



Fethullah Gülen's Epistemology of Islamic Education and its Implementation towards Integrated Islamic Education

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pendidikan di sebagian besar negara muslim yang masih tertinggal dan masih adanya dikotomi antara pendidikan Islam dan pendidikan sekuler. Akibatnya, generasi Muslim mengalami hambatan dalam berkontribusi dalam pembangunan peradaban dunia yang dimana seharusnya kaum muslimin mencerminkan prinsip-prinsip Islam "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*". Hal ini dikarenakan pendidikan Islam tidak menyesuaikan dengan kemajuan dan persaingan zaman. Pemikiran epistemologi pendidikan Fethullah Gülen mencoba memberikan solusi atas permasalahan tersebut dengan mencoba meniadakan dikotomi pendidikan dengan menciptakan sistem pendidikan Islam yang terintegrasi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui secara mendalam epistemologi pendidikan Islam dari perspektif Fethullah Gülen dan implementasinya dalam pendidikan Islam integratif. Hasil penelitian ini adalah: 1) Esensi epistemologi pendidikan Islam Gülen adalah *hikma*, yaitu mampu memadukan ilmu yang bermanfaat disertai dengan pengamalannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari; 2) Sumber epistemologi pendidikan Islam berasal dari panca indra, akal, dan laporan (berita) yang dapat dipercaya yang berasal dari orang lain atau rasul Allah; 3) Tujuan pendidikan Islam adalah mewujudkan insan kamil yang mampu menguasai pengetahuan ilmiah, sosial dan agama serta mengamalkannya dalam kehidupan guna mewujudkan dunia yang damai dan berkemajuan global; 4) Model pendidikan Islam terpadu menurut Fethullah Gülen mirip dengan model integrasi neo-modernisme, yaitu memadukan tradisi Islam dengan modernitas peradaban.

ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by education in most Muslim countries which are still lagging and there is still a dichotomy between Islamic education and secular education. As a result, the Muslim generation has obstacles in contributing to the development of world civilization, which should reflect the Islamic principles of "*rahmatan lil 'alamin*". This is because Islamic education does not adjust to the progress and competition of the times. The epistemological thought of education by Fethullah Gülen tries to provide a solution to this problem by trying to abolish the dichotomy in education by creating an integrated Islamic education system. The purpose of this study is to find out in depth the epistemology of Islamic education from the perspective of Fethullah Gülen and its implementation of integrated Islamic education. The results of this study are: 1) The essence of the epistemology of Gülen's Islamic education is *hikma*, i.e. being able to combine useful knowledge accompanied by its practice in life; 2) The source of the epistemology of Islamic education comes from the senses, reason and true reports (news) that come from other people or Allah's messengers; 3) The purpose of Islamic education is to create *insan kamil* who are able to master religious, social and scientific knowledge and practice them in life in order to create a world full of peace and global progress; 4) The integrated Islamic education model according to Fethullah Gülen is similar to the neo-modernism integration model, that is integrating Islamic tradition with the modernity of civilization.

KATA KUNCI

Epistemologi; Pendidikan Islam; Fethullah Gülen, Pendidikan Integratif

KEYWORDS

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A. Introduction

In general, education in most Muslim countries is dominated by the humaniora and social sciences. There are relatively few places available for science. Worse, in the teaching process, memorization tends to dominate not only in the humaniora and social sciences but also in the teaching of science. To a significant extent, the viability of rote learning in the educational institutions of the contemporary Muslim world suggests that many Muslims still believe that knowledge is something to be acquired rather than discovered and developed; therefore, attitudes of thought in most Muslim countries are still passive and receptive rather than creative and inquisitive. Moreover, all knowledge is considered immutable, and all books tend to be memorized or respected.¹

Education in Muslim countries must not continue to be left behind. Yet, the world continues to change. Globalization is changing the world we live in in many ways: those who are well educated and live in parts of the world that are rich in both human and natural resources can look forward to a good life, and those who live in parts of the world that are poor in human and natural resources almost certainly will be marginalized. Countries or regions where access to technology, information and communication is high will benefit from these conditions and at least can raise the next generation in the perspective of hope and progress of civilization, while populations from other regions face a bleak prospect.²

Islam is a religion that obliges every believer to seek and deepen knowledge. For Muslims, seeking knowledge and religion are obligations that cannot be separated. The Qur'an obliges every reader to seek knowledge, both general knowledge and religious knowledge.³

Science is usually defined as coherent knowledge relating to certain facts, objects or phenomena which obey universal laws and are verified by experimental methods. Experimental approach and demonstrative argumentation are two characteristic elements of science that are often excluded in religion. While religion is generally based on intuition without showing experimental evidence or verification. This supreme belief generated by intuitive thinking escapes all experimentation because God is supposed to exist in the supernatural world, that is, beyond what is accessible to human senses and logic.⁴

Gülen sees religion and science as not only compatible but also complementary. Therefore, Gülen encourages scientific research and technological development for the good of all mankind.⁵

¹ Azyumardi Azra, "Islamic Education and Reintegration of Science: Improving Islamic Higher Education," *Media Syariah*, Vol. XV No. 2 (July-December 2013): 264.

² Rik Pinxten, "The Relevance of a Non-Colonial View on Science and Knowledge for an Open Perspective on the World," *Worldviews, Science and Us: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Worlds, Cultures and Society* (Danvers: World Scientific Publishing, 2011), 34.

