

## EPISTEMOLOGY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION FROM RATIONAL TO CRITICAL METHODS

Slamet PAMUJI

State Islamic University Professor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1087-791X>

[pamujiislamet25@gmail.com](mailto:pamujiislamet25@gmail.com)

Moh ROQIB

Pascasarjana UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8228-9482>

[moh.roqib@uinsaizu.ac.id](mailto:moh.roqib@uinsaizu.ac.id)

Novan Ardy WIYANI

UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0841-6452>

[novan\\_heutagogy@uinsaizu.ac.id](mailto:novan_heutagogy@uinsaizu.ac.id)

**Received:** January 17, 2025

**Accepted:** May 28, 2025

**Published:** June 30, 2025

### Suggested Citation:

Pamuji, S., Roqib, M., & Wiyani, N. A. (2025). Epistemology of Islamic education from rational to critical methods. *International Journal of Su-Ay Development Association (IJOSDA)*, 4(1), 29-40.



Copyright © 2024 by author(s). This is an open access article under the [CC BY 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

### Abstract

This study aims to explore the concept of Islamic educational epistemology as articulated by Mujamil Qomar in his book *Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam dari Metode Rasional hingga Metode Kritik* (The Epistemology of Islamic Education from Rational Methods to Critical Methods). The review highlights the urgent need to reformulate the epistemological foundations of Islamic education to be more responsive to modern challenges while preserving its spiritual values. Qomar identifies that the main issue in Islamic education today lies in its weak epistemological basis, leading to intellectual stagnation and civilizational decline. Through an integrative approach, Qomar proposes five essential methods for constructing the epistemology of Islamic education: the rational method, empirical method, intuitive method, dialogical method, comparative method, and critical method. Emphasis is placed on the integration of reason, revelation, empirical experience, and intuition in acquiring knowledge. The book also stresses the necessity of rethinking traditional Islamic educational epistemology, moving from dogmatic rigidity to a more creative, critical, and dynamic orientation. Scientific methods are blended with Islamic spiritual values to produce a holistic educational model. This study concludes that an adaptive and transformative epistemology of Islamic education will not only enable it to meet contemporary challenges but also strengthen the authenticity of Islamic scientific traditions. A solid epistemological foundation is expected to produce generations balanced in intellect, skills, spirituality, and morality.

**Keywords:** Epistemology, Islamic education, rational method, critical method.

### INTRODUCTION

Epistemology can simply be interpreted as a branch of philosophy that studies knowledge or knowledge about knowledge, and is sometimes referred to as "theory of knowledge" (Loren, 2002). Apart from that, it can also be interpreted as science that discusses the authenticity, understanding, structure, methods and validity of science (Azra 1999). Historically, epistemology can be divided between classical and contemporary. Classical epistemology emphasizes aspects of sources and knowledge, while contemporary epistemology focuses its discussion on how processes, procedures and methods are used to obtain knowledge. If the definition of epistemology is as above, including classical and contemporary epistemological paradigms which are used as the basic basis for research, then the scope of the study will be very broad and complex. Therefore, in this research, the author only focuses on discussing the essence, sources and methods used by Fazlur Rahman in obtaining knowledge.

The Introduction in Qomar's introduction assesses that the main problem of Islamic education is an epistemological problem. Qomar then clearly describes and analytically reveals the three keys to the progress of Islamic education (Qomar, 2005). According to Qomar, the epistemology of Islamic education is related to Islamic education in the form of ideas, concepts, thoughts, insights, concepts and theories. This epistemology of Islamic education functions to explore, discover and develop knowledge of Islamic education. According to Qomar, the discussion of Islamic education epistemology is more directed at methods or approaches that can be used to build knowledge of Islamic education, rather than other components, because these methods are closest to efforts to develop Islamic education, both conceptually and applied (Qomar, 2014). The epistemology of Islamic education demands that it be immediately developed by Islamic thinkers. Because it really functions to develop education conceptually and applicatively (Umar, 2023). The study of Islamic educational philosophy in terms of epistemology and axiology provides great benefits. Ontology discusses the nature of Islamic education, epistemology discusses the sources of Islamic education and axiology examines the values of Islamic education (Mahfud, 2018).

This epistemology is supported by Abdurahman's opinion by providing practice on how to build an epistemology based on the Al-Qur'an and Assunnah which is designed by considering the concept of science, the Islamization of science and the character of science from an Islamic perspective which relies on spiritual power which has a harmonious relationship between reason and revelation, the interdependence of reason and intuition and related spiritual values (Abdurrahman, 2021). Epistemology of Islamic education like this, becomes the foundation of hope in building a better life for Muslims with a more established and stable Islamic civilization. This kind of Islamic educational epistemology emphasizes the totality of experience and reality (empiricism) and recommends many ways to study nature (rationalism), so that knowledge obtained from revelation and reason, from observation and intuition, from tradition and theoretical speculation truly produces generations that are balanced in terms of intellectual, skill and spirituality as well as morality.

