

**DOUBLE MOVEMENT AND ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY: A STUDY OF
FAZLUR RAHMAN'S THOUGHT ON THE INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Fazlur Rahman's concept of the double movement in addressing the dichotomy between traditionalist and modern knowledge systems within Islamic education. Employing a qualitative library research approach, this study analyzes Rahman's construction of an integrative epistemology that harmonizes classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary scientific knowledge. The findings reveal three key contributions: First, Rahman's double movement method enables the integration of traditional and modern sciences through a two-step hermeneutical process moving from the present context to the Qur'anic revelation period, then back to contemporary application. Second, the educational epistemology emphasizes ijtihad as intellectual jihad, requiring the integration of religious and general sciences, developing curricula responsive to contemporary challenges, and prioritizing character development. Third, intellectualism in Islamic education functions to demonstrate the truth of religious knowledge within disciplinary frameworks, formulate knowledge products aligned with religious values, and pioneer scientific concepts derived from religious norms. The study concludes that Rahman's construction has significant implications for harmonizing modern knowledge with traditional Islamic scholarship, producing Muslim generations capable of understanding both normative Islam and its historical development.

Keywords: double movement; integration; educational epistemology; Islamic intellectualism.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education faces a profound crisis characterized by the persistent dichotomy between traditional religious knowledge and modern scientific disciplines. This dualism has resulted in two parallel educational systems: religious schools that preserve classical Islamic traditions while remaining disconnected from scientific and technological developments, and modern educational institutions that operate within secular frameworks devoid of spiritual and moral foundations. As Fazlur Rahman (1984) observed, Islamic education had become trapped between two extreme poles: normative conservatism that treats classical heritage as absolute authority, and liberal secularism that disregards spiritual values, reducing education to mere economic production and social mobility. The Indonesian National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 emphasizes the importance of holistic education that develops students' spiritual, intellectual, and moral capacities, yet the reality of educational practice often falls short of this ideal.

The dominance of Western modes of thinking has significantly shaped educational paradigms across the Muslim world. Rahman (1984) identified this as a fundamental challenge confronting Islamic civilization, arguing that the substitution of *taqlid* (blind imitation) for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) had produced an intellectual culture that was passive, uncritical, and incapable of responding to changing circumstances. This phenomenon, which began in the medieval period, continues to impede intellectual progress in the Muslim world. Assyaukanie (2009) similarly noted that the separation between religious and secular knowledge has produced graduates who are either religiously knowledgeable but scientifically illiterate, or scientifically competent but spiritually empty.

The dichotomy between traditional and modern knowledge has profound consequences. Traditional Islamic education tends toward textual literalism, emphasizing memorization and repetition over critical analysis and creative thinking (Nuryanto, 2011). Meanwhile, modern education, imported from Western models, operates autonomously without integrating Islamic values and worldview. Menchik (2019) observed that this separation has resulted in Muslim societies that are either culturally rooted but intellectually stagnant, or scientifically advanced but spiritually disconnected. The situation is further complicated by the rapid advancement of science and technology, which has created new challenges that traditional Islamic scholarship struggles to address.

In response to this crisis, Fazlur Rahman developed a systematic methodological approach known as the "double movement" (*al-harakah al-muzdawijah*). This hermeneutical method offers a framework for interpreting Islamic sources in a manner that remains faithful to their original revelation while remaining responsive to contemporary realities (Sibawaihi, 2007). The double movement consists of two interconnected movements: first, moving from the present situation back to the time of the Qur'an's revelation to understand the historical context and moral objectives of its teachings; second, moving from the Qur'anic period back to the present to derive contextualized principles applicable to modern challenges (Hermanto, 2018).

What distinguishes Rahman's approach is its integration of both inductive and deductive reasoning. The first movement employs inductive reasoning, deriving universal principles from specific historical cases. The second movement applies deductive reasoning, implementing these universal principles in particular contemporary contexts (Abdul Aziz, 2007). This methodological sophistication enables Rahman to bridge the gap between classical Islamic scholarship and modern intellectual traditions without compromising the essential values of either. Amal (1996) emphasized that Rahman's methodological innovation represents a significant departure from traditional approaches that treated Islamic sources as static and unchanging.