³ Carmen Escribano Ródenas, "Educación en Egipto: La Economía, Una Enseñanza Emergente," *Hesperia Culturas del Mediterráneo, Fundación José Luis Pardo*, Año II, Vol. II, (2006): 43.

⁴ Daniel Baril, *Tout ce que la Science Sait de la Religion* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2018), 5-6.

⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *The Essentials of the Islamic Faith* (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2005), 222.

Gülen's overall goal of overcoming the dichotomy in education is to create a 'golden generation' armed with the tools of science and religion. By combining scientific knowledge with human values, this new generation will solve the problems of the future. For Gülen, education must prepare students to become useful citizens and have characters. A good school cultivates moral virtue and is equipped with the best technology to enhance its scientific character.⁶ Schools that return to their educational vision are characterized by having highly dedicated teachers, collaboration with families in student education, the use of high technology, the availability of boarding schools for students, teaching universal values through exemplary one another.⁷

Gülen proposes a progressive interpretation of the Islamic faith in which Muslims can engage with the world through education, science, technology, and philosophy. He promoted the Ottoman model of society (not the Ottoman Caliphate) to the Muslim world to return to the realities of the 21st century and forge fruitful relations with the West. Hence, to promote the positive side of Islam, he emphasized Muslims to be a part of globalization and invited them to engage with different people around the world. Gülen inspires to educate and equip generations with Islamic ethics and modern knowledge.⁸

Character education has been woven into the curriculum structure of Gülen schools around the world. Through this education, students develop good academic and moral skills that prepare them to achieve the highest intellectual and moral potential to become wise human beings and become good citizens. The media has repeatedly reported an increase in violence, crime, teenage pregnancy, and disruptive behavior in schools. Educators are now aware that there is a moral crisis in our education system. As a result, character education gets serious attention because research shows a positive correlation between good character education and academic achievement. Moral education also helps create a safe environment for students, which is also an important factor in their academic achievement.⁹

Gülen has urged his followers to invest in modern schools rather than traditional madrasas and mosques. True education, according to him, combines modern science with Islamic knowledge. In his view, science without religion can lead to atheism, while religion without science can lead to fanaticism. Gülen argues that the two increase students' faith and knowledge. With a balanced education, students can become agents of positive change. Teachers, says Gülen, must be trained in nurturing the whole person, must lead by example, and must reject their inner world of jealousy, resentment, and hatred;

⁶ Yasien Mohamed, "The Gülen Philosophy of Education and Its Application in a South African School", *International Handbook of Learning, Teaching and Leading in Faith-Based Schools* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 409.

⁷ Juan José Sanabria López, "Iniciativas Transnacionales de Educación, Diálogo y Ayuda Humanitaria: El Movimiento Gülen", *Multidisciplina*, No. 15, (May-August 2013): 205-206.

⁸ Waseem Khan dan Hafeez Ullah Khan, "The Gulen Movement: The Blending of Religion and Rationality", *Journal of Research in Social Sciences - JRSS*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Januari 2018): 186-187.

⁹ Yasien Mohamed, "The Gülen," 407.

and dress their outside world with all kinds of kindness. They must combine the study of science with character development. In Gülen's view, success should be measured by scientific and moral progress.¹⁰

From the description above, schools and related parties such as parents and the community need to be directed to provide solutions to the actual problems that are being faced by the people. The problems that exist do not always come from the realm of religion but also from the fields of science, social and so on so that the concept of integrated education needs to be developed to integrate all of them. Islamic education on the one hand can guide the morals of students, while science on the other hand can be a guide in living and regulating life in the world as human nature as caliph on earth.

This research uses qualitative methods. This type of research is library research which is focused on Fethullah Gülen's Epistemology of Islamic Education and its Implementation towards Integrated Islamic Education. The primary data of this research are books, articles, and speeches from Fethullah Gülen.

B. Epistemology from the Perspective of Fethullah Gülen

Epistemology comes from the Greek "*episteme*" which means knowledge and "*logos*" which means systematic knowledge. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and justification.¹¹ In educational practice and research, the term epistemology has referred to various questions and theories about knowledge which have traditionally come under the field of philosophy of knowledge, and more broadly under the sociology and anthropology of knowledge, and psychology. Questions in epistemology include what knowledge is, what is the nature of knowledge, who can claim to own it, the difference between knowledge and belief (or between knowing and believing), what is considered the source of knowledge, and how knowledge is acquired or developed.¹²

There are two schools of thought in epistemology, both are opposite to each other, they are rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism argues that knowledge will only be discovered by using reason, while empiricists argue that knowledge comes from the perception of sensory experience.¹³ Knowledge is the integration of experience, values, information, and knowledge, which is the basis for the continuous incorporation of new experiences and information and is useful for action.¹⁴ Empiricist philosophers such as John Locke argued that all knowledge comes from experience by understanding habits and the relationship of ideas to one another.¹⁵ Immanuel Kant agrees in acknowledging the role of reason and experience. When experience that functions as an information seeker and reason that

¹⁰ Yasien Mohamed, "The Gülen," 409.

¹¹ Paul K. Moser, "Epistemology", in Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 315.

¹² D. C. Phillips, *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014), 286.

¹³ Stephen Timothy Akpan and Michael Benedict, "Exclusive Rationalism and Empiricism: A Disservice to the Theory of Knowledge", *Aquino Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2021): 59.

