



Dynamic-Stabilism as the Foundational Principle of Islamic Educational Ideology: A Nexus between Conservatism and Liberalism

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Abstract

This article stems from the critical importance of examining educational ideologies, including the ideology of Islamic education. Islamic educational ideology is often identified with two major streams of thought: first, liberalism, and second, conservatism. Discussions on the essence of Islamic education, for instance, ideally begin by exploring the perspectives of these two ideologies. However, both ideologies are frequently accepted as ready-made options for constructing the ideological foundation of Islamic education. Consequently, this has led to confusion, as despite certain similarities, neither liberalism nor conservatism fully aligns with all the principles and values of Islamic education. This misalignment arises from the inherent deficiencies in both ideologies. Errors in selecting or understanding the ideological foundation may result in the narrowing or distortion of the orientation of Islamic education. This paper seeks to propose an alternative foundation for Islamic educational ideology, namely Dynamic-Stabilism, as conceptualized by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud. The origins, development, and deficiencies of both liberalism and conservatism will be elaborated upon, followed by a comparative explanation of the Dynamic-Stabilism framework. The comparison will emphasize the points of convergence and divergence between Dynamic-Stabilism, liberalism, and conservatism. This study employs a qualitative library research method with a narrative-descriptive approach. Data will be drawn from primary sources, particularly the works of Wan Mohd Nor, as well as secondary sources that reinterpret

his ideas. Based on an in-depth analysis, the findings suggest that the Dynamic-Stabilism framework is highly relevant as a foundation for achieving ideological independence in Islamic education in the future, without being constrained by the paradigms of liberalism or conservatism.

Keywords: Dynamic-Stabilism, Islamic Educational Ideology, Conservatism, Liberalism

Artikel ini berangkat dari pentingnya meninjau ideologi pendidikan, termasuk ideologi pendidikan Islam. Ideologi pendidikan Islam sering kali diidentifikasi dengan dua aliran pemikiran utama: pertama, liberalisme; dan kedua, konservatisme. Pembahasan mengenai esensi pendidikan Islam, idealnya, dimulai dengan menggali perspektif dari kedua ideologi ini. Namun, kedua ideologi tersebut sering diterima begitu saja sebagai pilihan yang tersedia untuk membangun fondasi ideologis pendidikan Islam. Akibatnya, hal ini sering menimbulkan kebingungan karena, meskipun terdapat beberapa kesamaan, baik liberalisme maupun konservatisme tidak sepenuhnya selaras dengan seluruh prinsip dan nilai-nilai pendidikan Islam. Ketidaksesuaian ini muncul karena adanya kekurangan yang melekat pada kedua ideologi tersebut. Kesalahan dalam memilih atau memahami fondasi ideologis dapat mengakibatkan penyempitan atau distorsi orientasi pendidikan Islam. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengusulkan fondasi alternatif bagi ideologi pendidikan Islam, yaitu Dynamic-Stabilism yang dikonseptualisasikan oleh Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud. Asal-usul, perkembangan, dan kekurangan liberalisme serta konservatisme akan dijelaskan, diikuti dengan penjelasan komparatif mengenai kerangka Dynamic-Stabilism. Perbandingan ini akan menyoroti titik-titik persamaan dan perbedaan antara Dynamic-Stabilism, liberalisme, dan konservatisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif dengan pendekatan naratif-deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan dari sumber primer, terutama karya-karya Wan Mohd Nor, serta sumber sekunder yang menafsirkan ulang gagasan-gagasannya. Berdasarkan analisis mendalam, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kerangka Dynamic-Stabilism sangat relevan sebagai dasar untuk mencapai kemandirian ideologis pendidikan Islam di masa depan tanpa terikat oleh paradigma liberalisme maupun konservatisme.

Kata Kunci: Dynamic-Stabilism, Ideologi Pendidikan Islam, Konservatisme, Liberalisme

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian education is currently at a crossroads. The frequent changes in the Minister of Education often result in shifts in educational orientation, whether on a large scale or in smaller, particular aspects. The ongoing contestation of opinions and ideas regarding fundamental elements of education is inevitable. One of these fundamental elements is the educational ideology, which serves as the foundation for all aspects of education.

In essence, any agenda for reform, including educational reform, requires a worldview or ideology as an initial guide for how the educational process and the role of schools are implemented (Leonardo, 2003). The role of ideology in shaping the principles of society and its institutions (Haynes, 2022) ultimately becomes a key differentiator in the formulation of educational policies (Jonathan Leader Maynard, 2023).

