



OPEN ACCESS

Rethinking Merdeka Belajar: Toward an Ethical and Epistemic Reconstruction through Pesantren Pedagogy

Moch Najib Yuliantoro*

Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Siti Murtiningsih

Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Sonjoruri Budiani Trisakti

Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Irfan L. Sarhindi

University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Article History	Abstract
-----------------	----------

Received
March 24, 2026

Revised
July 11, 2026

Accepted
July 16, 2026

Published
July 31, 2026

This study examines the concept of Merdeka Belajar as a contemporary educational reform in Indonesia and critically analyses its ethical and epistemic foundations through the lens of pesantren-based religious pedagogy. While existing studies largely focus on pedagogical innovation, curriculum flexibility, and digital transformation, they often overlook the deeper philosophical dimensions of knowledge and moral formation. This research employs a qualitative library-based approach using critical and comparative philosophical analysis of educational policy, Islamic epistemology, and religious pedagogy. The findings reveal that Merdeka Belajar is predominantly framed within a progressive and instrumental paradigm, emphasising autonomy, flexibility, and competence development, yet it lacks a coherent ethical and epistemic foundation. In contrast, pesantren-based education represents a systematic knowledge tradition that integrates revelation, reason, and lived experience into a unified ethical–epistemic framework. This integration enables the formation of moral subjectivity, in which knowledge is not only acquired but also embodied through ethical discipline and spiritual practice. The study argues that pesantren-based religious pedagogy provides a critical conceptual resource for reconstructing the meaning of education beyond instrumental rationality, positioning education as a process of ethical self-formation and epistemic responsibility. This research contributes to the philosophical discourse on education by integrating ethical and epistemic perspectives into contemporary educational reform.

Keywords: *Merdeka Belajar; Islamic epistemology; religious pedagogy; ethical formation; pesantren*

**Correspondence: Moch Najib Yuliantoro, Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta, Indonesia
mnajib@ugm.ac.id*



© Author(s), 2026. Published by Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Semarang.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) has emerged as a major educational reform in Indonesia, aiming to transform rigid, standardised, and bureaucratic learning systems into more flexible, student-centred, and adaptive approaches. Introduced in 2019, this policy emphasises autonomy for both teachers and students in determining learning processes, methods, and evaluation systems in response to rapid socio-technological change and the demands of the digital era (Lestiyani 2020; Natalia and Sukraini 2021). In this context, education is increasingly seen as a strategic tool for preparing human resources to adapt to global challenges and technological transformation (Rohimah et al. 2024). While current literature extensively discusses the administrative transition to Merdeka Belajar, a significant critical gap remains in examining the deeper epistemological mismatch between this modern, outcome-based policy and Indonesia's deeply rooted religious education systems, specifically Pesantren. Most existing studies focus merely on practical implementation challenges or general policy alignment. They fail to address the core ideological tension: how an economically driven, outcome-based model can coexist with a value-driven, traditional Islamic pedagogy without eroding the latter's ethical foundations. This study fills this gap by drawing on Philip Kitcher's philosophy to analyse and synthesise these two seemingly divergent educational worldviews critically.

Philosophically, Merdeka Belajar is closely associated with progressive educational thought, particularly the ideas of John Dewey, which emphasise experiential learning, learner autonomy, and the active role of students in constructing knowledge (Faiz and Kurniawaty 2020; Dewey 1916).

Education, from this perspective, is understood as a dynamic, continuous process that enables individuals to develop critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills necessary for navigating modern life. This paradigm also redefines teachers' roles as facilitators rather than as authoritative sources of knowledge, thereby encouraging a more dialogical, participatory learning environment.

However, despite its transformative aspirations, existing studies indicate that Merdeka Belajar is predominantly framed within a pedagogical and instrumental perspective. Most analyses focus on curriculum flexibility, digital integration, and the development of competencies aligned with labour-market and industrial demands (Lestiyani 2020; Rahma et al. 2025; Biesta 2009; Biesta 2015). While these aspects are important, they tend to reduce education to a functional system oriented toward efficiency, productivity, and adaptability. Consequently, the deeper philosophical dimensions of education, particularly its ethical and epistemological foundations, remain insufficiently explored. This reflects a recurring struggle in national curriculum shifts where standardised updates often fail to harmonise with deeply rooted religious literacy frameworks (Zuhdi and Sarwenda 2020).

This tendency reflects a broader global shift in educational discourse, where knowledge is increasingly treated as a tool for economic growth and competitiveness (Nussbaum 2010; Peters 2017). Such an orientation risks marginalising the intrinsic value of knowledge and its role in shaping moral subjectivity. As knowledge becomes instrumentalised, education may lose its ethical purpose and become detached from its function in cultivating responsible and reflective individuals. This raises a fundamental question: should education primarily serve economic and technical

goals, or should it be oriented toward the formation of ethical human beings?

In contrast to this instrumental orientation, Islamic educational traditions—particularly those embodied in *pesantren*—offer an alternative paradigm in which knowledge, ethics, and spirituality are integrated into a unified system. *Pesantren* have historically functioned as centres of knowledge production and moral formation, where learning is deeply embedded in communal life and ethical practice (Hanif et al. 2024; Huda et al. 2024). Within this tradition, knowledge is not merely transmitted but internalised and embodied through discipline, character formation, and spiritual cultivation.

From an epistemological perspective, Islamic thought conceptualises knowledge as an integrated system derived from multiple sources, including revelation, reason, and experience. This framework unites ontology, epistemology, and axiology, ensuring that knowledge is always oriented toward ethical and moral purposes (Supratama et al. 2023). Furthermore, Islamic epistemology understands truth as a dynamic, context-sensitive process involving the interaction among *ḥaqq* (objective truth), *ḥikma* (wisdom), and *maʿrifa* (epistemic inquiry), allowing knowledge to remain responsive to changing social conditions while preserving its ethical grounding (El Fadl 2015).

In addition, Islamic ethical theory provides a meta-ethical foundation that integrates divine guidance with human rationality, enabling individuals to engage in reflective moral reasoning. This integration challenges the notion that knowledge is value-neutral and reinforces the idea that knowledge production is inherently ethical and socially embedded (Al-Aidaros et al. 2013; Al-Attar 2017). In this sense, *pesantren*-based education can be understood as a form of systematic knowledge that embodies an ethical–

epistemic unity, rather than merely a traditional or cultural educational model.