The novelty of this research lies in its examination of how Rahman's double movement methodology can serve as a foundation for educational epistemology that produces Muslim intellectuals capable of engaging with both traditional Islamic sciences and modern knowledge systems. While previous studies have examined Rahman's hermeneutical theory (Mustaqim, 2002, 2010) or his contributions to Islamic reform (Soleh, 2003), fewer have explored the specific implications of his thought for educational practice and the cultivation of Islamic intellectualism. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the construction of Rahman's educational epistemology and its potential to resolve the knowledge dichotomy that plagues contemporary Islamic education.

Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: First, how does Fazlur Rahman's double movement methodology resolve the dichotomy between traditional and modern knowledge in Islamic education? Second, how does Rahman's construction of Islamic educational epistemology offer an alternative framework for Islamic education?

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Philosophy and Design

This research employs a qualitative approach with library research (library research) as its primary method. Qualitative research emphasizes in-depth understanding of phenomena rather than generalization, focusing on case-by-case analysis based on the premise that each problem possesses unique characteristics requiring specific examination (Suprayogo & Tobroni, 1998).

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary materials. Primary data include Fazlur Rahman's original works, particularly *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1984), *Islamic Methodology in History* (1965), and *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (1980). These works contain Rahman's foundational ideas regarding educational reform, methodological innovation, and the integration of knowledge. Secondary data include scholarly articles, books, theses, and dissertations that analyze and critique Rahman's thought, written by both Western and Muslim scholars (Muhaimin, 2020).

Data collection techniques involved systematic documentation from research journals, academic books, mass media, and credible internet sources. The analysis followed three stages: editing, organizing, and finding. Editing involved reviewing collected materials for relevance and quality. Organizing entailed categorizing information according to thematic areas corresponding to the research questions. Finding involved interpretive analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and implications within Rahman's thought.

The use of library research is appropriate for this study because it examines the intellectual contributions of a historical figure whose primary legacy exists in written form. This approach enables comprehensive engagement with Rahman's extensive corpus while situating his ideas within broader scholarly conversations about Islamic education and modernity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Double Movement as a Resolution to the Knowledge Dichotomy

The Construction of Double Movement and Its Pedagogical Foundations

Fazlur Rahman's double movement methodology emerges from his critical assessment of the stagnation in Islamic intellectual life. He identified the medieval doctrine of the "closure of the gates of *ijtihad*" as a primary cause of this stagnation, arguing that the substitution of *taqlid* for independent reasoning had produced an intellectual culture that was passive, uncritical, and incapable of responding to changing circumstances (Rahman, 2001b). Rahman (1984) argued that secularism in the Muslim world was not primarily a product of Western influence but rather a consequence of the internal failure of Islamic thought to address contemporary challenges. The double movement was designed to overcome this limitation by providing a systematic method for interpreting Islamic sources that remained faithful to their original intent while enabling creative adaptation to new situations.

The double movement operates through two interconnected movements. As Rahman (1984) explained, the first movement requires understanding the meaning of a text while simultaneously comprehending the historical and social conditions that prompted its revelation. This movement demands comprehensive engagement with the Qur'anic text in its entirety, examination of specific contexts, and extraction of general legal and moral principles that constitute its universal message. This process employs inductive reasoning, moving from particular cases to general principles (Abdul Aziz, 2007).

The second movement involves taking these universal principles and applying them to contemporary situations. After identifying the moral objectives and ethical values underlying specific Qur'anic injunctions, the interpreter must determine how these principles can be realized in the present context (Muttaqin, 2013). This movement employs deductive reasoning, moving from general principles to particular applications. Together, these two movements create a hermeneutical circle that ensures both historical authenticity and contemporary relevance. Hermanto (2018) emphasized that this methodological framework enables the Qur'an to remain a living guide rather than a static historical text.

This methodological framework aligns closely with principles of critical pedagogy and constructivism. Constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge cannot be simply transferred but must be actively constructed by learners, resonates with Rahman's emphasis on active intellectual engagement rather than passive reception (Stit et al., n.d.). Nuryanto (2011) similarly argued that critical pedagogy's emphasis on dialogue, critical thinking, and the transformation of educational

practices from indoctrination to empowerment corresponds to Rahman's vision of Islamic education as a process of cultivating autonomous, creative intellectuals.

Rahman's approach challenges the traditional pedagogical model that dominates many Islamic educational institutions. This model, characterized by memorization, repetition, and one-way transmission of information, produces students who are passive recipients rather than active producers of knowledge. As Nuryanto (2011) observed, this approach fails to develop the critical thinking skills necessary for genuine intellectual contribution and leaves students unable to distinguish between normative Islam (the eternal principles of the faith) and historical Islam (the contextual formulations developed by scholars in particular times and places).