Then Fathi, in this case, said that we must prioritize Islamic educational epistemology which is based on the process of monotheism, empirical experience, where this empirical reality is then observed, studied and researched by relying on methods of observation and experimentation accompanied by techniques with the spirit of monotheism of faith. This step emphasizes that epistemology must be interpreted as a process, procedure, method or work of research methodology to achieve new knowledge, not epistemology in the sense of a source or tool for achieving knowledge (Fathu, 2020). Then, theological contents or the hegemony of the theology over epistemology must be removed in such a way that epistemology becomes independent or stands alone. To get orientation or emphasis on knowing (ma'rifah), theoretical or academic knowledge which tends to make students passive in learning under teacher authority, needs to be changed towards an epistemological orientation in Islamic education which emphasizes doing, activity and creativity, or professional work which makes students active and creative in learning. In the process of doing, activity, creativity, spiritual values and morality are included in it, so that in addition to students discovering new knowledge, they also access spiritual values simultaneously.

## METHOD

This study employs a library research method using a qualitative descriptive approach. The primary data source is Mujamil Qomar's work, *Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam dari Metode Rasional hingga Metode Kritik* (2005). Data collection techniques include in-depth reading, note-taking, and critical analysis of the primary text and supporting literature, such as journals, articles, and books related to Islamic educational epistemology. The data were analyzed qualitatively through interpretation, categorization, and thematic synthesis. The validity of the data was strengthened through source triangulation and comparison with expert opinions found in relevant literature (Sugiyono, 2021). This research focuses on identifying key concepts, epistemological methods, and the relevance of Qomar's ideas to contemporary challenges in Islamic education. A hermeneutic approach was also utilized to

understand the historical and philosophical contexts behind the ideas presented, allowing for a comprehensive and contextualized understanding.

## RESULTS

### Islamic Epistemology

The study of epistemology has a very important meaning for building knowledge, because it is a place to stand. Building knowledge becomes established if it has a solid foundation. The epistemological basis of science is the scientific method, namely the way science uses to construct true knowledge. The scientific method is a procedure for gaining knowledge. So, science is knowledge obtained through scientific methods. Thus, the scientific method is a determinant of whether or not knowledge is worthy of becoming science, so it has a very important function in building science, especially when we want to construct Islamic education (Triyo, 2011). The construction of Islamic epistemology in the world of education is very important in order to produce quality and intelligent education, especially in the current crisis involving Islamic knowledge and education today. The current crisis in the world of Islamic knowledge and education has caused scientific traditions to become frozen and stagnant, so that Islamic education is still unable to show its role optimally. To overcome the weaknesses and problems in Islamic education, reform (reconstructing Islamic education) must be carried out comprehensively so that ideal Islamic education is realized which is intelligent and moral by reconstructing the epistemology of Islamic education. The epistemology of Islamic education includes; discussions related to the nature, sources and methods of Islamic education.

Mujamil Qomar discusses Islamic epistemology. In some literature it can be said that Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, which discusses how to gain knowledge from the object you want to think about (Qomar, 2005). D.W. Hamlyn defines epistemology as a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and scope of knowledge, and its presuppositions and generally its reliability as confirmation that people have knowledge (Amin, 1986). Furthermore, a clearer understanding of epistemology was expressed by Azyumardi Azra, namely that epistemology is a science that discusses the authenticity, understanding, structure, methods and validity of science. Based on the definitions above, we can detail the aspects that constitute the scope of epistemology, namely the nature, source and validity of knowledge.

Epistemology has many meanings or understandings that are sometimes difficult to understand. In giving meaning to epistemology, experts have different points of view, thus giving different meanings when expressing it. However, to make it easier to understand the meaning of epistemology, it is necessary to know the basic meaning first. Epistemology is based on the root words episteme (knowledge) and logos (systematic knowledge, theory). Epistemologically, this comes from the Greek, namely "episteme" and "logos. Episteme means knowledge of language (etiology while logos means theory, description or reason. So epistemology can be interpreted as a theory of knowledge (*teori of knowledge*) (Hashim, 2022)). Terminologically, epistemology is a theory or science about the methods and foundations of knowledge, especially those related to the limits of knowledge and the validity or validity of that knowledge. To understand the meaning of epistemology, here are several experts who try to express its definition, namely:

D.W Hamlyn, he said that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and scope of knowledge, the basis and presuppositions and in general it can be relied upon as confirmation that people have knowledge. Dagobert D. Runes. As written by Mujamil Qomar, he explained that epistemology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the sources, structure, methods and validity of knowledge. Am Syaifudin stated that epistemology includes questions that must be answered, what is knowledge, where does it come from, what is its source, what is its essence, how to build appropriate and correct knowledge, what is truth, is it possible for us to achieve true knowledge, what can we know, and what are its limits. All these questions can be summarized into two main problems, the problem of the source of knowledge and the problem of the truth of knowledge.