Despite the richness of this tradition, existing research on *pesantren* education has largely focused on its institutional, cultural, or sociological dimensions, without fully exploring its potential as a conceptual framework for rethinking contemporary education (Huda et al. 2024). At the same time, studies on *Merdeka Belajar* rarely engage with indigenous epistemological traditions as sources of philosophical reflection. As a result, a significant gap remains in the literature regarding the integration of modern educational reform with ethical and epistemic frameworks rooted in local knowledge traditions.

This study addresses this gap by bringing *Merdeka Belajar* into dialogue with *pesantren*-based religious pedagogy and Islamic epistemology. It argues that *pesantren* should not be understood merely as an alternative educational model, but as a conceptual resource for reconstructing the ethical and epistemic foundations of education. By integrating insights from philosophy of science, particularly Philip Kitcher’s concept of knowledge as an ethical project, with Islamic epistemology, this study proposes an ethical and epistemic reconstruction of education in Indonesia.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to analyse the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* critically and to explore how *pesantren*-based religious pedagogy can contribute to redefining education as a process of ethical self-formation and epistemic responsibility. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on educational reform by offering a more holistic understanding of education that integrates knowledge, ethics, and human flourishing.

Literature Review

The concept of Merdeka Belajar has been widely discussed as a transformative educational reform aimed at addressing the challenges of globalisation, digitalisation, and rapid technological change. As a policy framework, it emphasises flexibility, autonomy, and innovation in learning, allowing both teachers and students to determine learning methods, materials, and evaluation systems (Lestiyani 2020; Natalia and Sukraini 2021; Burtonwood 2003). This reform is designed to foster competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, which are considered essential in the 21st century.

In practice, Merdeka Belajar has been associated with various pedagogical innovations, including project-based and experiential learning, as well as the integration of digital technology into educational processes (Rohimah et al. 2024). Within higher education, the policy is further developed through the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, which introduces flexible learning pathways that allow students to engage in interdisciplinary and real-world learning experiences (Fuadi 2021). These developments reflect a shift from traditional, standardised education toward more adaptive, learner-centred approaches.

From a philosophical perspective, Merdeka Belajar is closely linked to the tradition of progressive education, particularly the ideas of John Dewey. Progressive education emphasises the importance of experience, inquiry, and learners' active role in constructing knowledge, positioning education as a dynamic process that evolves with social and historical changes (Faiz and Kurniawaty 2020; Mcdermott 2007). In this framework, learning is not merely the transmission of knowledge but an interactive process that enables individuals to develop critical and reflective thinking.

This philosophical orientation also highlights the importance of educational autonomy, in which learners are encouraged to explore their interests, develop their potential, and actively engage in the learning process. Teachers, in this context, act as facilitators who guide and support students rather than imposing knowledge upon them. Such an approach is consistent with the broader goal of creating an educational system that is flexible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of contemporary society (Dewey 1916; Freire 1970; Giroux 2011).

Despite its progressive foundation, a significant body of literature indicates that contemporary educational reforms, including Merdeka Belajar, are often shaped by an instrumental view of education. This perspective prioritises efficiency, productivity, and alignment with market demands, framing education as a means to produce skilled labour and support economic development (Rahma et al. 2025; Rohimah et al. 2024; Biesta 2010). As a result, knowledge is often valued for its utility rather than its intrinsic or ethical significance.

This instrumentalisation is particularly evident in the emphasis on digital literacy, technological integration, and competency-based education. While these elements are essential for adapting to the digital era, they may also contribute to reducing education to a technocratic system focused on measurable outcomes and performance indicators. Such a system risks neglecting the broader purpose of education, including the development of ethical awareness, moral responsibility, and critical engagement with knowledge.

Moreover, the dominance of instrumental rationality in education reflects a broader global trend in which knowledge is increasingly commodified and aligned with economic interests. In this context, education becomes a tool for

achieving external goals, rather than a process of cultivating meaning and understanding. This raises important questions about the ethical and epistemological foundations of contemporary educational systems.

In contrast to modern instrumental approaches, pesantren-based education represents a long-standing tradition that integrates knowledge, ethics, and spirituality into a unified pedagogical framework. Pesantren are not merely educational institutions but also social and cultural centres that play a crucial role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge and the formation of moral character (Hanif et al. 2024). Learning within pesantren is deeply embedded in communal life, where knowledge is acquired through both formal instruction and lived experience.

Pesantren pedagogy emphasises discipline, character formation, and ethical conduct, reflecting a holistic approach to education. Traditional learning methods, such as *sorogan* (individualised, text-based learning) and *bandongan* (collective, lecture-based learning), are not only means of transmitting knowledge but also processes for cultivating intellectual humility, respect, and spiritual awareness (Huda et al. 2024). In this context, knowledge is understood as a transformative process that shapes both the intellect and the character of the learner.

Recent studies also highlight the adaptability of pesantren in responding to modern challenges. While maintaining their core values, pesantren have incorporated elements of modern education, including technology and vocational training, demonstrating their capacity to engage with contemporary realities without losing their ethical and epistemological foundations (Hanif et al. 2024). This adaptability underscores the relevance of pesantren as a dynamic educational model.

Islamic epistemology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding knowledge as an integrated system that encompasses ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Unlike modern epistemological frameworks that often separate knowledge from values, Islamic thought emphasises the unity of knowledge and ethics, in which the pursuit of knowledge is inherently linked to moral and spiritual objectives (Supratama et al. 2023). Knowledge is derived from multiple sources, including revelation, reason, and experience, forming a holistic and coherent system.

Furthermore, Islamic epistemology conceptualises truth as a dynamic process involving the interaction among objective truth (*haqq*), contextual wisdom (*hikma*), and epistemic inquiry (*ma'rifa*), thereby allowing knowledge to remain responsive to changing social and historical contexts (El Fadl 2015). This dynamic understanding challenges static, purely instrumental conceptions of knowledge, emphasising the importance of context, interpretation, and ethical judgment.

In addition, Islamic ethical theory integrates divine guidance with human rationality, enabling individuals to engage in reflective moral reasoning. This integration provides a meta-ethical foundation for understanding knowledge as inherently normative and value-oriented, rather than neutral or purely descriptive (Al-Aidaros et al. 2013; Al-Attar 2017). Such a framework supports the development of ethical awareness and moral responsibility within educational contexts.

Although the literature on Merdeka Belajar, pesantren education, and Islamic epistemology is extensive, these domains have largely been studied separately. Research on Merdeka Belajar tends to focus on policy implementation, pedagogical innovation, and technological integration, with limited attention to ethical and

epistemic dimensions. Conversely, studies on pesantren often emphasise their cultural, institutional, or historical aspects, without fully exploring their potential as a theoretical framework for contemporary education (Huda et al. 2024).