¹⁴ Carlos Alejandro Zarzar Charur, *Métodos y Pensamiento Crítico 1* (México: Grupo Editorial Patria, 2015), 11.

¹⁵ John W. Yolton, *A Locke Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 109.

functions to manage experience are combined properly, accurate knowledge will be obtained.¹⁶ Gülen argues that there are three sources of knowledge, they are: 1) Five external senses, provided they are healthy; 2) True reports (news), of which there are two types: reports given by a group of truthful people of such an amount that it is not possible for them to agree to lie (*mutawatir*), and reports by the messengers of Allah (revelation); 3) The third source of knowledge is reason. Axiomatic knowledge and knowledge achieved by using mental faculties belong to this type of knowledge.¹⁷

Gülen divides knowledge based on the process of obtaining it into two categories: Knowledge possessed without having to try to acquire it and knowledge which is acquired in several ways. Every living thing has its own characteristics and potential. These qualities and potentials are definite sources, innate knowledge, knowledge possessed by beings without having to acquire it. (The modern scientific term for this kind of knowledge is called instinct, which is the ability of living things to sense lack of air, thirst, hunger, sadness, joy, baby's knowledge of how to breastfeed etc.) In short, this type of knowledge is knowledge of how to deal with the necessities of life, belonging to the category of knowledge without means. Knowledge acquired through internal and external senses falls into the second category. Knowledge of the physical world is usually obtained through the five external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), while knowledge of the metaphysical realm of existence is obtained through the internal senses (mind and heart) with its ability to process thought, reason, intuition, discovery and spiritual experiences and others.¹⁸

Speaking about truth, Immanuel Kant said: "The nominal definition of truth, namely that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed."¹⁹ Meanwhile, Charles S. Peirce said: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth."²⁰ According to Gülen, truth is not something produced by the human mind. Truth exists independently from human, and human's job is to seek it.²¹ According to Gülen, there are two sides to the love of truth; one is formed by knowledge while the other is formed by faith. Indeed, while on the one hand the relationship is the discovery and determination of truth, that is, what creates the relationship between knowledge and human consciousness; on the other hand, is the attitude adopted in relation to truth.²² Moreover, while religion represents absolute truth about the essence of the universe and has existed since the creation of the universe, science represents a relative truth that was produced to help mankind understand the absolute truth. Gülen views religion and science as not

¹⁶ Lailiy Muthmainnah, "Tinjauan Kritis Terhadap Epistemologi Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)", *Jurnal Filsafat*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (2018): 81-83.

¹⁷ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 2* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 27.

¹⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 2*, 26-27.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 97.

²⁰ Charles Sander Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideal Clear", *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 12, 1878, 286-302.

²¹ Gürkan Çelik, *The Gülen Movement: Building Social Cohesion Through Dialogue and Education* (Delft: Eburon, 2010), 98.

²² M. Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance* (New Jersey: The Light, 2009), 142.

actually contradictory, because science relies on empirical data and rational (but relative) interpretation by humans with their limited knowledge.²³

The absolute truth of God is manifested in religious beliefs. Religion here means acknowledging God and His oneness which is absolute and transcendental; Gaining spiritual purity by acting in His way; Arrange relationships in His name and according to His commandments; and feel a deep interest and love for all creation because of Him.²⁴ God gives humans reason and mind so that humans can know God and His creation through the process of thinking. For Gülen, the purpose of human creation is clear: To achieve the highest goals in religion, knowledge, and spirituality; To contemplate the universe, humanity, and God, and thus prove our usefulness as human beings.²⁵

The main problem in today's world, according to Gulen, is the lack of knowledge that includes the production and control of knowledge, as well as the acquisition of existing knowledge. Producing, maintaining, and disseminating knowledge can only be achieved through quality education. The education referred to by Ibn Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah is to maintain human nature and avoid things that lead to deviations and create person who has *ubudiyah* characteristic and obedient to Allah.²⁶ The education referred to by Gülen is the education of the heart and soul as well as the mind that aims to revive and activate all people to achieve competence and provide goods and services that are useful to others.

C. Fethullah Gülen Thoughts

Fethullah Gülen is a new model of Islamic scholar, well versed in modern intellectual trends and Islamic traditions. He draws on knowledge from various disciplines such as Sunni teachings, Sufism teachings and European secular ideas. Unlike conservative clerics in Turkey, Gülen spreads eclectic sources of information. Gülen opposes *taqlid* which he sees as introducing intellectual laziness to Islamic thought.²⁷

Gülen's relationship with modernity and the West is very different from Wahhabism, Tablighi, and Jihadism. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani believed that Islam was compatible with science, and to compete with Europe, Muslims must embrace modernity.²⁸ Muhammad Abduh emphasized that Islam could be the moral basis of modern society.²⁹ For Gülen, Muslims should not stay away from fields related to the

²³ Osman Bakar, "Gülen on Religion and Science: A Theological Perspective", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, No. 3, July 2005, 363.

²⁴ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom* (New Jersey: The Light, 2010), 8-9.

²⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization*, 133.

²⁶ Nur Asih Istiqomah and Farid Setiawan, "Realizing the Purpose of Islamic Education through Boarding School Management", *JISAE (Journal of Indonesian Student Assessment and Evaluation)*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2021, 31.

²⁷ Erol Nazim Gulay, "The Theological Thought of Fethullah Gülen Reconciling Science and Islam" (Tesis, Oxford University, Oxford, 2007), 61.

