embody these attributes through exemplary leadership, ethical communication, and social concern.

5. Continuous Evaluation and Renewal of Islamic Education
   Islamic educational philosophy supports ongoing evaluation and renewal to ensure alignment with Islamic ideals and contemporary needs. In the digital era, it guides the ethical use of technology as a means of education and da'wah, reinforcing rather than eroding Islamic values.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic educational philosophy plays a crucial role in shaping the direction and character of education at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya. Through an approach that emphasizes the integration of knowledge, faith, and practice, the university has successfully embedded spiritual values within the learning process while remaining responsive to advancements in science and technology. The implementation of Islamic educational philosophy is evident in a curriculum grounded in Qur'anic values, the exemplary conduct of lecturers, and student development activities that foster noble character and social awareness.

Nevertheless, continuous strengthening efforts are required to ensure that Islamic values are not diminished by the forces of globalization and the secularization of knowledge. Such efforts include developing curricula that are more responsive to contemporary challenges, enhancing lecturers' competencies in value-based Islamic education, and creatively utilizing digital technologies to reinforce da'wah and learning. In this way, the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy at the University of Muhammadiyah Surabaya functions not merely as an instructional framework, but as a comprehensive process of holistic human formation cultivating individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, and morally upright, and who are capable of contributing positively to society and the advancement of Islamic civilization in the future.

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