This separation reveals a significant gap in the literature, particularly in the absence of dialogue between modern educational reform and indigenous epistemological traditions. There is a lack of research that examines how pesantren-based religious pedagogy can contribute to rethinking the conceptual foundations of Merdeka Belajar. As a result, the ethical and epistemic potential of indigenous knowledge systems remains underutilised in current educational discourse.

Previous studies on Indonesian educational reforms have primarily focused on two distinct trajectories. On one hand, scholars have extensively evaluated Merdeka Belajar from administrative and technical standpoints, focusing on curriculum flexibility, digital readiness, and structural alignment with industrial needs. On the other hand, research on Pesantren has largely concentrated on historical preservation, character building, and institutional resilience against modernisation. What remains unaddressed by these prior studies is a critical, synthesis-oriented investigation that brings these two domains into a direct philosophical dialogue. Prior research has failed to evaluate how the pragmatic, outcome-based education (OBE) metrics of Merdeka Belajar interact with the metaphysical and ethical commitments of Pesantren. By addressing this blind spot, this article maps what has been omitted in current scholarship and offers a conceptual framework to bridge this pedagogical divide.

Therefore, this study positions itself at the intersection of these fields by integrating insights from philosophy of

science, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren pedagogy. It aims to provide a conceptual framework for reconstructing education as an ethical and epistemic project, thereby contributing to a more holistic understanding of educational reform in Indonesia.

Conceptual Framework

This study develops an integrative conceptual framework that brings together three interrelated perspectives: Philip Kitcher's philosophy of science, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren-based religious pedagogy. This framework is employed to critically examine the ethical and epistemic limitations of contemporary educational reform and to propose an alternative understanding of education as an ethical and epistemic project. From a theoretical standpoint, Merdeka Belajar embodies the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), requiring a strong synergy between institutional learning and experiential learning in society. In contrast, Pesantren constitutes a hybrid model that integrates traditional Islamic education with modern educational frameworks.

The first component of this framework is derived from Kitcher's philosophy of science, particularly his concept of well-ordered science. Kitcher argues that knowledge production should not be viewed as value-neutral or isolated from social concerns, but rather as a process guided by ethical considerations and oriented toward the common good (Kitcher 2001; Ziman 2000). In this view, knowledge is inherently normative, as it involves decisions about what is worth knowing, whose interests are served, and how knowledge contributes to collective well-being.

This perspective is further extended through Kitcher's notion of knowledge as part of an "ethical project," in which societies collectively construct moral

frameworks to regulate human behaviour and guide intellectual inquiry (Kitcher 2011). From this standpoint, education becomes a central site of ethical formation, shaping individuals not only as knowers but also as moral agents. Kitcher's later work reinforces this argument by positioning education as the "main enterprise of the world," emphasising its role in cultivating rationality, cooperation, and social responsibility (Kitcher 2021). These ideas provide a critical foundation for rethinking education beyond its instrumental function.

However, while Kitcher's framework offers a strong critique of instrumental rationality, it remains rooted in a secular epistemological tradition that does not fully integrate spirituality and revelation as sources of knowledge. To address this limitation, this study incorporates Islamic epistemology as the second component of the framework.

Islamic epistemology conceptualises knowledge as an integrated system encompassing ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Knowledge is derived from multiple sources, including revelation, reason, and experience, forming a holistic structure that unites understanding with ethical purpose (Supratama et al. 2023). Unlike modern epistemology, which often separates facts from values, Islamic thought emphasises that knowledge is inherently ethical and oriented toward the pursuit of justice, goodness, and human well-being.

Furthermore, Islamic epistemology provides a dynamic understanding of truth, articulated through the interaction between *ḥaqq* (objective truth), *ḥikma* (contextual wisdom), and *ma'rifa* (epistemic inquiry). This framework allows knowledge to remain responsive to historical and social contexts while maintaining its ethical grounding (Abou El Fadl 2015). In addition, Islamic ethical theory integrates divine guidance with human rationality, enabling reflective moral reasoning and reinforcing the

normative character of knowledge (Al-Aidaros et al. 2013; Al-Attar 2017).

The third component of this framework is pesantren-based religious pedagogy, which embodies an integrated ethical–epistemic system. Pesantren education does not treat knowledge as abstract or value-neutral, but as a lived and embodied practice in which intellectual development is inseparable from moral and spiritual formation. Through communal learning, close teacher-student relationships, and the internalisation of ethical values, pesantren pedagogy facilitates the formation of ethical subjectivity, in which individuals become both knowers and moral agents (Hanif et al. 2024).

By integrating these three perspectives, this study advances the concept of ethical and epistemic reconstruction in education. This reconstruction seeks to overcome the dichotomy between knowledge and values by re-integrating ethical considerations into the core of educational thought and practice. It redefines education not merely as a system of knowledge transmission or skill development, but as a process of forming ethical subjects within a coherent epistemological framework.

Within this framework, Merdeka Belajar is critically reinterpreted. While the policy emphasises autonomy and flexibility, this study argues that true educational freedom must be grounded in ethical responsibility and epistemic awareness. Freedom in education, therefore, is not simply the absence of constraints, but the capacity to engage in meaningful, responsible, and ethically guided knowledge practices.

Accordingly, this conceptual framework positions education as a holistic enterprise that integrates knowledge, ethics, and human flourishing. It provides a theoretical basis for rethinking

contemporary educational reform in Indonesia by bridging modern policy discourse with indigenous epistemological traditions, particularly pesantren-based religious pedagogy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a library research approach. The research focuses on a conceptual and philosophical analysis of educational reform, particularly the concept of Merdeka Belajar, in relation to Islamic epistemology and pesantren-based religious pedagogy. This approach is appropriate because the study does not aim to measure empirical variables, but to critically examine ideas, concepts, and theoretical frameworks concerning the ethical and epistemic dimensions of education.

The data sources in this study consist of both primary and secondary materials. Primary sources include philosophical works, particularly those of Philip Kitcher, such as *Science, Truth, and Democracy* (2001), *Science in a Democratic Society* (2011), and *The Main Enterprise of the World: Rethinking Education* (2021), which provide the theoretical basis for understanding knowledge as an ethical and social enterprise. Secondary sources include academic journal articles, policy documents, and previous studies on Merdeka Belajar, Islamic epistemology, pesantren education, and educational philosophy (Lestiyani 2020; Natalia & Sukraini 2021; Faiz & Kurniawaty 2020; Supratama et al. 2023).