²⁸ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 103-129.

²⁹ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 140.

workings of the universe such as science, history, art, politics, and philosophy that help understand the world better and Muslims should be interested in these fields.³⁰

When Gülen talks about freedom, pluralism, tolerance, and democracy, he is of course speaking from an Islamic perspective. Gülen reinterpreted the basic concept of the purpose of Islamic law following changes in space and time. Gülen's thinking was inspired by the five basic principles of Islamic law (*maqashid ash-syariah*). The five basic principles of Islamic law are *maqashid ash-syariah* to protect religion, lives, mind, property, and offspring. The legal ends of Islamic law, according to ash-Shatibi are the benefits intended by the law.³¹ *Maqashid ash-shariah* itself aims to fulfill human rights and basic freedoms. The issue of *maqashid ash-syariah* to protect the mind is closely related to freedom of thought and expression, freedom of religion, pluralism, and democracy.³²

Compared to so-called 'fundamentalist' Islamic groups, the Gülen movement's view of Islam is quite liberal and tolerant of non-Islamic lifestyles. This approach may be the result of the specific long-term experience of the Anatolian people and the unique historical dynamics of Turkish socio-cultural life. For example, the movement was influenced by the concept of "Turkish Islam" which was formulated by several nationalist thinkers and was also influenced by Said Nursi's writings. The main premise of "Turkish Islam" is moderation. Since the people of Turkic origin first accepted Islam, they understood and practiced it under the influence of Sufi ideas. The Sufi tradition of self-describing is based on the philosophy that all creatures should be loved as a physical reflection of God and the object of love of the Creator himself.³³

Gülen's thoughts got a great influence from Said Nursi's writings on how Muslims should relate to non-Muslims. Gülen became committed to a philosophy of education that sought to combine theological, spiritual, and scientific knowledge. His main concern is that in the country's highly secular education system, Turkish youth are losing touch with their Islamic heritage. Therefore, Gülen came up with an approach to help reverse this trend. Starting with holiday camps, Gülen and those interested in his ideas looked for ways to provide an Islamic education that would complement the secular education that the state provided.³⁴ One of Gülen's hallmarks is his openness to scientific research as a religious endeavor, and to avoid the impression of being religious schools, many of Gülen's inspired schools have excelled in the teaching of science, as demonstrated by the awards their students have won in science competitions and olympiads around the world.³⁵

³⁰ John L. Esposito and İhsan Yılmaz, *İslâm ve Barış İnşası: Gülen Hareketi İnisyatifleri* (Izmir: Nil Yayınları, 2014), 53.

³¹ al-Raysuni, *Nazariyyat Al-Maqasid 'inda Al-Imam Al-Shatibi* (Mansoura: Dar al-Kalimah, 1997), 129.

³² al-Raysuni, *Nazariyyat Al-Maqasid*, 57-58.

³³ Bülent Aras and Ömer Çaha, "Fethullah Gülen and His Liberal 'Turkish Islam' Movement", in Barry Rubin, *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 141.

³⁴ Bekim Agai, "Fethullah Gülen and His Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education", *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2002, 33.

³⁵ Lester R Kurtz, "Gülen's Paradox: Combining Commitment and Tolerance", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, July 2005, 381.

Fetullah Gülen has several views on education. For example, in one of his writings, Gülen states that people who need education must be willing to learn how to take advantage of the knowledge and views of others, because this can benefit them, their minds and the world. Gülen insists that they should always seek to benefit from the experience of people with good experience.³⁶ As Muhammad Abduh believed that it was necessary to assimilate or borrow what is good from them.³⁷

The most important thing that inspired Gülen to rethink and redefine education was the failure of the existing education system which did not provide holistic education to students that could encourage individual growth and development. To reverse this situation, Gülen advocated a different kind of education which could unite mind and spirit; allows conscience and logic to complement each other; enabling physics and metaphysics; assists in establishing life at school and at home to allow for the flow of happiness and education that enables people to coexist harmoniously regardless of ethnic, cultural, or religious affiliation. This is like Nursi's view on education that Nursi's model of education is very comprehensive and progressive, meeting the needs of both religion, science, and morality, thus providing a harmonious blend of the three in a holistic way.³⁸

In support of his educational ideology, Gülen asserted that the lack of adaptation to the current conditions in life would lead to extinction.³⁹ According to Gülen, it is possible that the enforcement of justice is hampered by a lack of comprehensive education and recognition of human rights and an attitude of acceptance and tolerance towards others. The only cure for this is proper education which can enable people to think for themselves and support social justice, human rights and tolerance thereby turning them into agents of change in society.⁴⁰ To achieve this, Gülen asserts that a new style of education is needed that can combine religious and scientific knowledge with morality and spirituality if the world is to produce truly enlightened people with hearts illuminated by the sciences of religion and spirituality and enlightened minds with positive sciences who are aware of the socio-economic and political conditions of their time.⁴¹

Gülen felt that the authorities were using a lack of education as a strategy to find the masses. Gülen believes that when people do not have access to the knowledge they need, they will have no alternative but to submit to the authorities. Gülen further points out that the only practical solution to

³⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 104.

³⁷ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 156.

³⁸ Qazi Mohd. Jamshed, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to Modern Education-Integrating Science with Religious Sciences-", *Proceedings of ADVED 2016 2nd International Conference on Advances in Education and Social Sciences*, Istanbul, October 10-12th (2016), 646.