In his presentation, Mujamil Qomar explained that in Islamic epistemology there are 4 sources of knowledge, namely Revelation, Ratio, Senses, Intuition. The following is an explanation of the revelation based on experts who support Mujamil Qomar:

1. Revelation is news conveyed by God to His Prophet for the benefit of his people. In fact, revelation and belief are almost indistinguishable because both use belief. The difference is that the belief in revelation that one dogmatically follows is a rule contained in religion. Meanwhile, belief is more about the ability of the human soul which is an observation of belief. Someone who has knowledge through revelation will dogmatically carry it out well. Revelation can be said to be a source of knowledge, because humans know something through their beliefs (Khamim, 2023).
2. Ratio, etymologically, the Latin ratio means reason. The understanding that adheres to a source of knowledge based on ratio, namely rationalism, really emphasizes reason as the main source of human knowledge and the final authority in determining the truth of human knowledge. This school is usually attributed to several Western thinkers, including Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1672), Leibniz (1646-1716), and Christian Wolf (1679-1754). Even though the roots of his thinking are actually found in the thoughts of classical philosophers, namely Plato (427 BC-347 BC) and Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) (Usman, 1994). For the rationalist group, the source of human knowledge is based on ideas carried by humans since birth. According to Descartes, these innate ideas are divided into three categories, namely: a. Thought, that by nature, humans carry innate ideas that are aware that they are thinking creatures. From here, Descartes' very famous statement emerged, namely *cogito ergo sum*, which means I think therefore I am. b. Allah or deus, humans by nature, have the idea of a perfect being, and that perfect being is God. c. Extensia or breadth, namely the innate human idea, material that has breadth in space.
3. Indra or another name empirical comes from the Greek word *empeirikos* meaning experience. The flow that adheres to the belief that the source of knowledge is empirical is called empiricism. According to this school, humans gain knowledge through experience. The experience in question is a sensory experience. In this empiricist paradigm, the senses are the only and most valid instrument for connecting humans with their world, which does not mean that reason does not have an important meaning. However, the value of the ratio is still placed within the framework of empiricism. This means that the existence of reason here only follows experimentation because it does not have anything except through the intermediary of the senses, reality cannot be perceived (Mulyana, 2018). One of the figures of empiricism, David Hume (1711-1776), as quoted by Proverbs Bakhtiar (L.1960) in his book entitled "Philosophy of Science", said that humans do not carry innate knowledge in their lives. The source of knowledge is observation. Observation provides two things, namely impressions and understandings or ideas. What is meant by impressions are direct observations received from experience, such as feeling the skin being pinched. Meanwhile, what is meant by idea is a picture of a vague observation that is produced by reflecting back on or reflecting on the impressions received from that experience (Bahtiar, 2011). In this case it can be understood that the mind only manages sensory concepts, it does this by arranging these concepts or dividing them. So in empiricism, the main source for obtaining knowledge is empirical data obtained from the five senses. Reason does not function much, if it does exist it is only a vague idea.
4. Intuition is an ability that exists in humans in the form of a psychological process. It is true that this type of knowledge source is acknowledged to exist, but it has a weakness, namely that this type of knowledge source will be difficult to prove empirically and rationally (Nawawi, 2021). Then the author agrees that according to philosophers, sources of knowledge or in other words tools or ways to obtain knowledge can be divided into three ways; respectively called Empiricism (Senses), Rationalism (reason), Intuition, and Revelation. Meanwhile, according to the Qur'an, the source of knowledge is the senses and/or reason and heart. Islam not only mentions God's gift to humans in the form of senses or reason, but also encourages us to use them, while with the heart Allah SWT will provide light with which believers can distinguish between what is right



and what is false. Reason is a tool for thinking and philosophizing aimed at finding truth. Intellectual activity is an extraordinary power in searching for truth which is an object of thought that never ends. Therefore, reason is never satisfied with a truth that it accepts without rational proof. To strengthen faith in Allah's revelation and to provide explanations for those who doubt, revelation really requires the participation of reason to reveal the truths brought by revelation. With the ability of reason to express the truth brought by revelation rationally, the truth of revelation will be more easily accepted by humans. In expressing the truth of revelation, reason still has limitations. In Islamic teachings, the use of reason is not given absolute freedom, because it can violate the signs that have been determined by revelation.

*Rethinking* in the context of Islamic education epistemology: *rethinking* or rethinking is the process of reviewing established understandings, methods and paradigms in an effort to develop a more relevant and contextual view. In Mujamil Qomar's book, *Rethinking* used as a critical step to reconstruct the epistemology of Islamic education so that it can answer the challenges of the times (Qomar, 2005).

The background *Rethinking* : 1) stagnation of thought: Islamic education is often trapped in static traditions, making it less responsive to social changes and the needs of the times. 2) dominance of traditional methods: The use of normative-theological methods often excludes rational and critical approaches. 3) challenges of modernity: Technological advances, globalization and pluralism demand reforms in the Islamic education system.