To ensure academic rigour, data sources were selected according to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required: (1) primary philosophical works authored by Philip Kitcher that directly address pragmatism, science, and education as an ethical project; (2) official, current regulatory frameworks and policy documents on Merdeka Belajar

issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Education; and (3) peer-reviewed journal articles or authoritative classical books on pesantren pedagogy published within the last decade to capture contemporary discourse. Conversely, the exclusion criteria omitted: (1) opinion pieces, mass media blog posts, and non-peer-reviewed commentaries on Merdeka Belajar; and (2) general textbooks or historical studies on pesantren that do not conceptually intersect with educational philosophy or modern curriculum design.

Data collection was conducted through systematic documentation and literature review, involving the identification, selection, and organisation of relevant texts. The selection criteria were based on the relevance of the sources to the research focus, particularly their contribution to discussions on educational reform, epistemology, and ethics. The collected data were then categorised according to key themes, including instrumental approaches to education, ethical perspectives on knowledge, and the epistemological framework of pesantren-based pedagogy.

The systematic documentation and literature review were carried out in three sequential steps, each conducted independently by the researchers. First, the identification step involved electronic database searches using Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science (WoS) with specific keyword strings including Merdeka Belajar, Pesantren Pedagogy, Islamic Epistemology, and Philip Kitcher. This initial search yielded 65 documents. Second, the selection step applied strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, filtering out 36 publications that were duplicates or lacked direct philosophical relevance. Third, the organisation structured the remaining texts into thematic matrices. Through this rigorous process, a final set of 29 highly relevant documents was selected and

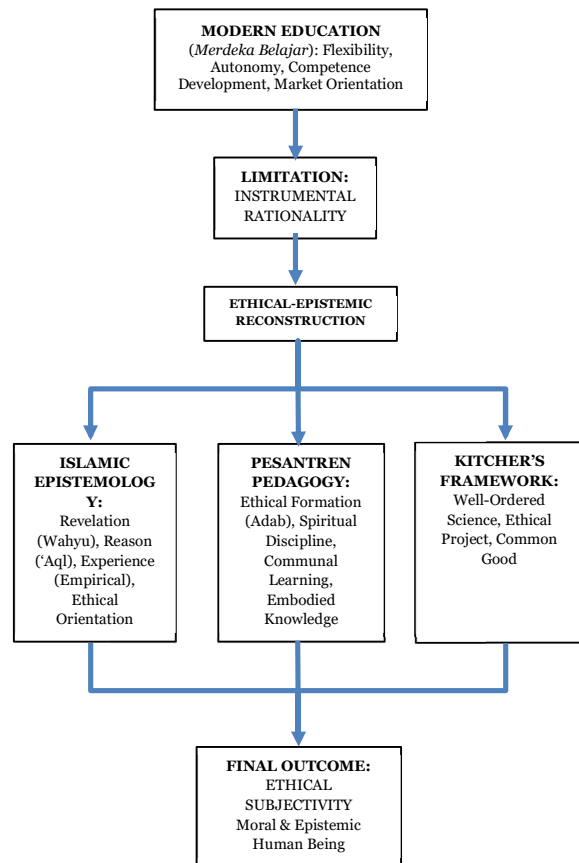
analysed, exactly as listed in the references. This final corpus consists of 4 primary philosophical texts by Philip Kitcher and 25 secondary sources, which include official policy studies, contemporary educational theories (e.g., Biesta, Dewey, and Freire), and authoritative Islamic epistemological literatures (e.g., Abou El Fadl, Al-Attar, and Hanif)

The data analysis technique used in this study is philosophical analysis, which includes conceptual clarification, critical interpretation, and theoretical synthesis. The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to present key concepts related to Merdeka Belajar, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren education. Second, critical analysis was employed to examine the limitations of existing educational frameworks, particularly their instrumental orientation and lack of ethical grounding. Third, a reconstructive analysis was conducted to develop an alternative conceptual framework that integrates the ethical and epistemic dimensions of education.

Through this methodological approach, the study aims to produce a coherent theoretical argument that redefines education as an ethical and epistemic project. This approach not only enables a critical understanding of contemporary educational reform but also provides a conceptual foundation for reconstructing the meaning of education in a more holistic and value-oriented manner.

To illustrate the integration of Kitcher's philosophy, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren pedagogy, the following figure presents the proposed ethical-epistemic reconstruction of education.

Figure 1. Ethical–Epistemic Reconstruction of Education through the Integration of Kitcher's Philosophy, Islamic Epistemology, and Pesantren Pedagogy.



Source: Constructed by the authors (2026).

As shown in Figure 1, the framework begins with the limitations of modern education, particularly its instrumental orientation. It then integrates Kitcher's ethical framework and Islamic epistemology, operationalised through pesantren pedagogy. This integration leads to the formation of ethical subjectivity, where knowledge and moral responsibility are inseparable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Merdeka Belajar, while conceptually progressive, remains largely embedded within an instrumental paradigm of education. The policy emphasises flexibility, autonomy, and competence development as

key principles, aiming to prepare learners for the demands of the digital and global economy (Lestiyani 2020; Natalia & Sukraini 2021). This orientation reflects a broader transformation in educational discourse, where knowledge is increasingly positioned as a resource for productivity and competitiveness.

In practice, this instrumental orientation is evident in the strong focus on digital literacy, skill acquisition, and curriculum adaptability. Educational success is often measured by the development of competencies aligned with labour market demands, reinforcing the view that education serves primarily as a means to achieve economic and functional goals (Rohimah et al. 2024; Rahma et al. 2025; Biesta 2009; Young 2013). While such an approach is necessary for responding to contemporary challenges, it also narrows the scope of education by prioritising utility over meaning.

This reduction of education to instrumental purposes raises critical concerns regarding the nature of knowledge itself. When knowledge is treated primarily as a tool for achieving external objectives, its ethical and epistemological dimensions are marginalised. As a result, education risks losing its role in shaping moral subjectivity and fostering reflective engagement with truth. This finding suggests that Merdeka Belajar requires a deeper philosophical grounding to address its ethical and epistemic limitations.

Kitcher's philosophy provides a critical framework for understanding the limitations of instrumental education. His concept of well-ordered science challenges the assumption that knowledge production is neutral, arguing instead that it must be guided by ethical considerations and oriented toward the common good (Kitcher 2001). This perspective implies that educational systems should not be evaluated solely based on efficiency or

performance, but also on their contribution to ethical and social development.