³⁹ Lynne Emily Webb, *Fethullah Gülen: Is There More to Him Than Meets the Eye?* (Izmir: Mercury International Publishing), 86.

⁴⁰ Thomas Michel, "Gülen as Educator and Religious Teacher", in <https://fgulen.com/en/press/review/gulen-as-educator-and-religious-teacher>. Accessed on 17 August 2021.

⁴¹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah Gülen: Essays-Perspectives-Opinions* (New Jersey: Tughra Books, 2009), 110.

such a situation is by providing adequate education which will equip people with the knowledge of how to have adequate understanding and tolerance to respect the rights of others.⁴²

D. System of Integrated Islamic Education According to Fethullah Gülen's Perspective

The purpose of education and related charity is to fulfill the obligation of individuals and society to submit to God's will. As Gülen stated:

“The main duty and purpose of human life is to seek understanding. The effort of doing so, known as education, is a perfecting process through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of their beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect pattern of creation.”⁴³

Gülen proposes education as an effective method for bringing about global peace and progress and for curbing extremism. Gülen emphasized that education is very important for society and individuals to meet the needs of individuals and society and in turn to solve humanitarian problems, such as terrorism, anarchism and conflicts caused by ignorance, poverty and schism. Gülen believes that these problems can only be solved by knowledge (through education), working capital (through labour) and unification (through interfaith or intergroup dialogue).⁴⁴

To fulfill Gülen's educational goals, it is necessary to have an education system in which there are educational components, such as: educators and education staff, students, curriculum, educational materials, educational infrastructure and facilities, school environment, funding and finances.

Educators according to Gülen is ‘holy master’ who shapes lifelong lives for people. Gülen considers no job equivalent to teachers who can guide his nation, elevate its morals and character and instill a sense of immortality.⁴⁵ Calling teachers a ‘holy masters’ or calling teaching activities a ‘sacred duty’ is not an exaggeration according to Gülen. In contrast, Gülen reasoned his approach to the roots of Islamic philosophy which shows every human being as the most noble creature created by God. Therefore, the teachers whose job is to improve human abilities is honorable and his job is sacred. According to him, true teachers are cultivators and protectors of pure seeds. It is also their duty to keep them strong and good and to lead and guide them during life's events.⁴⁶ According to Gülen, no matter how good the pre-school education in the family is, the main role of increasing the potential of students belongs to the teachers.⁴⁷ According to Gülen, to be ideal educators, educators must have perfect faith, a lot of love, the nature of thinkers and boosters, higher-order thinking skills, must address science with full consideration, logic and feelings, must think freely and respect freedom of thought, must be wise and responsible.⁴⁸

Being a student, according to Gülen, is a very valuable task and Gülen recommends lifelong learning to his followers. Gülen asked them to remain students of knowledge throughout their lives and to devote their lives to studying religious, social or natural sciences.⁴⁹ Therefore, according to Gülen, being a student of knowledge is very important, not only beneficial for the present life, but also for the

⁴² Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen* (Fairfax: The Fountain, 2000), 22-23.

⁴³ M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah*, 67.

⁴⁴ M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah*, 86.

⁴⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 1* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 121.

⁴⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 1*, 114.

⁴⁷ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 4: Zamanın Altın Dilimi* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 115.

⁴⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 39-121.

⁴⁹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 15: Yolun-Kaderi* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2020), 206.

life after. In addition to highlighting the importance of being a student of knowledge, Gülen also describes the profile of the ideal student in his speeches.

One of the most important characteristics or signs of being an ideal student is the enthusiasm to learn or research new things and try to produce new improvements in their identity. According to Gülen, such people began to develop in the West and in this way technology and science increased rapidly in the West.⁵⁰

In his speeches, Gülen also gives specific concrete examples and shows his followers how to achieve success in modern science. In addition, Gülen also gave examples of important scholars such as Albert Einstein and Thomas Alva Edison and encouraged his followers to become like them.⁵¹ For example in his speeches, Gülen described Edison as a person who spent most of his time in the laboratory. On the other hand, Gülen believes that most of the failures of students arise from a lack of courage. Therefore, Gülen suggested that teachers encourage students by motivating, praising and guiding from time to time.⁵² Apart from the role of the teacher, there is another side that is the responsibility of the country and society to assist students in their studies. According to Gülen, successful learners should be supported primarily financially and their success should be rewarded.⁵³ The main reason behind this is the importance of concentration in scientific studies. Gülen believes that having deep knowledge, hard work on one subject and great awareness in any kind of science depends on concentration in that field and without this ability is impossible to achieve brilliance in scientific success. Therefore, the core activity and the only task of an ideal student is to focus on his studies and not think about other things like making money, worrying about his career and thinking about the cost of living.⁵⁴ Therefore, Gülen always invites entrepreneurs and rich people to play an active role as funders in educational activities.⁵⁵ According to Gülen, the community must play an active role in this and successful students or researchers must be supported by the community.⁵⁶

In this case, cooperation between students and the community is very important. Well-organized and well-coordinated cooperation gives students the opportunity to specialize in social and natural sciences and bring a bright future to society. Gülen describes this collaboration as a combination of environment, love of knowledge, determination to work and methodology.⁵⁷

An important characteristic of an ideal student is to have moral values in addition to technical knowledge. Gülen describes this type with the term *insan kamil* which means perfect human or real human. In this model, the moral and ethical parts are represented as the inside or the human heart, while the reason, science and technology parts are the outside or the human brain.⁵⁸ According to Gülen, the purpose of education is to create perfect human beings by educating both outwardly and inwardly their students. To become *insan kamil*, students must try to show every stage of truth. Students who try to show every stage of truth must try to make it happen with an attitude of honesty, trustworthiness, awareness of obligations, broad insight, awareness of circumstances, foresight, and purity.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 2: Kendi Dünyamıza Doğru* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 29.