The distinction between normative and historical Islam is crucial for understanding Rahman's educational project. Normative Islam refers to the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which are unchanging and universal. Historical Islam refers to the interpretations, legal formulations, and institutional practices developed by Muslim scholars throughout history, which are contingent and subject to revision (Rahman, 2001a). The failure to distinguish between these two categories has led many Muslims to treat historical formulations as if they possessed the same authority as divine revelation, resulting in intellectual rigidity and an inability to adapt to changing circumstances. Sibawaihi (2007) noted that this distinction forms the foundation of Rahman's hermeneutical approach.

The Procedural Application of Double Movement in Education

Rahman's double movement methodology has direct implications for educational practice. First, it requires reviving the Muslim community's awareness of the importance of learning and knowledge development. Rahman (1984) frequently cited the prophetic tradition, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim," as foundational for this endeavor. Second, it necessitates eliminating the dualism between religious and secular education systems. Rahman (1984) argued that this separation was artificial and detrimental, producing graduates who were either religiously knowledgeable but scientifically illiterate, or scientifically competent but spiritually empty.

The integration of knowledge that Rahman envisioned requires several concrete steps. As Rahman (1984) articulated, educational institutions must develop curricula that combine religious sciences (tafsir, fiqh, tauhid) with modern sciences (natural sciences, social sciences, technology). This integration should be substantive rather than superficial, meaning that students should understand not only the content of both knowledge traditions but also their underlying methodologies and worldviews. Rahman (2001b) argued that teaching methods must shift from repetition and memorization to understanding and analysis, training students to think critically, evaluate evidence, and construct arguments independently.

Third, language proficiency must be emphasized as a tool for accessing knowledge. Rahman himself was renowned for his mastery of multiple languages Urdu, Persian, Arabic, English, French, German, and Latin which enabled him to engage with both classical Islamic sources and Western scholarship (Affandi, 2002). Fourth, teacher training must be improved to ensure that educators possess both deep knowledge of their fields and pedagogical skills that enable them to facilitate active learning.

The practical implementation of these principles can be observed in Rahman's work as Director of the Central Institute of Islamic Research in Pakistan. Rahman (1984) documented his efforts to recruit madrasa graduates with foreign language skills as junior staff and provide them with modern research training; recruit senior staff from university graduates in philosophy and social sciences and provide them with instruction in Arabic and classical Islamic disciplines; send delegations abroad for advanced training and degrees in Islamic studies; and invite young postdoctoral scholars from both Western and Eastern institutions as visiting teachers to supervise research and introduce modern scholarly techniques.

The Integration of Traditional and Modern Knowledge

The double movement methodology provides a framework for integrating traditional and modern knowledge that avoids both wholesale rejection and uncritical acceptance. Rahman rejected the position of traditionalists who viewed modern knowledge as inherently corrupting and therefore to be avoided. He equally rejected the position of secularists who viewed religious knowledge as irrelevant to modern scientific and technological development (Rahman, 1984). Instead, he argued for a constructive engagement in which both knowledge traditions are critically examined and their respective strengths harnessed for the benefit of Muslim societies.

This integration requires understanding that knowledge is ultimately unified because truth comes from God. The Qur'an repeatedly encourages observation of the natural world and reflection upon its signs as a means of deepening faith. Rahman (1984) argued that the separation of religious and scientific knowledge is a historical accident resulting from particular developments in Islamic intellectual history, not a necessary feature of Islam itself. The original Islamic civilization was characterized by a vibrant intellectual culture in which religious and scientific inquiry flourished together.

The double movement facilitates this integration by providing a method for distinguishing between the eternal principles of Islam and their historical expressions. When Muslims understand that many aspects of classical Islamic scholarship represent contextual responses to particular historical circumstances, they become free to develop new formulations that address contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to Islamic values (Amal, 1996). Usman et al. (2022) argued that this freedom, however, must be exercised responsibly through rigorous scholarly inquiry rather than arbitrary reinterpretation.