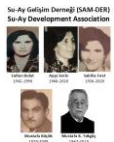
Objective *Rethinking*: 1) actualizing Islamic education: Integrating Islamic values with developments in science and technology. 2) open critical space: Provide space for students to think creatively and critically, without being confined by dogma. 3) building a dynamic epistemology: Making Islamic education relevant to local and global contexts.

Deep method *rethinking* Islamic education, Mujamil Qomar explained that *Rethinking* involves exploring diverse methods, including:

1. Rational Method: prioritizes reason as a source of knowledge, so that it is able to analyze educational problems logically and systematically. Contribution, helping students understand the relationship between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge.
2. Empirical Method: Based on observation and real experience in the educational process. Contribution, resulting in innovation in reality-based teaching strategies.
3. Criticism Method: criticizing established assumptions, both in religious teachings and educational practices. Contribution, identifying ideological biases that hinder the development of Islamic education.
4. Integrative Method: characteristics, Combining normative (theological) methods with rational and empirical approaches. Contribution, realizing an education system that is holistic and balanced between spiritual and intellectual aspects.

The direction of reform in Islamic education, *Rethinking* initiated by Mujamil Qomar focuses on the following aspects of reform:

1. Curriculum Update: balancing religious knowledge and general science. Integrating contextual materials such as technological literacy and globalization.
2. Improving Teacher Quality: teachers as agents of change must have critical and innovative thinking skills. Teacher training is directed at mastering various learning approaches.
3. Multidisciplinary Approach: developing Islamic education that is open to the contributions of various scientific disciplines. Eliminating the dichotomy of religious knowledge and secular science.
4. Social Participation: encouraging community involvement in Islamic education reform. Making Islamic education a means of empowering the people.



*Rethinking* In the epistemology of Islamic education, as explained by Mujamil Qomar, it is an effort to revive the adaptive, critical and transformative spirit of Islam. This process not only involves changes in methods, but also a transformation of the paradigms and values that underlie Islamic education. Thus, it is hoped that Islamic education can be a solution to the challenges of the times while remaining loyal to the universal values of Islam.

### **Islamic Epistemology and Education**

Mujamil Qomar discusses epistemology and Islamic education. After we know some of the logical consequences of applying an epistemological approach, we need to know the source of knowledge or how to obtain knowledge. According to Mujamil Qomar, in terms of how to obtain it, sometimes educational knowledge is obtained after experience. This is *a posteriori* educational knowledge (by Imam Ghazali it is called *nazari science*) or in Western terms it is called empiricism. Sometimes educational knowledge is obtained before experiencing it, only through reflection and ideas. This is called *a priori* educational knowledge (by Imam Ghazali it is called *preliminary science*) or in Western terms it is called rationalism (Qomar, 2005). If the first educational knowledge comes from the senses, then the second educational knowledge comes from the mind. Meanwhile, the origin or source of knowledge in Islamic education is from Allah SWT. Therefore, when compared with knowledge that comes from the senses and reason, there is still a much higher level of knowledge, namely knowledge obtained based on the guidance of revelation. Knowledge that comes from the senses or reason, the truth is relative. This means that if there is research and other evidence that successfully refutes the results of the first research, then the results of the first research are no longer valid and the results of the second research are used, and so on. Meanwhile, for knowledge that comes from revelation, the truth is absolute. Mujamil added that apart from that, there is still knowledge obtained - for free - from God through dreams, intuition, inspiration, and the like (Qomar, 2005). No matter how great the power of the mind is to carry out the process of thinking, reasoning, contemplating, conceiving, speculating and imagining to discover new knowledge, it needs to be emphasized again that the mind has limitations. Intellectual abilities are very limited. Many realities are acknowledged to exist, but reason cannot reach them. This fact can be used as a warning so that humans do not become arrogant after discovering a little of Allah's knowledge hidden behind the *sunnatullah* or His natural creation.

As Mujamil Qomar said, western epistemology has been viewed by Muslim and non-Muslim experts as a general epistemology, has been used as the dominant way of knowing and investigating recently and has excluded other ways of knowing and investigating. The very dominance of western epistemology has caused all humans or communities on this earth to assume that all educational institutions in this world are shaped by the image of western epistemology. Some Islamic education experts/observers claim that Islamic educational institutions depart from the basis of Western epistemology. If so, educational practices in educational institutions are considered not in accordance with the teachings of the Koran and Hadith, and can eliminate the special characteristics of Islamic educational institutions that make them different from other educational institutions. Western epistemology refers to rationality and empiricism as its main pillars, and ignores spiritual values in religion. Meanwhile, Islam has absolute truth which comes from the Al-Qur'an and Hadith, this truth cannot be contested by any truth originating from human thought. The reason is that the human brain is limited, as well as thinking, reason cannot think about all the truths that exist in this universe, such as the process of the *Isra' Mi'raj* of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Sulthon, 2022). In Western epistemology, the ratio method has a very strategic position in measuring the validity of scientific truth. Knowledge whose truth cannot be rationalized means that knowledge is not recognized or its truth is rejected. For Western scientists who always place the strategy of human reason and thoughts as absolute truth, there is no scientific truth that can be justified without being measured by reason. This raises a lot of concern for the community, especially for education in Islamic boarding schools. For example, like nuclear weapons, scientific findings that rely on scientific methods originating from the human mind must of course be appreciated. However, its existence creates anxiety for society and