Furthermore, Kitcher conceptualises knowledge as part of an "ethical project," in which societies collectively construct moral frameworks to guide intellectual and social practices (Kitcher 2011). From this standpoint, education becomes a central process in the formation of ethical agents, equipping learners not only with knowledge but also with the capacity for moral reasoning and social responsibility. This challenges the dominant view of education as a technical process and repositions it as a moral enterprise.

Kitcher's later work further reinforces this argument by emphasising that education is the "main enterprise of the world," highlighting its fundamental role in shaping human flourishing and collective well-being (Kitcher 2021). This perspective invites a rethinking of Merdeka Belajar, suggesting that a stronger ethical orientation must complement its emphasis on autonomy and flexibility. Educational freedom, in this sense, should be understood not merely as independence from constraints, but as the capacity to engage in ethically meaningful knowledge practices.

Pesantren as an Ethical–Epistemic Alternative

The analysis reveals that pesantren-based education offers a fundamentally different model of knowledge, integrating epistemology and ethics into a unified framework. Unlike modern educational systems that tend to separate knowledge from values, pesantren pedagogy emphasises that knowledge is inherently ethical and must be embodied in practice. Learning within pesantren involves not only intellectual development but also moral and spiritual formation (Hanif et al. 2024). This integrated pedagogical approach manifests an alternative educational paradigm where

institutional axiology is directly driven by moral consciousness and deep spiritual value systems (Ahmad Sulton 2023).

This integrated approach is grounded in Islamic epistemology, which conceptualises knowledge as a synthesis of revelation, reason, and lived experience (Supratama et al. 2023). Such a framework ensures that knowledge is always oriented toward ethical purposes, including justice, goodness, and social responsibility. In this sense, knowledge is not merely acquired but internalised and enacted through ethical conduct.

Moreover, Islamic epistemology provides a dynamic understanding of truth through the interplay between *haqq*, *hikma*, and *ma'rifa*, allowing knowledge to adapt to changing contexts while maintaining its moral grounding (El Fadl, 2015). This perspective contrasts sharply with static or purely instrumental conceptions of knowledge, emphasising the importance of wisdom and ethical judgment in the learning process.

Pesantren pedagogy also reflects a model of ethical subject formation, in which learners are shaped through discipline, communal interaction, and the internalisation of values. This process fosters what can be described as ethical subjectivity, in which individuals become both knowers and moral agents. Such a model demonstrates that education can function as a transformative process that integrates knowledge with ethical and spiritual development.

Building on the integration of Kitcher's philosophy and Islamic epistemology, this study proposes an ethical and epistemic reconstruction of education. This reconstruction seeks to move beyond the instrumental paradigm by re-integrating ethical considerations into the core of educational thought and practice. It redefines education not as a system of

knowledge transmission or skill development, but as a process of ethical self-formation.

In this reconstructed framework, educational freedom is understood as the capacity to engage in responsible and meaningful knowledge practices (Lambert 2015; Noddings 2005). Autonomy is not merely the absence of constraints, but the ability to make ethical judgments and to use knowledge in ways that contribute to the common good. This perspective aligns with both Kitcher's notion of knowledge as an ethical project and the Islamic understanding of knowledge as inherently moral.

Furthermore, this reconstruction highlights the importance of integrating indigenous epistemological traditions into contemporary educational reform. Pesantren-based pedagogy demonstrates that alternative models of knowledge can provide valuable insights into the ethical dimensions of education. By incorporating these perspectives, educational systems can move toward a more holistic and balanced understanding of knowledge, integrating cognitive, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

Ultimately, this study argues that Merdeka Belajar can be strengthened and deepened through an ethical and epistemic reconstruction that draws on both philosophical and religious traditions. Such an approach not only enhances the conceptual foundation of educational reform but also contributes to the development of an educational system that is more meaningful, responsible, and aligned with human flourishing.

Beyond its instrumental orientation, the findings also reveal a deeper issue in contemporary educational reform: an epistemological fragmentation that separates knowledge from its ethical and moral foundations. This fragmentation is not unique to Merdeka Belajar, but reflects a broader global condition in which

education increasingly prioritises technical rationality over ethical reflection. As knowledge becomes more specialised and fragmented, its connection to meaning, purpose, and moral responsibility weakens.

Several studies indicate that integrating technology and modern curricula, while offering efficiency and accessibility, may also contribute to reducing knowledge to data and measurable outputs. In such a context, the richness of knowledge as a transformative and value-oriented process is diminished. Knowledge is no longer experienced as a process of understanding reality and developing moral awareness, but rather as a functional tool for achieving predefined objectives.

This condition can be interpreted as an epistemological crisis, in which the foundations of knowledge become unstable due to the loss of coherence between knowledge, values, and human purpose. As Kitcher (2021) argues, the inability to reconcile competing value systems—particularly between tradition and modernity—can lead to inconsistencies in ethical judgment and institutional practice. In education, this crisis manifests as a tension between economic productivity and the need for moral and ethical development.

Knowledge, Power, and the Moral Responsibility of Education

Another important dimension revealed in this study is the relationship between knowledge and power in educational systems. Knowledge is not neutral; it is always embedded within structures of power that shape what is considered valid, legitimate, and valuable. In modern education, this often takes the form of standardised curricula, assessment systems, and policy frameworks that prioritise certain types of knowledge while marginalising others.

From a critical perspective, this dynamic reflects the interplay between knowledge and power, where educational systems function not only to transmit knowledge but also to reproduce particular social and ideological structures (Apple 2004). In this sense, Merdeka Belajar, despite its emphasis on freedom and autonomy, still operates within a broader system shaped by global economic and technological paradigms.

Kitcher's framework provides an important corrective to this tendency by emphasising that knowledge must be democratically organised and ethically justified (Kitcher 2001). Rather than allowing knowledge to be shaped solely by market forces or institutional power, Kitcher proposes that knowledge production should be guided by collective deliberation and oriented toward the common good. This perspective highlights the ethical responsibility of education to shape not only what people know but also how they understand their role in society.

Within this context, pesantren-based education can be understood as a form of epistemic resistance that challenges dominant paradigms of knowledge. Rather than adopting a purely instrumental or technocratic approach, pesantren traditions maintain a holistic understanding of knowledge that integrates intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. This integration allows pesantren to offer an alternative model of education that is both contextually grounded and ethically oriented.