In the discourse on educational ideologies, numerous ideologies serve as the foundation for policy-making in education, including in the context of Islamic education. Examples include perennialism, humanism, existentialism, behaviorism, reconstructionism, conservatism, liberalism, and others. Among these, however, two ideologies frequently dominate as the foundational choices for policy formulation:

Conservatism and Liberalism. These two ideologies are philosophically opposed to one another in terms of their educational philosophies. The contestation between their respective proponents has even evolved into what is now referred to as Neo-Conservatism versus Neo-Liberalism (Lois Weis, Cameron McCarty, 2006).

The intense counter-narratives between these ideologies often create the impression that no alternative ideological options exist. Disagreement with liberal principles seems to imply support for conservatism, and vice versa. This dilemma also affects those formulating the ideology of Islamic education. For instance, Hosnan argues that liberalism does not inherently conflict with Islam simply because it promotes the use of reason, which aligns with human nature (Hosnan, 2018).

In this context, several studies have addressed these issues. For example, Nasichin and Miftah elaborated on the conservative aspects of Islamic education and linked them to al-Ghazali (Mochamad Nasichin Al Muiz, 2020). Similarly, Agus Gunawan and colleagues highlighted the tendency of Islamic educational institutions to rely solely on conservative ideology (Agus Gunawan, Abdussahid, 2020). Usman and Jamiluddin also emphasized that the ideological foundation of Islamic educational institutions is predominantly conservative (Usman, 2019). Conversely, a different approach was undertaken by Syafii, who recognized the deficiencies in both ideologies but tended to adopt an eclectic approach by combining them (Syafii, 2018). A similar effort was made by Rofiqotul, who asserted that Islamic education should possess an independent ideology distinct from Conservatism and Liberalism. However, her study remains limited to a comparative analysis between these two ideologies (Aini, 2017).

The ideological approach that tends to be dichotomous and dualistic, as reflected in the studies mentioned above, illustrates the phenomenon of the false dilemma fallacy—a cognitive error that arises from limiting choices to only two options (Nuruddin, 2020). Such a fallacy has significant implications, as it constrains Islamic education theorists and practitioners within the confines of these two ideologies, rendering them unable to propose alternative ideologies that align more closely with the essence of Islamic education itself. This inability also indicates that Islamic education theorists and practitioners suffer from a "captive mind," a state of intellectual entrapment that prevents them from transcending the classifications of Liberalism and Conservatism, which have become dominant paradigms (Alatas, 2000).

This situation is rooted in reliance on dualistic educational ideology theories, such as those formulated by O'Neill, who categorizes educational ideologies exclusively into Conservatism and Liberalism (O'Neill, 1981). Furthermore, both Liberalism and Conservatism originate from the same ideological root, namely Secularism, which is fundamentally incompatible with the Islamic worldview (Haynes, 2022).

This reliance distorts the philosophy of Islamic education itself and leads to two equally detrimental extremes: intellectual stagnation as a result of Conservatism and ideological deviation as a consequence of Liberalism. Additionally, the ongoing conflict between Liberalism and Conservatism, in the absence of an alternative ideology to mediate, may negatively impact the political stability of a nation (Lois Weis, Cameron McCarty, 2006). Therefore, Islamic education theorists and practitioners must strive to formulate an alternative ideology that transcends O'Neill's classification.

Such an alternative ideology should reflect the inherent characteristics of Islam, which is marked by *wasathiyah* or moderation (Al-Shalabi, 2020). This alternative ideology could draw upon the principles of Dynamic-Stabilism, as conceptualized by Wan Mohd Nor (Daud, 2013). This framework serves as an antithesis to both

Conservatism and Liberalism by rejecting their respective excesses. Simultaneously, it accommodates the strengths of both ideologies due to its integrative nature.

RESEARCH METHOD

To explore the depth of the concept of dynamic-stabilism within Islamic educational thought, this study adopts a qualitative library research approach. Using a narrative-descriptive framework, the researcher conducts an in-depth examination of various literary sources, particularly those authored by Wan Mohd Nor, a central figure closely associated with the concept. These primary sources serve as the foundational basis for constructing a comprehensive understanding of dynamic-stabilism. In addition, secondary sources discussing the relevant discourse are incorporated to enrich the analysis and provide broader perspectives.

This study employs a qualitative library research method with a narrative-descriptive approach to investigate the concept of dynamic-stabilism. The primary data sources are Wan Mohd Nor's works that are pertinent to the theme of this research. Furthermore, the study references various secondary sources, including books, scholarly articles, and dissertations that analyze Wan Mohd Nor's ideas. The data collected will be analyzed thoroughly using thematic content analysis techniques to identify key themes, patterns of thought, and the implications of the dynamic-stabilism concept within the context of Islamic education.