its creators themselves. If Islamic boarding school education relies on Western epistemology, it will create many negative things in it, such as bringing evil and disbelief, and even fostering atheistic attitudes.

Western epistemology offers an empiricist method in expressing scientific truth based on sensory experience, external experience (*sensation*) as well as inner experiences (*reflection*) as the main pillar in gaining knowledge. As said by Mujamil Qomar in his book entitled "Epistemology of Islamic Education From Rational Methods to Critical Methods", this school was formulated by Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776). David Hume has held the pinnacle of success in this stream of empiricism, because David Hume used empiricist principles in a very radical way. Especially the understanding of substance and causality (cause-effect relationship) is the object of criticism. Western scientists determine a combination of reason and empiricism in determining whether or not knowledge is worthy of becoming science. If the measure of truth is based on ratio and empirical, then how do we explain this world which is not only inhabited by humans and animals. In the science of monotheism, Islam believes in the existence of creatures that cannot be seen by the five senses, such as jinn, demons and angels. Islam also believes in the existence of supernatural sciences such as black magic, sorcery and pellets. Western epistemology will not confirm the existence of these sciences, because these sciences cannot be explained logically or empirically. Based on the description above, if the basis of Western Epistemology is used as a construction for Islamic educational institutions in Islamic boarding schools, of course it will conflict with the main scientific disciplines taught there. Universally, the vision and mission of Islamic boarding schools is to educate students to have (spiritual makrifat), practice the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. However, in Islamic boarding schools rational and empirical methods are used to explore the rules of religious law (fiqh), but the absolute truth is still held by Allah SWT. In connection with rational-empirical, Imam Al-Ghazali also offers several rational-empirical approaches in searching for and discovering Islamic laws such as Ijma' and Qiyas.

Then Shidiq said that we know that Western epistemology has the characteristics of a skeptical approach (doubt or skepticism), a rational-empirical approach, a dichotomous approach, a positive-objective approach, and an approach that opposes the spiritual dimension (Shidiq, 2020). Meanwhile, the epistemology of Islamic education so far seems to still be theological, doctrinal, passive, secular, barren, stagnant, and far behind the epistemology of Western education, especially science and technology. In this case, it is an effective alternative to break the ice of epistemology in the building of Islamic education and to save Muslims and their civilization due to Western epistemology. In general, epistemological sources can be classified into 3, namely Rationalism, Empiricism and Intuitionism. However, Louis O. Meanwhile, Pradana Boy ZTF classifies it into 3, namely Empiricism, Rationalism and Criticism. In this case, the researcher deliberately only explains 3 sources of epistemology, namely Empiricism, Rationalism, and Criticism, because these three sources of epistemology are more relevant to this book.

Then the author agrees that Islamic Epistemology and Western Epistemology have their own uniqueness, but if Western Epistemology is used as the main basis for building Islamic Educational Institutions, then damage will occur therein. As said by Mujamil Qomar, Islamic epistemology emphasizes the totality of experience and reality and recommends many ways to study nature, so that knowledge can be obtained from revelation or reason, from observation and intuition, from tradition and theoretical speculation. So Islamic epistemology emphasizes the search for all forms of knowledge within the framework of eternal values which are the main foundation of Muslim civilization.

### **Epistemological Methods of Islamic Education**

Mujamil Qomar discusses the epistemological method of Islamic Education. The way to gain knowledge of Islamic education is by using methods. Islamic education epistemology methods are

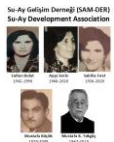
methods in the epistemology of Islamic education or methods used to gain knowledge about Islamic education. The epistemological method of Islamic education is a philosophical tool that discusses knowledge of Islamic education. The epistemological method of Islamic education seeks to build, formulate and process knowledge about Islamic education. According to Mujamil Qomar, from reflections on the verses of the Koran, the Hadith of the Prophet and his own reasoning, he has temporarily obtained five types of effective methods for building knowledge about Islamic education, namely:

1. Rational Method (Manhaj 'Aqli) Rational Method is a method used to obtain knowledge by using considerations or criteria of truth that can be accepted by reason. According to this method, something is considered true if it can be accepted by reason, such as ten more than five. No one can reject this truth based on the use of common sense, because rationally ten is greater than five. Rakhmat added that this method is used to achieve knowledge of Islamic education, especially that which is a priori. Reason gives logical explanations to a problem, while Indra proves those explanations. The use of reason to achieve knowledge, including Islamic educational knowledge, is justified by the Islamic religion (Rahmat, 2022). Muslim philosophers are of the view that some of the naş of the Shari'a contain a final meaning for the general public and an inner-philosophical meaning for special groups. This second meaning is realized through ta'wil for experts. This means that the Al-Quran and Hadith really contain aspects of philosophical thoughts and require these thoughts to be expressed by people who are capable and skilled. After that the author comments and approves the method '*mind* (thinking or rational process) is a method used to obtain knowledge using considerations or criteria of truth through a thought process that can be accepted by reason. This method views that everything is considered correct, if it is acceptable to reason (see Ali 'Imran, 190-191);
2. Intuitive Method (Manhaj Zawqi) The intuitive method is a typical method for scientists who use Western scientific traditions as a basis for thinking considering that this method has never been needed in the development of science. On the other hand, among Muslims there seems to be an agreement to approve intuition as a valid method for developing knowledge, so they have become accustomed to using this method in capturing the development of knowledge. Hasyim said that in Islamic education, intuitive knowledge is placed in a worthy position. Islamic education now makes humans as material objects, while the formal object is human abilities (Hasim, 2022). Islamic education is actually specifically focused on learning human abilities, both based on revelation, intellectual empowerment and direct observation. Among Islamic thinkers, intuition is not only equated with reason and Indra, but even more privileged than both. For Al-Gazhali, that al-zawaq (intuition) is higher and more reliable than reason to capture knowledge that is truly believed to be true. The source of knowledge is called al-nubuwwat, which is in the form of revelation to the prophets and in the form of inspiration to ordinary people Then Jalaluddin put forward an epistemological method, intuition is neutral. This means that it can be used to gain various kinds of knowledge. Intuition in the sense of the ability to reach conclusions correctly without going through logical steps one by one (al-hads), or in the sense of enlightening experience (al-wjdan), is the arrival of meaning, or the arrival of meaning in oneself, whether it is obtained through proof, as in the first case of al-hads, or comes by itself in the second case of al-wjdan. After that, the author agreed on the method of dzauqi, hikmah, or exploring the qolbu (intuitive method), namely the method used to gain knowledge by honing the sensitivity of the qolbu so that knowledge suddenly appears, even without being preceded by previous experience or knowledge. In religious terms, intuitive is inspiration. "Who is able to maintain his sincerity for 40 days, then sources (like springs) of wisdom will radiate from his heart" (Al-Hadith);
3. Dialogical Method (Manhaj Jadali) The dialogical method referred to here is an effort to explore knowledge of Islamic education carried out through written work presented in the form of a conversation between two or more experts based on arguments that can be scientifically justified. This method has a clear theological basis. Efforts to search for answers are a legitimate activity



according to Islam and science. Events as a form of dialogue have been put forward in the Koran. According to Khamami, Islamic education needs to be dialogued with our reasoning to obtain significant answers in developing Islamic education. This reasoning will have sharp analytical power when facing challenges. Islamic educational science must rely on ideas that are in dialogue with empirical experience consisting of facts or information to be processed into valid theories on which scientific knowledge rests. To apply this method, the forum can be prepared in several ways, for example by determining dialogue partners, forming a dialogue forum, bringing together two dialogue forums, or by inviting Islamic education experts, if it is used optimally. These dialogue platforms only differ in scale, while their mission and function are relatively the same. Everything is a forum for exploring knowledge of Islamic education from the Koran, hadith and Islamic educational practices, then formulated into scientific theories about Islamic education. After that, the author agreed to the jadali method (dialogic or discussion method), namely a method for exploring knowledge through written work presented in the form of questions and answers between two or more people based on arguments that can be justified scientifically and in the presence of revelation (see An-Nahl's letter: 111 and 125);