Epistemology of Islamic Education in Fazlur Rahman's Thought

The Concept of Knowledge in Rahman's Philosophy

Rahman's epistemology begins with the Qur'anic concept of al-'ilm (knowledge). He observed that the Qur'an frequently uses this term to denote knowledge that is both received through tradition and acquired through rational inquiry (Rahman, 2001a). In early Islamic history, knowledge was predominantly understood in traditional terms as transmitted from authoritative sources rather than critically examined. This understanding, Rahman (1984) argued, contributed to the subsequent stagnation of Islamic intellectual life.

Rahman critiqued the medieval Muslim tendency to treat knowledge as passive reception rather than active construction. This tendency, he argued, was responsible for the failure of Islamic law and institutions to develop in response to changing social needs. Rahman (2001b) observed that the resulting gap between Islamic ideals and social reality created conditions in which secularism could emerge as an alternative framework for organizing social and political life. As Rahman (1984) stated, "secularism emerged in the Muslim world in the pre-modern period because of the stagnation of Islamic thought in general, and more particularly because of the failure of law and Shariah institutions to develop themselves and meet the needs of changing society."

In Rahman's view, knowledge is not a passive state like a mirror reflecting external reality but an active, continuous process that never reaches final completion. All knowledge is acquired through experimentation and observation, and it remains perpetually open to revision and refinement (Rahman, 2001a). This dynamic conception of knowledge stands in sharp contrast to the static understanding that prevailed in much of classical Islamic scholarship, which treated knowledge as a fixed body of transmitted information.

Rahman emphasized that knowledge is fundamental to Muslim personality formation. A Muslim who lacks knowledge cannot fulfill the responsibilities of vicegerency (khilafah) that God has entrusted to humanity. The Qur'anic narrative of Adam's creation, in which God taught Adam the names of all things, establishes knowledge as the basis of human distinction and responsibility (Rahman, 2020). Rahman (1984) argued that the pursuit of knowledge is therefore not merely an individual obligation but a collective responsibility that defines the Islamic community's identity and mission.

The Characteristic Features of Rahman's Epistemology

Rahman's epistemology is characterized by its integration of rational and empirical elements. He employed both deductive reasoning (moving from general principles to particular applications) and inductive reasoning (moving from particular observations to general principles). This dual approach enables knowledge to be both grounded in revelation and responsive to experience, avoiding the extremes of uncritical traditionalism and ungrounded rationalism (Mustaqim, 2010).

The rational dimension of Rahman's epistemology involves the use of reason to evaluate information, analyze data, and construct arguments. Reason functions as a measure for determining the objective truth of claims and the coherence of arguments. The empirical dimension involves observation and experimentation as sources of information about the natural world and human society. Rahman (1984) argued that reason and experience are complementary rather than competing sources of knowledge. Reason requires empirical input to function effectively, while experience requires rational interpretation to yield meaningful understanding.

Putra (2025) emphasized that this epistemological framework has direct implications for education. If knowledge is acquired through both rational reflection and empirical investigation, then education must cultivate both capacities. Students must learn to think critically and logically while also developing skills of observation, experimentation, and analysis. They must learn to evaluate arguments and evidence independently rather than simply accepting what they are told. They must also learn to recognize the limits of human knowledge and the importance of remaining open to new information and revised interpretations.

The integration of rational and empirical elements in Rahman's epistemology also reflects his engagement with both Islamic intellectual traditions and Western philosophy. As Affandi (2002) noted, Rahman's training in both classical Islamic sciences and Western philosophy enabled him to develop a distinctive approach that combined the strengths of both traditions while avoiding their respective weaknesses. This synthesis is particularly evident in his treatment of knowledge as both divinely revealed and humanly constructed.

The Formation of Islamic Intellectualism

The ultimate goal of Rahman's educational epistemology is the cultivation of Islamic intellectualism. He argued that the Qur'an directs humanity to seek knowledge through learning, thinking, and experience, which he understood as forms of observation and experimentation (Rahman, 2001a). All knowledge, whether acquired through induction or deduction, builds upon what came before and continues indefinitely without reaching final completion. As Rahman (1984) stated, "The intellectual endeavor, including intellectual elements from both past and present moments, is technically called *ijtihad*, which means the effort to understand the meaning of a text or precedent from the past that has normative significance, and to modify that norm by extending, limiting, or adapting it so that a new situation can be addressed with a new solution."