⁵¹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 11: Yaşatma İdeali* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2020), 115.

⁵² Çengiz Şimşek, "Gülen's Model as a Solution for Problems in Current Education," *International Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (September, 2013): 28.

⁵³ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 2*, 29.

⁵⁴ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 15*, 206-207.

⁵⁵ Çengiz Şimşek, "Gülen's Model," 28.

⁵⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 15*, 206-207.

⁵⁷ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Ruhumuzun Heykelini Dikerken 2*, 30-31.

⁵⁸ Marcia Hermansen, "Understandings of "Community" within the Gülen Movement", (paper presented in *Islam in the Contemporary World: The Fethullah Gulen Movement in Thought and Practice*, Rice University, Houston, Texas, (November 12-13th, 2005), 14

⁵⁹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Pearls of Wisdom*, 104.

One of the most important points in Gülen's educational idea which is channeled through Gülen-inspired schools is to use the local curriculum in each country. Unlike other progressive education movements, Gülen-inspired schools do not have their own unique subjects or curriculum. Instead, they accept the local curriculum their schools and enrich the programs with their philosophies and additional teaching activities.⁶⁰ As an example of the case in Indonesia, Gülen-inspired schools in Indonesia use national curriculum which is strengthened by the curriculum developed by PASIAD which is oriented towards an international curriculum.⁶¹ With an active learning approach, the curriculum is developed into active, creative, effective, and fun learning. Students become the subject of learning, while the teacher becomes an inspiration and motivator.

Gülen-inspired schools around the world basically use local curricula. This is mainly due to the Gülen movement's localization strategy and fits the Gülen movement's policy of 'avoiding contradiction', as Gülen views that synergies and interactions with local culture are very important.⁶² Gülen advised his followers to mingle with the locals and unite in the same values as them rather than make controversial things.

Educational material, in Gülen's view, has two orientations, i.e.: Modern educational material and religious educational material. Gülen argues: "The spirit of the madrasa education and the spirit of the modern education can come together. They can make a new marriage, and the mind's radiance and the heart's light can be reunited. With their union and integration, the student's zeal will take wing and fly".⁶³

Gülen's educational materials combine intellectual, spiritual and physical education. In other words, Gülen's education aims to raise students as children who develop their intellectual and intellectual abilities, improve the quality of their faith and devotion to Allah, develop noble character, and have health, fitness and skills in everyday life. Educational materials are delivered using an approach based on: (a) Problem solving that involves students in critical, systematic, logical and analytical thinking; (b) Based on creativity, which encourages students to think original, flexible and creative.

Educational infrastructure and facilities are very important in Gülen's view of education. Gülen stated that every effort made to develop the country in terms of economy and education is worship.⁶⁴ Therefore, building infrastructure and educational facilities also means worship. Of course, this inspired Gülen's followers to compete to build educational institutions with the best facilities.

One common feature of Gülen-inspired schools is the modern school facilities. Each school has complete laboratory facilities. The Gülen School prioritizes the construction of schools with quality educational support equipment, such as the provision of chemistry, physics, biology, language and multimedia-based learning and computer technology laboratories. With this, the school will easily

⁶⁰ Mehmet Evrim Altın, *Internationalization through Localization Gülen Inspired Schools*, disertasi, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, 2020, 196.

⁶¹ Ali Ünsal, "PASIAD Partner Schools' Education System," (paper presented in *International Conference on Fundamentals and Implementation of Education (ICFIE) 2014*, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Oktober 11-12th, 2014), 6.

⁶² M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kırık Testi 11*, 163.

⁶³ M. Fethullah Gülen, "Excerpts from F. Gülen's Answers to Questions on Education and Turkish Educational Activities Abroad," in Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue* (New Jersey: Fountain Pub, 2000), 324.

⁶⁴ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Prizma 2* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 45.

facilitate students in learning and research activities, especially in the natural sciences. The provision of learning support devices certainly requires teachers to always set up-to-date learning methods. This is in line with Gülen's opinion which states that modern facilities can help modernize life.⁶⁵ For Gülen, building quality schools is more important than building places of worship. Building a place of worship is considered more than enough. A fully-equipped education system along with dormitories, laboratories and other facilities is the main goal of Gülen's education. These facilities are used to support the learning of religion, science and morality which are very often mentioned in Gülen's sermons which then be applied practically in Gülen-inspired schools. The dormitory is used as a place for students to live to be taught morality and religion in a practical way which is exemplified daily by the boarding school advisor after teaching and learning activities at school. Complete laboratories are used to support students' research practices in developing knowledge. Meanwhile, other supporting facilities such as sports fields are used to facilitate the needs of students in developing physical needs.