The primary objective of the data analysis in this study is to construct a comprehensive understanding of the concept of dynamic-stabilism within Islamic educational thought. Through a narrative-descriptive approach, the researcher aims to present a clear and detailed depiction of how this concept is conceptualized, developed, and linked to contemporary issues in Islamic education. The data analysis will be conducted systematically, focusing on identifying the key dimensions of the dynamic-stabilism concept, its relationships with other concepts within Islamic thought, and its implications for curriculum development and Islamic educational practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of modern thought, Liberalism emerged earlier than Conservatism (Robin, 2011). Liberalism as an ideology first appeared during the medieval period as a response to Feudalism, which was prevalent at the time (Zarkasyi, 2010). The ideology gained significant traction during the French Revolution of 1789, marked by its famous slogan: *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. From its inception, Liberalism was characterized by its opposition to feudal structures, anti-establishment stance, rationality, freedom, and openness. Early proponents of this ideology included thinkers such as Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Diderot, Lessing, and Kant (Arif, 2017). In the context of education, the core value of Liberalism lies in fostering self-actualization through critical thinking to address problems effectively. This capability is developed by honing one's research skills through scientific and logical reasoning. Genealogically, Liberal educational ideology has been deeply influenced by Empiricism, Instrumentalism, Pragmatism, Subjectivism, and Materialism (O'Neill, 1981).

The foundational principles of Liberalism, often referred to as Progressivism in education, were developed as a reformative response to traditional educational methods, which emphasized rote memorization, hierarchical structures, competition, and standardized content and assessments. The basic hypothesis of Liberalism posits that education should align with the nature and experiences of students, who are seen as

constantly evolving individuals. Liberalism shifts the focus of the educational process to the experiences of students, rather than predefined teaching materials prepared by educators (Fairfield, 2009). Advocates of Liberalism, known as reformers, view traditional education negatively, criticizing it for its discriminatory and segregative tendencies and its imposition of uniformity on students (Leonardo, 2003). The ultimate goal of Liberalism is to produce individuals capable of contributing to economic development and societal welfare. Consequently, education is expected to meet the labor demands of industrial sectors.

In its later development, Liberalism transformed into Neo-Liberalism in the post-1980s era. Neo-Liberalism increasingly emphasized the economic utility of education as a producer of labor. The initial focus of Liberalism on equality and social justice as an antithesis to Feudalism shifted toward corporate principles such as competition, efficiency, and accountability. This shift is rooted in two fundamental assumptions of Neo-Liberalism: that everything can be commodified, and that human orientation is primarily driven by the desire to maximize personal utility. The impact on education is evident in the adoption of market-driven principles in educational policies and the growing emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) as pillars of industrial development (Zajda, 2018).

Conversely, Conservatism emerged as a reaction to the development of Liberalism during the Enlightenment, particularly after the French Revolution. Edmund Burke, an English thinker, is regarded as its primary pioneer through his work *The Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Initially, Conservatism was conceived to assert that human nature is inherently imperfect and inclined toward immorality. Consequently, governance should be controlled by a ruling class—aristocrats with collective traditions of leadership deemed superior to individual reasoning. Genealogically, Conservatism is heavily influenced by Ethnocentrism, which tends toward a closed cultural system (O'Neill, 1981). Conservatism's primary aim is to maintain the status quo and slow down or reverse change (Robinson, 2008). It seeks to revive traditions and social values that were neglected following the rise of Liberalism (Zajda, 2018).

In the context of education, Conservatism views the primary purpose of education as preserving and transmitting established traditions and social patterns. Social change is not prioritized unless it aligns with existing traditions. Proponents of this ideology, referred to as conformers, emphasize the equality of students over their differences. The Conservative curriculum aims to produce good citizens through the cultivation of moral values. Teachers play a dominant role in the learning process compared to the student-centered approach of Liberal education. Student competition through examinations is also emphasized to enhance learning outcomes (O'Neill, 1981). Moreover, Conservatism underscores the use of fear in the teaching-learning process to compel student engagement (Stanley Aronowitz, 2003). A distinctive feature of Conservatism in preserving tradition is the introduction of classical thinkers to students. In the context of Western education, figures such as Plato are often highlighted as invaluable contributors to the Western intellectual tradition (Leonardo, 2003).

Similar to Liberalism, Conservatism has also undergone a more radical transformation into what is now termed Neo-Conservatism. This development places greater emphasis on the preservation of traditions and established values, to the extent of questioning the role of formal educational institutions. This is exemplified by the growing prevalence of homeschooling, wherein parents seek to ensure the continuity of traditions

for their children. Schools are increasingly perceived as incapable of preserving traditions due to their orientation toward market demands (Lois Weis & Cameron McCarty, 2006).