The revival of *ijtihad* is essential, Rahman argued, for Islam to respond to the challenges of modernity without losing its essential character. Islamic education must cultivate the intellectual capacities that enable *ijtihad*critical thinking, broad knowledge, methodological sophistication, and moral commitment. Teachers must model intellectual engagement by continuously engaging in *ijtihad* in response to social and intellectual challenges. Students must be prepared to become the next generation of Islamic intellectuals capable of continuing this tradition of creative engagement (Soleh, 2003).

Rahman proposed several concrete reforms to achieve this vision. As documented in his work, curricula must integrate religious and general sciences; curricula must be responsive to contemporary challenges, including climate change, information technology, and pluralism; education must emphasize character development, instilling Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and compassion; and technology must be utilized to enhance learning quality and expand access to Islamic education (Rahman, 1984).

These reforms aim to produce graduates who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also possess strong understanding of the modern world. The integration of knowledge should eliminate the dichotomy between religious and secular education, producing intellectuals who can contribute to both Islamic scholarship and broader society. The formation of Islamic intellectualism requires that knowledge production be guided by Islamic values and norms, ensuring that scientific inquiry serves human flourishing rather than narrow material interests (Usman et al., 2022).

Models of Intellectual Engagement

Rahman's vision of Islamic intellectualism encompasses four models of engagement. First, demonstrating the truth of religious knowledge within academic disciplineshowing how Islamic perspectives can contribute to and enrich various fields of knowledge. Second, formulating knowledge products that are consistent with Islamic values and normsdeveloping theories and practices that embody Islamic principles. Third, critiquing knowledge claims that lack foundation in truth but remain as mere hypothesesubjecting ideas to rigorous evaluation based on both rational and ethical criteria. Fourth, pioneering the development of scientific concepts derived from religious values and normsgenerating new knowledge from Islamic sources (Rahman, 2001b).

These models of engagement require intellectual courage and creativity. They demand that Muslim intellectuals move beyond defensive postures that merely react to Western scholarship and instead adopt constructive postures that generate original contributions. They also require humility and openness to correction, recognizing that all human knowledge is provisional and subject to revision. As Rahman (1984) emphasized, "The intellectual endeavor is a continuous process that never recognizes an end."

The integration of knowledge that Rahman advocated has profound implications for contemporary Islamic education. It challenges the assumption that religious and scientific knowledge are inherently separate or opposed. It also challenges the assumption that Islamic education must choose between preserving tradition and engaging with modernity. Rahman's double movement offers a way forward that honors both commitments, producing Muslim intellectuals who are rooted in their tradition yet responsive to their time.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined Fazlur Rahman's thought on Islamic education, focusing on two interrelated dimensions: the double movement methodology as a resolution to the dichotomy between traditional and modern knowledge, and the construction of an educational epistemology that cultivates Islamic intellectualism. The double movement methodology effectively bridges the gap between traditional and modern knowledge systems through a two-step hermeneutical process. The first movement moves from present challenges back to the historical context of Qur'anic revelation, employing inductive reasoning to derive universal principles from particular cases. The second movement moves from these universal principles back to contemporary application, employing deductive reasoning to implement Islamic values in specific modern contexts. This methodological framework enables Muslim educators and intellectuals to engage with both classical Islamic scholarship and modern knowledge systems without compromising the essential values of either. The construction of Rahman's educational epistemology emphasizes the cultivation of Islamic intellectualism as the ultimate goal of education. This requires integrating religious and general sciences, developing curricula responsive to contemporary challenges, emphasizing character development, and utilizing technology in learning. The revival of *ijtihad* is essential for this project, enabling Muslim intellectuals to continuously develop knowledge in response to changing circumstances while remaining faithful to Islamic principles. The implications of Rahman's thought for contemporary Islamic education are significant. His double movement methodology offers a framework for harmonizing modern knowledge with traditional Islamic scholarship. His educational epistemology provides guidance for developing curricula and pedagogical approaches that produce Muslim generations capable of understanding both normative Islam and its historical development. His vision of Islamic intellectualism challenges Muslim educators to cultivate graduates who are not only religiously knowledgeable but also scientifically competent, critically thinking, and morally committed. Further research is needed to explore the practical implementation of Rahman's ideas in diverse educational contexts. Studies examining curriculum development, teacher training, and pedagogical innovation based on Rahman's framework would contribute to the ongoing reform of Islamic education. Additionally, comparative studies examining Rahman's thought alongside other Muslim educational reformers would enrich our understanding of the possibilities and challenges facing Islamic education in the contemporary world.

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