The school environment is one of the concerns of Gülen's educational view. Gülen stated that in order to ensure the best education for children, we must also create the best educational atmosphere. Children are formed according to their environment, in the sense that children are products of the environment in which they live.⁶⁶

Mentoring services are another important part of Gülen's educational vision aimed at the welfare and character development of students. The responsible staff for mentoring services should be well educated and equipped, and the content of mentoring services should be developed according to local culture. This volunteer-based service strengthens bonds between school staff, students and parents, and creates a positive school climate. Gülen regards parents as educators and he emphasizes the importance of the school-parent relationship for the best educational outcomes. Parents should increase their educational knowledge and devote their spare time to their children's education, and family life should be used to contribute to their children's education.⁶⁷

In terms of funding and finances, it is very important to understand Gülen's method of funding in Islamic education as reflected in Gülen-inspired schools. Gülen does not want to add to the burden on society or country. Therefore, Gülen based his model on a private education system in which schools finance their own education costs. Therefore, in almost all cases, only initially, educational institutions were supported by entrepreneurs until these institutions became self-funded.⁶⁸ Schools whose tuition fees are derived from student and public donations will not be a foreign concept to society and therefore will pave the way for staff to be more efficient in their service to parents and the community.⁶⁹ However,

⁶⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 3: Yitirilmiş Cennete Doğru* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 51.

⁶⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çekirdekten Çınara*, 89.

⁶⁷ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çekirdekten Çınara*, 52.

⁶⁸ Yasien Mohamed, "The Educational Theory of Fethullah Gülen and its Practice in South Africa," *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gulen Movement* (London: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007), 564.

⁶⁹ Cengiz Şimşek, "Gülen's Model," 28.

there are also cases such as state-supported schools where schools also receive assistance from the government. In this case, the number of students is very important to obtain financial support from the government, both in the case of Gülen-inspired schools in Indonesia and in other countries. Each country's support for these schools is in the form of funds for each student, as is the case in Indonesia where schools receive BOS (school operational assistance program) funds whose amount depends on the number of students.

E. Design of Integrated Islamic Education According to Fethullah Gülen's Perspective

The ideal form of Gülen's perspective education model recommends: (1) Teaching universal human values through the example of teachers and advisors; (2) teaching modern and scientific knowledge and technology.⁷⁰ The method used to apply Gülen's educational model is through boarding schools. Dedicated and sincere teachers inspire a love of learning in the classroom in a culture that values respect for teachers, while at night the advisors who live in the dorms with the students, nurture them, help them learn and most importantly serve as role models for them.

The boarding school advisors are supervised by the boarding school manager, and the boarding school manager works under the vice principal who is responsible for guidance. There is also vice principal who is responsible for classroom instruction. Thus, the administrative hierarchy includes both branches (one for boarding school life and the other for school life). In this way, Gülen's emphasis on dealing with students' hearts and minds is achieved. Usually, students are not allowed to leave school. Generally, they have canteen inside the school for their needs. During playtime, mealtime, study time, and leisure time, students communicate with boarding school advisors, play and exercise together. Boarding school advisors live in school dormitories, and they carry out their personal activities in the morning and afternoon for lectures or other activities. However, the main task of the boarding school advisors is to be a role model for students and make big changes in students' lives. Boarding school advisors make Gülen-inspired school unique. They show such dedication and altruism that they basically give their lives for service.⁷¹

Gülen has his own method of teaching. Gülen said that the right method should be chosen according to the educational goals. Based on Ali bin Abi Thalib' words: "Narrate to people only according to their level of knowledge", Gülen recommends that religious knowledge and general science be given according to the abilities and readiness of students. The method used by Gülen is an exemplary method for children in building mental and character and instilling character in them. The point is to set an example with action. This is in line with the principles of good educators. For this reason, Gülen provides

⁷⁰ Margaret A. Johnson, "Glocalization of the Gülen Education Model: An Analysis of the Gülen-Inspired Schools in Indonesia", (paper presented in *The Significance of Education for the Future: The Gülen Model of Education*, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Oktober 19-21st 2010).

⁷¹ Margaret A. Johnson, "Glocalization of the Gülen Education Model."

methodological principles in teaching and educating that educators must really pay attention to in teaching, i.e.:

First, educators should explain at a level that students can understand. The point is that an educator must understand and know which students are smart and slow in understanding, educators must also understand which ones are appropriate and suitable to be taught according to the conditions and thinking power of students. This must be considered so that the lessons transferred can be understood, digested and applied in everyday life by students and are beneficial for them. Educators must be able to modify information so that it can be received accurately and thoroughly by students. Educators need to have competent teaching skills so that students can learn and participate and achieve learning objectives.

Second, educators must be able to accompany their students step by step.⁷² Don't move to new course before it is fully understood by students. This is to prevent students from misunderstanding the lessons they are learning and to avoid weakening their minds and clouding their understanding.

Third, educators must always educate with joy and nurture students to always be better.⁷³ Educators must teach with love and teach in the best way to get the best results.

Fourth, educators are expected to teach absolute truth with scientific evidence.⁷⁴ When educators explain, they must provide a clear and detailed explanation without hiding anything and even better if it is supported by valid evidence.

Fifth, educators shouldn't leave doubts on students.⁷⁵ Educators who leave their students doubtful about science can't be called educators, nor can be called a school if educators can't lead their students to good outcome.