Both Liberalism and Conservatism, as outlined above, exhibit inherent weaknesses. Liberalism's focus on rational development, aligned with market demands and corporate principles, has resulted in moral degradation, identity crises, the exploitation of education under the pretext of economic advancement, distorted thinking, and the commercialization of education within a legitimized exploitative system (Zajda, 2018). Conversely, Conservatism tends to foster an authoritarian educational framework, producing students characterized by intellectual stagnation, imitative tendencies, a lack of confidence, and diminished motivation for learning (Fairfield, 2009). Consequently, it is imperative for Islamic education theorists and practitioners to formulate an independent ideology that transcends the dichotomy between Liberalism and Conservatism. Such an endeavor would prevent entrapment in counterproductive ideological conflicts (Fairfield, 2009).

The resolution to the false dilemma posed by these two ideologies lies in establishing a nexus that bridges them—a moderate and balanced position. This nexus must integrate the positive elements of both ideologies and combine them proportionally (Adler, 1939). One potential framework that could serve as this nexus is the concept of Dynamic-Stabilism, as proposed by Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, a prominent Malaysian scholar of Islamic education. Wan Mohd Nor defines Dynamic-Stabilism as the ability to revive forgotten ideas and concepts from the Islamic intellectual tradition, rectify misconceptions, reformulate these ideas and concepts, and subsequently connect them to address contemporary challenges. This process also involves integrating relevant elements from contemporary thought into a unified and coherent framework (Daud, 2010).

Wan Mohd Nor also refers to Dynamic-Stabilism as Principled-Dynamism, which he describes as a respectful engagement with past intellectual traditions while maintaining the courage to critique and refine them. In other words, respect for tradition does not preclude critical thinking and creative reform. He asserts that this principle was a hallmark of the Islamic intellectual tradition during its golden age (Daud, 2019). This phenomenon is evident in the contributions of Muslim intellectuals of that era. Wan Mohd Nor notes that the works of creative Muslim thinkers, often regarded as mujaddid (reformers), were dynamic because their new ideas addressed emerging historical, conceptual, and practical challenges. These thinkers did so without severing ties with the Islamic intellectual tradition, instead refining, elaborating, and strengthening its metaphysical foundations, legal frameworks, ethics, and other principles that underpin the Islamic intellectual heritage across generations (Daud, 2013).

The two integrated elements of this principle—dynamic and stabilism—each hold strategic significance. The dynamic element reflects the capacity of Islamic educational ideology to harness human rational potential. It encourages Muslims to think critically, creatively, and innovatively when addressing problems. This critical thinking applies not only to external ideas outside the Islamic intellectual tradition but also to internal ideas within it. Wan Mohd Nor cites prominent Islamic thinkers such as Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, Ibn Khaldun, Mulla Sadra, and Shah Waliullah Al-Dihlawi as examples of individuals who dared to differ from their predecessors while critically evaluating contemporary ideas (Daud, 2019).

The dynamic element also fosters openness to new and foreign ideas from outside the Islamic intellectual tradition, including those related to ethics, logic, politics, and

physics. Wan Mohd Nor emphasizes that this dynamic element prevents Islamic education from succumbing to restrictive conservatism, which, while preserving tradition and societal stability, stifles critical thinking and the ability to engage with contemporary scientific developments.

Meanwhile, the stabilism element ensures that educational activities preserve and safeguard the fundamental aspects of the Islamic intellectual and educational tradition. Wan Mohd Nor explains that this element protects absolute principles from being eroded by the reformative endeavors of Muslims. Critical thinking remains guided to prevent it from devolving into liberal or progressive ideologies that inevitably lead to relativism (Stanley Aronowitz, 2003). Without such guidance, a state of disruptive dynamism, as Wan Mohd Nor terms it, could arise, driven by the "dictatorship of relativism" (Daud, 2019). An Islamic educational ideology based on Dynamic-Stabilism avoids these extremes. Its ultimate goal is not merely to produce "good citizens," as in Conservatism, or "good laborers," as in Liberalism, but to cultivate *insan adabi*—individuals of moral and intellectual excellence (Daud, 2010).

Wan Mohd Nor critiques Muslim reformers who, in their zeal for change, undermine the absolute principles preserved within the Islamic intellectual and educational tradition across generations. Such actions result not only in reform but also in deviation. Similarly, he criticizes those who, in their well-intentioned efforts to safeguard these principles, impose excessive rigidity, leading not only to stability but also to intellectual stagnation (Daud, 2010).