Research on decolonial Islamic studies highlights that pesantren traditions constitute an indigenous epistemology that resists the dominance of Western-centric knowledge systems (Huda et al. 2024). This resistance is not merely oppositional but constructive, as it provides alternative ways of understanding knowledge rooted in local traditions and values. In this sense,

pesantren education contributes to a pluralistic understanding of knowledge, where multiple epistemological frameworks coexist and interact.

Moreover, pesantren pedagogy demonstrates that knowledge can function as a transformative force that shapes both individual character and social life. Through practices such as ethical discipline, communal learning, and spiritual reflection, pesantren education cultivates a form of knowledge that is deeply connected to lived experience. This approach contrasts with abstract, decontextualised forms of knowledge that often dominate modern education.

A key contribution of this study is the concept of ethical subjectivity as a central goal of education. In contrast to the dominant model of education that focuses on the development of competencies and skills, this study emphasises the formation of individuals capable of ethical reflection and responsible action. Ethical subjectivity refers to the capacity of individuals to understand themselves as moral agents and to engage critically with knowledge in ethically meaningful ways.

In pesantren-based education, this process is facilitated by integrating knowledge and practice, where learning is inseparable from moral and spiritual development. The learner is not merely a passive recipient of knowledge, but an active participant in a process of self-formation. This process involves not only intellectual engagement but also ethical discipline, emotional development, and spiritual awareness.

This perspective aligns with Kitcher's view that education should cultivate individuals who are capable of participating in ethical deliberation and contributing to the common good (Kitcher 2011). However, integrating Islamic epistemology adds a deeper dimension to this process by emphasising the role of spirituality and

moral consciousness in shaping human understanding. As a result, education becomes a holistic process that encompasses both intellectual and ethical development.

The expansion of this discussion also leads to a reinterpretation of the concept of educational freedom within Merdeka Belajar. While the policy emphasises autonomy and flexibility, this study argues that educational freedom must be understood in a more substantive sense. Freedom is not merely the absence of constraints, but the ability to engage in meaningful and responsible knowledge practices.

In this sense, educational freedom involves the capacity to make ethical judgments, to evaluate knowledge critically, and to act in ways that contribute to others' well-being. This understanding of freedom is consistent with both Kitcher's ethical framework and Islamic epistemology, which emphasise the importance of responsibility and moral awareness in human action.

By redefining educational freedom in this way, this study highlights the need to move beyond purely instrumental interpretations of Merdeka Belajar. Instead, educational reform should aim to create conditions that enable individuals to develop both intellectual and ethical capacities, ensuring that knowledge is used in ways that are socially and morally beneficial.

Reconstructing Education: Toward a Holistic Model

A deeper analysis of this study reveals that the contrast between Merdeka Belajar and pesantren-based education is not merely institutional, but fundamentally epistemological. These two models represent distinct paradigms of knowledge, each grounded in different assumptions about the nature, purpose, and function of education.

Merdeka Belajar, as previously discussed, is rooted in a progressive, modern educational framework that emphasises autonomy, flexibility, and competence development. Knowledge, in this paradigm, is largely oriented toward problem-solving, innovation, and adaptation to changing socio-economic conditions (Faiz and Kurniawaty 2020; Fuadi, 2021). Learning is designed to prepare individuals for participation in a dynamic, competitive global environment, where success is often measured by performance, productivity, and employability.

In contrast, pesantren-based education operates within a fundamentally different epistemological framework. Knowledge in pesantren is not primarily oriented toward external outcomes, but toward internal transformation. The purpose of learning is not only to understand the world, but to cultivate moral character, spiritual awareness, and ethical responsibility. In this sense, knowledge is not merely instrumental, but transformative.

This difference can be understood through three key dimensions: the nature of knowledge, the role of the learner, and the purpose of education. First, in Merdeka Belajar, knowledge is often treated as modular and transferable, designed for application across different contexts. In pesantren, however, knowledge is relational and embodied, developed through continuous engagement with texts, teachers, and lived experience.

Second, the learner's role differs significantly. In Merdeka Belajar, the learner is positioned as an autonomous individual who actively constructs knowledge. While this aligns with progressive educational ideals, it may also reinforce individualistic tendencies if not balanced by ethical considerations. In pesantren, the learner is situated within a

community and guided by a moral framework that emphasises humility, discipline, and responsibility.

Third, the purpose of education reflects the most fundamental difference. Merdeka Belajar aims to produce competent and adaptable individuals, while pesantren education seeks to form ethical subjects capable of navigating life with moral awareness and spiritual depth. This distinction highlights the limitations of an educational model that prioritises external success over internal formation.

Building on this comparison, this study proposes that the future of education lies not in choosing between these paradigms, but in reconstructing a more holistic model that integrates their strengths. Merdeka Belajar makes important contributions through its flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness to contemporary challenges. However, without a strong ethical and epistemic foundation, these strengths may lead to fragmentation and superficiality in learning.

Pesantren-based education, on the other hand, offers a robust ethical and epistemological framework that emphasises the integration of knowledge and values. Its focus on character formation, ethical discipline, and spiritual awareness provides a deeper understanding of education as a transformative process. However, pesantren education may also face challenges in adapting to rapidly changing technological and social contexts.

An ethical–epistemic reconstruction of education, therefore, requires a synthesis of these two paradigms. Such a synthesis would involve integrating the flexibility and innovation of Merdeka Belajar with the ethical depth and epistemological coherence of pesantren-based pedagogy. In this model, education is not reduced to a technical process but is understood as a

holistic enterprise encompassing intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

This reconstruction also requires a rethinking of curriculum design, teaching methods, and assessment systems. The curriculum should not focus solely on knowledge acquisition but also on ethical reflection and moral reasoning. Teaching methods should encourage not only critical thinking, but also self-awareness and responsibility. Assessment should move beyond measuring performance to evaluating the development of ethical and epistemic capacities.

Philosophical Implications: Education as Moral–Epistemic Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for educational policy and practice in Indonesia. First, policymakers should recognise that educational reform cannot be limited to structural and technical changes; it must also address the philosophical foundations of education. Without a clear ethical and epistemic framework, policies such as Merdeka Belajar may fail to achieve their intended goals.

Second, there is a need to integrate indigenous knowledge traditions into educational reform. Pesantren-based pedagogy demonstrates that local traditions can provide valuable insights into the ethical dimensions of education. By incorporating these perspectives, educational systems can become more culturally relevant and philosophically grounded.

Third, educators should be encouraged to adopt a more holistic approach to teaching and learning. This involves recognising that education is not only about knowledge and skills, but also about values, character, and meaning. Teachers should be supported in creating

learning environments that foster both intellectual and ethical development.