4. Comparative Method (Manhaj Muqaran) The comparative method is a method of gaining knowledge (in this case knowledge of Islamic education), both with Islamic education and Islamic education with other education. This method is used to look for advantages or combine meaning or understanding, so that the purpose of the educational problem is confirmed. So this comparative method can still be differentiated from comparative education. Nawawi strengthened this by saying that the comparative method as one of the epistemological methods of Islamic education has various objects to be compared, namely: comparison between verses from the Koran about education, between verses on education and hadiths on education, between fellow educational hadiths, between fellow theories from educational thinkers. between fellow theorists from Islamic and non-Islamic education experts, between fellow Islamic educational institutions, between fellow Islamic educational institutions and non-Islamic educational institutions, among fellow historians of Muslims past and present (Nawawi, 2021). After that, the author concludes with the moqaranah (comparative) method, namely a method of comparing theory or practice or two figures' opinions with the aim of finding weaknesses and strengths or combining understanding and understanding in order to obtain the intended confirmation of the existing problem. (see letter: Al-Hasyr letter: 20);
5. Criticism Method (Manhaj Naqdi) Criticism method is an effort to explore knowledge about Islamic education by correcting the weaknesses of an educational concept or application, then offering solutions as alternative solutions. So what this means is that criticism is not because of hatred, but because there are irregularities or weaknesses that must be straightened out. In fact, criticism is a method that has existed for a long time from the sciences of kalam, fiqh, Islamic history and hadith. However, unfortunately nowadays it is rare for Muslims to use critical methods when expressing their ideas. One of the Muslim thinkers whose works have a critical nuance is Muhammad Arkoun (Mahfud, 2018). He criticized the building of Islamic religious scientific epistemology. Actually, criticism has the connotation of constructive efforts, unlike what we have understood so far, that criticism is an insult. And that results in Muslims not liking criticism. By using the critical method, you can criticize western theories that do not agree with the revelations related to Islamic education. After that, the author concludes with the naqdi (criticism) method, which is a method for exploring knowledge by correcting the weaknesses of a concept or application of knowledge and then offering solutions. This method can be said to be washiyah or advice (see surah al-ashr verses 1-3); The methods developed to build students' critical or intellectual powers must be based on revelation, spiritual values, as well as integral scientific methods whose implementation is based on the process of monotheism. Revelation functions to provide encouragement, direction, guidance, control, control over the implementation of this method. Spiritual values or Islamic ethics function to instill Islamic ethics in students during the method process. Meanwhile, the scientific method is used as a basic



reference for obtaining knowledge that meets empirical, rational and scientific requirements. This integration will be able to change the epistemological building of Islamic education which will later be expected to become a practical solution for building a more advanced Islamic civilization.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The epistemology of Islamic education as articulated by Mujamil Qomar represents a significant contribution to the discourse on educational reform in the Islamic world. Qomar emphasizes that the primary crisis in Islamic education is epistemological in nature — that is, a crisis concerning the sources, methods, and validation of knowledge itself. His framework seeks to offer an integrative model that draws simultaneously on rational thought, empirical observation, spiritual intuition, and critical analysis, all rooted firmly in Islamic principles.

First, Qomar identifies the rational method (*manhaj 'aqli*) as essential to the development of Islamic education. In contrast to traditions that prioritize rote memorization or uncritical acceptance of authority, the rational method empowers learners to question, reason, and critically engage with knowledge. Rationality is not viewed as contradictory to revelation; instead, it is seen as complementary. The Qur'an itself repeatedly urges believers to think (*tafakkur*), reflect (*tadabbur*), and use their intellect (*'aql*). Thus, rational inquiry within Islamic education is legitimized both scripturally and philosophically.

Second, the empirical method is highlighted as a vital pathway to knowledge. Qomar draws from classical Islamic scholars like Ibn al-Haytham and Al-Ghazali, who stressed observation and experience as valid sources of knowledge. Islamic education, therefore, must embrace empirical research methods, experimentation, and real-world engagement, integrating modern scientific approaches without sacrificing Islamic values. This method situates Islamic education in dialogue with contemporary scientific developments.

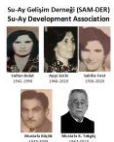
Third, the intuitive method (*manhaj zawqi*) is acknowledged, recognizing the role of spiritual insight, *ilham* (inspiration), and intuition in human cognition. While this method is less empirically verifiable, Qomar argues that intuition has been historically significant in Islamic thought, especially among figures like Al-Ghazali. Intuitive knowledge, when balanced with rational and empirical methods, enriches the educational process by incorporating the dimensions of spirituality and transcendence.

Fourth, Qomar introduces the dialogical method (*manhaj jadali*), inspired by the Qur'anic tradition of dialogue. Education is envisioned not as a one-way transmission of information but as an interactive, critical engagement between teacher and student, and among peers. Through structured dialogue, students refine their thinking, develop analytical skills, and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives while remaining anchored in Islamic ethical frameworks.

Fifth, the comparative method (*manhaj muqaran*) is advanced as a strategy for intellectual growth. This involves comparing Islamic education with other educational traditions — both historical and contemporary, Islamic and non-Islamic — to discern strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Comparative study prevents insularity and promotes a global, yet critical, outlook that is crucial for Islamic education in a globalized world.

Finally, the critical method (*manhaj naqdi*) plays a pivotal role in Qomar's epistemology. He calls for a healthy culture of criticism within Islamic education: not criticism born from negativity, but constructive criticism aimed at continuous improvement. Traditional practices and established knowledge are not immune to scrutiny; rather, they must be evaluated in light of changing contexts and the overarching objectives of Islam.

Qomar's framework of *rethinking* (*ijtihad fikri*) reflects his commitment to dynamic, context-sensitive reform. He critiques the historical stagnation resulting from an overemphasis on the normative-



theological approach and argues for an epistemology that balances knowing (*ma'rifah*) and doing (*'amal*). This transformation requires not only curricular reform but also changes in pedagogical methods, teacher training, and institutional philosophy.