The characteristics of integrated Islamic education on Gülen's perspective has several characteristics, including:

First, integrated education that is Islamic education that does not recognize the separation between religion and science. Instead, the two must be integrated.⁷⁶ Integration between religion and science is possible because it is based on the idea of *tauhid*. In this context, science or the study of nature is considered to be related to the concept of *tauhid*. In the Islamic view, nature is an integral part of its holistic view of God, humanity and the world. According to Islam, science and nature have continuity with religion and God. This relationship implies a sacred aspect in the search for scientific knowledge of Muslims because nature itself is seen in the Qur'an as a collection of evidence pointing to God.

Second, holistic education. Gülen argues that God is the educator of the universe and He created the universe as a whole. If the universe is considered a poem, humans are part of this poem as a stanza

⁷² M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 2: Buhranlar Anaforunda İnsan* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 104.

⁷³ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 2*.

⁷⁴ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 2*.

⁷⁵ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Çağ ve Nesil 1*, 118

⁷⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 15*, 205-206.

and must rhyme with other stanzas of the poem.⁷⁷ Therefore, according to his vision, education must fulfill all individual abilities, and moreover, must produce individuals who interact harmoniously with society and the wider environment.

Third, character education. Gülen states that in order to bring others to a better world, he must purify his inner world of hatred, resentment and jealousy, and adorn his outer world with all kinds of virtues.⁷⁸ In other words, educators must combine teaching with character development. Character education aims to instill certain character values in students with components of knowledge, awareness or willingness and action to realize these values.

Fourth, balanced education that is education that balances various aspects. Gülen wants Islamic education to be education that builds balance between the interests of the world and the hereafter, combines heart and mind and balances knowledge and charity.⁷⁹ To realize a balanced education, Gülen coined the concept of *Altın Nesil* (Golden Generation). This Golden Generation is a concept in forming a generation of Muslims who are educated in modern science and religious morality, as well as practice their knowledge in the form of concrete actions. Gülen's education is a continuous effort to further develop individual potential in comprehensive and integrated manner to create balanced and harmonious human being in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical based on faith and obedience to God.

Fifth, dynamic education that is education that has dynamic principles and is always changing with the times. With the advent of modernity, mankind has turned its attention to technological progress and this has been accompanied by a moral decline. Gülen initiated the construction of modern Islamic educational facilities that can attract people to want to learn about morals as well as teach modern knowledge that suits the needs of Muslims in the face of changing times.

Sixth, lifelong education. According to Gülen, being a student is a very valuable task and Gülen recommends lifelong learning to his followers. Gülen asked them to be students of knowledge throughout their lives and to devote their lives to studying religious, social or natural sciences.⁸⁰ Therefore, according to Gülen, being students of knowledge is very important, not only beneficial for the present life, but also for the good in the lifeafter.

Seventh, education is not only about teaching but also educating. Gülen distinguishes between the performance of the more superficial technical aspects, which he calls teaching, and the deeper, more meaningful, and holistic activities, which he calls educating. As Gülen said: "Education is different from teaching. Most people can teach, but only a very few can educate."⁸¹ Because educators not only teach but also educate, educators are responsible for creating an atmosphere or conditions that allow

⁷⁷ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar* (Istanbul: Nil Yayınları, 2016), 147.

⁷⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah*, 112.

⁷⁹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Civilization*, 81.

⁸⁰ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kirik Testi 15*, 206.

⁸¹ M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah*, 76-77.

students to develop while learning. Therefore, educators must also be responsible for the discipline of students, which must be controlled in every student's activity so that their behavior does not deviate from norms.

Eighth, Education to form the ideal human (*insan kamil*). According to Gülen, education is about developing something to the highest level.⁸² This highest level is known as *insan kamil*. *Insan kamil* always aims to be useful to others and seeks knowledge that will increase his horizons of knowledge. *Insan kamil* lives with good morals and always shows kindness. *Insan kamil* sees the good, thinks well, says good and useful words and always does good deeds.⁸³

F. Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion, there are two major focuses that need to be underlined, i.e.: the epistemology of Islamic education in the perspective of Fethullah Gülen and the implementation of the epistemology of Gülen's Islamic education on integrated Islamic education. The two points are interrelated because they originate from Gülen's thoughts related to education. The author tries to describe and analyze the thoughts above so as to find the formulation of the Islamic education system that is relevant to the times.

Based on the basic epistemological framework of Fethullah Gülen, the epistemological framework of Islamic education in Fethullah Gülen's perspective is broadly as follows: 1) The essence of the epistemology of Gülen's Islamic education is *hikma*, that is able to combine useful knowledge accompanied by its practice in life; 2) The epistemological sources of Islamic education come from human senses, reason and true reports (news) that come from other people or messengers of Allah; 3) The method in obtaining Gülen's knowledge uses inductive reasoning and continues with deductive reasoning.

Fethullah Gülen's idea of integrated Islamic education has the following characteristics: 1) The purpose of Islamic education is to create *insan kamil* who are able to master religious, social and scientific knowledge and practice them in life in order to create a world full of peace and global progress; 2) The integrative Islamic education model according to Fethullah Gülen is similar to the neo-modernism integration model, that is integrating Islamic tradition with the modernity of civilization.

This study on Fethullah Gülen only focuses on epistemological studies. There is an opportunity for the development of other studies on Gülen's thoughts in the fields of ontology, axiology and other studies that can develop research in the field of integrative Islamic education.

⁸² M. Fethullah Gülen, *M Fethullah*, 67.

⁸³ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Kalbin Zümrüt Tepeleri 2*, 297.

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