This study suggests that future research should explore practical ways of implementing ethical epistemic frameworks in educational settings. This includes examining how pesantren-based principles can be adapted to formal education systems, and how educational policies can be designed to support holistic learning.

The integration of Kitcher's philosophy, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren pedagogy ultimately led to a fundamental rethinking of education as a moral–epistemic practice. This perspective challenges the dominant assumption that education is primarily concerned with knowledge transmission or skill acquisition. Instead, it positions education as a process through which individuals come to understand not only the world but also their ethical responsibilities within it.

From a philosophical standpoint, this shift requires a redefinition of the relationship between knowledge and ethics. In modern educational systems, knowledge is often treated as a neutral entity, detached from moral considerations. This assumption is rooted in the legacy of Enlightenment thought, which sought to separate facts from values to establish objectivity. However, as Kitcher argues, such a separation is ultimately untenable, as all forms of knowledge are shaped by human interests, values, and social contexts (Kitcher 2001).

In contrast, the framework developed in this study affirms that knowledge is inherently ethical. The process of knowing involves making judgments about what is significant, what is worth pursuing, and how knowledge should be applied. These judgments are not purely technical, but deeply normative. As such, education must be understood as a site where these ethical dimensions of knowledge are cultivated and negotiated.

Islamic epistemology provides a robust foundation for this perspective by emphasising the unity of knowledge and values. In this tradition, knowledge is not only a means of understanding reality, but also a guide for ethical action. The integration of revelation, reason, and experience ensures that knowledge remains grounded in both truth and moral purpose (Supratama et al. 2023). This integration challenges the fragmentation of knowledge in modern education, where different domains of knowledge are often treated as isolated and disconnected.

Furthermore, the dynamic conception of truth in Islamic epistemology—articulated through the interplay of *haqq*, *hikma*, and *ma'rifa*—suggests that knowledge is always situated within a broader ethical and historical context (Abou El Fadl 2015). This perspective highlights the importance of wisdom and contextual understanding in learning, moving beyond purely analytical or technical approaches. It also reinforces the idea that knowledge must be continuously interpreted and re-evaluated in light of changing circumstances.

Pesantren pedagogy provides a concrete illustration of how this moral-epistemic framework can be realised in practice. In pesantren, learning is not confined to the acquisition of information, but involves a process of character formation and ethical discipline. The close relationship between teachers and students, the emphasis on communal life, and the integration of spiritual practices all contribute to the development of individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally grounded.

This model of education can be understood as a form of ethical subject formation, where the learner is shaped as a moral agent through engagement with knowledge. Unlike modern educational systems that prioritise individual

achievement and performance, pesantren education emphasises responsibility, humility, and service to others. This orientation reflects a fundamentally different understanding of the purpose of education, one that prioritises moral development over instrumental success.

The implications of this perspective are significant for contemporary educational reform. If education is understood as a moral-epistemic practice, then policies such as Merdeka Belajar must be evaluated not only in terms of their effectiveness or efficiency, but also in terms of their ethical orientation. This requires a shift from a purely technical approach to education to a more reflective, value-oriented framework.

In practical terms, this shift involves rethinking the goals, methods, and outcomes of education. Educational goals should include not only the development of skills and knowledge, but also the cultivation of ethical awareness and moral responsibility. Teaching methods should encourage students to engage critically with knowledge, reflect on its ethical implications, and apply it in ways that contribute to the common good. Assessment systems should move beyond measuring performance to evaluating the development of ethical and epistemic capacities.

Moreover, this perspective highlights the importance of cultural and epistemological diversity in education. By incorporating indigenous knowledge traditions such as pesantren-based pedagogy, educational systems can move beyond the dominance of a single epistemological framework and embrace a more pluralistic understanding of knowledge. This pluralism not only enriches educational discourse but also enables more inclusive and contextually relevant forms of learning.

Ultimately, this study suggests that the future of education lies in integrating knowledge, ethics, and human flourishing into a coherent framework. Such an integration requires both philosophical reflection and practical innovation, as well as a willingness to engage with diverse intellectual traditions. By bringing together insights from Kitcher's philosophy, Islamic epistemology, and pesantren pedagogy, this study provides a foundation for rethinking education as a holistic and transformative process.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the concept of Merdeka Belajar through a philosophical lens, analysing its ethical and epistemic foundations and situating it in dialogue with pesantren-based religious pedagogy and Islamic epistemology. While Merdeka Belajar represents a significant shift toward flexibility, autonomy, and student-centred learning, the findings indicate that its current formulation remains largely influenced by an instrumental orientation of education, emphasising competence, adaptability, and functional outcomes.

In summary, this study contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform by bridging modern policy frameworks with philosophical and indigenous knowledge traditions. It suggests that the future of education lies in integrating knowledge, ethics, and human flourishing into a coherent, sustainable framework. Despite these theoretical contributions, several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Because this research relies primarily on a qualitative, philosophical, and library approach, it does not provide empirical evidence of how Merdeka Belajar is practically implemented in actual school settings. Furthermore, while this study frames pesantren-based pedagogy as an alternative epistemological framework, it does not capture the vast diversity of pesantren traditions across

Indonesia, which vary significantly in curriculum and in their engagement with the modern world. Consequently, future research directions should focus on empirical studies that investigate the practical adaptations of these ethical–epistemic frameworks in formal public schools and higher education institutions. Future investigations could also explore the impact of integrating moral and spiritual dimensions on students' actual critical thinking, moral reasoning, and social responsibility. By empirically testing these philosophical claims, future scholarship can offer more scalable pathways toward a holistic national education system.

By integrating Philip Kitcher's philosophy, particularly the concepts of well-ordered science and knowledge as an ethical project, this study demonstrates that education cannot be understood as a value-neutral or purely technical process. Rather, education must be oriented toward ethical purposes, including the formation of responsible individuals and the pursuit of the common good. This perspective challenges the prevailing tendency to reduce education to a tool of economic productivity and highlights the need for a deeper philosophical grounding of educational reform.

In this context, pesantren-based education offers a significant conceptual contribution by presenting a model of knowledge that integrates epistemology, ethics, and spirituality into a unified framework. Knowledge within pesantren traditions is not merely acquired but embodied through ethical discipline, communal practice, and spiritual formation, resulting in what this study conceptualises as ethical subjectivity. This model demonstrates that education can function as a transformative process that shapes both intellectual capacity and moral responsibility.