Additionally, Qomar warns against the wholesale adoption of Western epistemology, particularly when it neglects spiritual dimensions and promotes secular materialism. While rationality and empiricism are embraced, they must be harmonized with divine revelation to prevent Islamic education from losing its spiritual essence. Thus, Qomar envisions an Islamic epistemology that is holistic, integrative, and spiritually conscious, capable of producing individuals who are intellectually sharp, morally upright, and spiritually connected. Mujamil Qomar's epistemological vision is not merely theoretical but proposes concrete methodologies and strategies for the revitalization of Islamic education. It offers a blueprint for rebuilding educational systems that are both faithful to Islamic teachings and fully engaged with the complexities of the modern world.

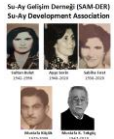
Mujamil Qomar's epistemology of Islamic education offers a transformative framework that integrates rationality, empirical experience, intuition, dialogue, and critical evaluation. His work highlights the necessity of moving beyond stagnant traditionalism toward a dynamic and contextually relevant educational model. By balancing revelation and reason, empirical observation and intuition, Islamic education can be revitalized to meet the intellectual and spiritual needs of contemporary society. The proposed methodologies encourage an education system that is not only concerned with transmitting religious knowledge but also actively engages learners in critical, creative, and holistic thinking processes. In doing so, Islamic education can reclaim its role as a vital force for personal development and societal transformation. Therefore, building a solid epistemological foundation, as advocated by Qomar, is essential for achieving a truly meaningful and sustainable advancement of Islamic education in the modern world.

### **Ethics and Conflict of Interest**

Ethical procedures in conducting the study were adhered to by the researchers and they declare that no conflict of interest exists.

### **REFERENCES**

- Abdurrahman, A. (2021). Rationality in the epistemology of Islamic education: Historical and contemporary overview. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 10(2), 123-140.
- Ahmad Sulton, S., Sirait, S., & Arif, M. (2022). The Educational Philosophy of Traditional Islamic Boarding School Roudlotul Muhsinin Al-Maqbul: Integrating Future Education Values. *Scholar: Journal of Education and Society*, 1(1), 33-48.
- Al-Ghazali, A. H. (2019). Scientific methods in Islamic education: An epistemological perspective. *Journal of Educational Philosophy*, 15(1), 45-60.
- Azra, A. (1999). *Islamic education: Tradition and modernity towards the new millennium*. Jakarta: Logos Discourse of Science.
- Bakhtiar, A. (2011). *Philosophy of science*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Good, L. (2002). *Philosophical dictionary*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Fathi, A. (2020). Critique of traditional methods in Islamic education: An epistemological approach. *Journal of Islamic Studies and Education*, 5(3), 67-82.
- Hashim, M. (2022). Epistemology of Islamic education: Integration between rational methods and spirituality. *Journal of Education and Culture*, 8(4), 88-102.
- Ibawi, M. (1986). Mode of dialogue in Islamic higher education. In Husni, A., et al. (Ed.), *The Image of a Religious Campus The Urgency of Dialogue between Empirical Theoretical Concepts and Normative Concepts of Religion*. Surabaya: PT Bina Ilmu.



- Jaluddin & Said, U. (1994). *Philosophy of Islamic education: Concept and development of thought*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Mahfud. (2018). Knowing ontology, epistemology, axiology in Islamic education. *Scholar: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 4(1), 84.
- Mulyana, A. (2018). Rationalism in Islamic education: Epistemological consequences. *Journal of Islamic Educational Thought*, 7(2), 101-115.
- Nawawi, H. (2021). Epistemology of Islamic education and the role of critical methods: Theoretical study. *Journal of Islamic Education and Science*, 9(1), 22-35.
- Pradana, B. Z. T. F. (2003). *Islamic philosophy: History, schools and figures*. Malang: UMM Press.
- Qomar, M. (2005). *Epistemology of Islamic education from rational methods to critical methods*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Qomar, M. (2012). *Educational awareness: A determinant of educational success*. Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media.
- Qomar, Mujamil. (2014). *Initiating Islamic education*. Bandung: PT Teen Rosdakarya.
- Rahendra, M., & Lesmana, I. (2018). Thoughts of Prof. Dr. Mujamil Qomar, M.Ag. Regarding Islamic Education Management. *Islamic Management*, 1(2).
- Rakhmat, A. (2022). The role of rational methods in Islamic education: An epistemological perspective. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 6(3), 75-90.
- Shidiq, M. (2020). Applying critical methods in the epistemology of Islamic education: An analysis. *Journal of Islamic Education and Thought*, 4(2), 55-70.
- Supriyatno, T. (2011). *Education Epistemology Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah*. Malang: UIN Maliki Press.
- Umar, F. (2023). The balance between rational and critical methods in Islamic education: An epistemological review. *Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 11(1), 42-59.