Building on this analysis, this study proposes an ethical and epistemic reconstruction of education, in which Merdeka Belajar is reinterpreted beyond its current instrumental framework. Educational freedom, in this sense, is not merely the absence of constraints but the capacity to engage in meaningful, responsible, and ethically grounded knowledge practices. This study develops an integrative conceptual framework.

This study highlights the importance of integrating indigenous epistemological traditions into contemporary educational discourse. Pesantren-based pedagogy demonstrates that local knowledge systems can offer valuable insights into the ethical dimensions of education, thereby contributing to a more holistic, contextually grounded understanding of learning. This integration not only enriches theoretical perspectives but also offers practical implications for developing more meaningful educational policies and practices.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform by bridging modern policy frameworks with philosophical and indigenous knowledge traditions. It suggests that the future of education lies in integrating knowledge, ethics, and human flourishing into a coherent, sustainable framework. Such an approach is essential for developing an educational system that is not only adaptive and innovative but also ethically grounded and socially responsible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article is part of the author's doctoral research conducted at the Faculty of Philosophy, Universitas Gadjah Mada. The research was funded by the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education Scholarship (Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia, BPI), administered by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and

Technology for the 2021–2025 period (currently under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia), in collaboration with the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP).

REFERENCES

- Al-Aidaros, Al-Hasan, Faridahwati Mohd. Shamsudin, and Kamil Md. Idris, 2013. "Ethics and Ethical Theories from an Islamic Perspective." *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 4: 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.4.2013.001>
- Al-Attar, Mariam. 2017. "Meta-Ethics: A Quest for an Epistemological Basis of Morality in Classical Islamic Thought." *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 1(1): 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340003>
- Apple, Michael W. 2004. *Ideology and Curriculum*. New York: Routledge.
- Biesta, Gert. 2009. "Good Education in an Age of Measurement." *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 21(1): 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9>
- Biesta, Gert. 2010. *Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315634319>
- Biesta, Gert. 2015. "What Is Education For?" *European Journal of Education* 50(1): 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12109>
- Burtonwood, Neil. 2003. "Social Cohesion, Autonomy and the Liberal Defence of Faith Schools", *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Volume 37, Issue 3, August 2003, Pages 415–425,

- <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00336>
- Dewey, John. 1916. *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- El Fadl, Khaled Abou. 2015. "The Epistemology of the Truth in Modern Islam." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 41(4-5): 473-486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453715577739>
- Faiz, Aiman, and Imas Kurniawaty. 2020. "Konsep Merdeka Belajar dalam Perspektif Filsafat Progresivisme." *Konstruktivisme: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 12(2): 155-164. <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v12i2.973>
- Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Fuadi, Tuti Marjan. 2021. "Konsep Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)." *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Biotik IX*, 9 (2): 183-200. <https://doi.org/10.22373/pbio.v9i2.11594>
- Giroux, Henry A. 2011. *On Critical Pedagogy*. New York: Continuum.
- Hanif, Abdullah, Ilzamudin Ma'mur, and Agus Gunawan. 2024. "From Tafaquh Fiddin to Applied Sciences." *Khazanah Pendidikan Islam* 6(3): 157-176. <https://doi.org/10.15575/kpi.v6i3.41500>
- Huda, Muhammad Hasanul Kamil, et al. 2024. "Decolonizing Islamic Studies: Rethinking Epistemology, Methodology, and Praxis in the Global South" *ASEAN Journal of Islamic Studies and Civilization*, 1 (2): 155-169. Doi: 10.62976/ajisc.v1i1.1437
- Kitcher, Philip. 2001. *Science, Truth, and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2011. *Science in a Democratic Society*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2011. *The Ethical Project*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2021. *The Main Enterprise of the World: Rethinking Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, D., & Biddulph, M. 2015. "The dialogic space offered by curriculum-making in the process of learning to teach, and the creation of a progressive knowledge-led curriculum". *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(3), 210-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2014.934197>
- Lestiyani, Pudji. 2020. "Analisis Persepsi Civitas Akademika Terhadap Konsep Merdeka Belajar Menyongsong Era Industri 5.0". *Jurnal Kependidikan : Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran, dan Pembelajaran*, 6(3), 365-372. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v6i3.2913>
- Mcdermott, R., & Raley, J. D. 2007. *From John Dewey to an Anthropology of Education. Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 109(7), 1820-1835. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810710900705>
- Natalia, Krisma, and Ni Wayan Sukraini. 2021. "Pendekatan Konsep Merdeka Belajar dalam Pendidikan Era Digital." *Prosiding Webinar Nasional IAHN-TP Palangka Raya*, 3. <https://prosiding.iahntp.ac.id/index.php/seminar-nasional/article/view/93>. <https://doi.org/10.33363/sn.voi3.93>

- Noddings, Nel. 2005. *The Challenge to Care in Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 2010. *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton University Press
- Peters, Michael A. 2017. "Education in a Post-Truth World." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 49(6): 563–566.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1264114>
- Rahma, H. R., Aprison, W., Hakimah, N., & Sospita, D. 2025. "Digitization of Islamic Education in the Framework of Indonesian Regulations: Opportunities, Challenges, and Development Directions". *At-Tasyrih: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Hukum Islam*, 11(2), 319- 327.
<https://doi.org/10.55849/attasyrih.v11i2.389>
- Rohimah, S. M., Mahmud, M. R., & Fazriyah, N. 2024." Epistemological Review of the Merdeka Curriculum in Elementary Schools: Relevance to the Axiological Values of the SDGs". *Literate: International Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 3(2), 211–229.
<https://doi.org/10.52005/literate.v3i2.40>
- Sulton, Ahmad. 2023. "The Educational Axiology of Al-Maqbul Traditional Pesantren." *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 8(1): 36–50.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v8i1.1843>
- Supratama, R., Hapsari, A. P. ., Ramadani, M. M. ., & Hidayat, R. . 2023. Islam as a Science: Ontology, Epistemology and Ethics. *Amorti: Jurnal Studi Islam Interdisipliner*, 2(4), 200–206.
<https://doi.org/10.59944/amorti.v2i4.227>
- Young, M. 2013. "Overcoming the crisis in curriculum theory: a knowledge-based approach". *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(2), 101–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2013.764505>
- Ziman, John. 2000. *Real Science: What It Is and What It Means*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zuhdi, Muhammad and Sarwenda. 2020. "Recurring Issues in Indonesia's Islamic Education: The Needs for Religious Literacy." *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 5(1): 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v5i1.1038>