Wan Mohd Nor redefines the concept of a reformer (*mujaddid*), arguing that it does not merely refer to individuals introducing novel ideas that deviate from traditional thought, particularly in matters of principle. A reformer is also someone who revives and clarifies neglected or misunderstood ideas within the Islamic intellectual and educational tradition. By recontextualizing these ideas to address contemporary issues, reformers inherently reinforce them. Thus, reformers, according to Dynamic-Stabilism, engage not only in discovery but also in the rediscovery of master ideas (Daud, 2022).

In terms of pedagogy, Dynamic-Stabilism integrates both substance and method simultaneously. Substance refers to the understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah, while method pertains to how these teachings are comprehended and how Islamic values are connected with other cultural values, both classical and contemporary. Conservatism, while valuing substance, often neglects method, resulting in stagnation and mere repetition. Although it preserves fundamental Islamic teachings, such as prayer, fasting, and moral conduct, it weakens the community's intellectual, social, economic, and political progress. Conversely, Liberalism prioritizes method but disregards substance, enabling engagement with reformist discourses but often at the expense of core Islamic teachings (Daud, 2012).

Wan Mohd Nor identifies Imam al-Ghazali as a model of Dynamic-Stabilism. Al-Ghazali's intellectual contributions exemplify this principle. His dynamic aspect is evident in his critique of traditional interpretations of key Islamic terms, challenging the narrow and distorted understandings prevalent at the time. Al-Ghazali redefined these terms, restoring their original meanings (Abdullah, 2019).

Additionally, his creative synthesis of *usul al-fiqh* and logic (*mantiq*) further illustrates his dynamic approach (Al-Ghazali, 2022). His stabilism is reflected in his defense of core Islamic doctrines, particularly against the intrusion of Greek philosophy propagated by Muslim Peripatetic philosophers (*falasifah*). In his seminal work *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, Al-Ghazali refuted their teachings, preserving Islamic theology with

innovative rational arguments that remained grounded in absolute Islamic principles (Al-Ghazali, 1986).

The following table illustrates the distinctions between Dynamic-Stabilism, Conservatism, and Liberalism, highlighting its role as a nexus between these two ideologies:

Liberalisme	Dynamic-Stabilism	Konservatisme
Good labor	Good man	Good citizen
Student-centered	Proportional student & teacher-centered	Teacher-centered
Reason development	Simultaneous reason & moral development	Moral development
Reformer	Rediscover	Conformer
Market-oriented	Substance-Method oriented	Tradition-oriented
Spirit of Changing	Spirit of Interdependence (between Absolute & Relative principle)	Spirit of Stabilizing

CONCLUSION

Islamic education ideology is a distinct and independent ideology. It possesses its own characteristics and strengths from the outset, in line with the nature of Islam itself. It is only fitting that Islamic education ideology is no longer under the influence of Conservatism or Liberalism. This is because Islamic education ideology does not adhere to conservative or liberal orientations, as is commonly seen in the Western-centric classification of educational ideologies. Islamic education theorists and practitioners need to develop an alternative foundation for their ideology. One such alternative foundation is the Dynamic-Stabilism principle, as proposed by Wan Mohd Nor. While this principle shares common ground with Conservatism in terms of safeguarding tradition, it differs in its approach to openness toward change and reform. The Dynamic-Stabilism principle prevents Islamic education from stagnation, blind imitation (taqlid), and the embarrassing weakness that results from the loss of creativity and innovation, which are side effects of Conservatism. Similarly, while Dynamic-Stabilism finds common ground with Liberalism in terms of creativity and openness to critical thinking, it fundamentally differs in its treatment of values regarded as absolute and sacred within the Islamic educational tradition. The Dynamic-Stabilism principle prevents Islamic education from deviating from values that are considered absolute (qath'i), such as those related to faith (aqidah), law (shari'ah), and ethics (akhlak), which are side effects of Liberalism's excessive pursuit of novelty.

Thus, with its integral and moderate (wasath) nature, Dynamic-Stabilism serves as an appropriate foundation for Islamic education ideology, particularly in a rapidly changing era like the present. Moreover, this principle has been the spirit of Islamic education since its early days and throughout its golden age, as exemplified by the intellectual legacy of Muslim thinkers such as Imam al-Ghazali. Therefore, Dynamic-Stabilism can act as a nexus between Liberalism and Conservatism. As such, Islamic education theorists and practitioners should no longer be confined to the dichotomy of Liberalism and Conservatism as the foundation of Islamic education ideology. If this dichotomous perspective persists, there is a risk that the Muslim community will become

increasingly marginalized, as described by Wan Mohd Nor. This refers to a society that no longer understands its own tradition, teachings, and identity, as it becomes enamored with and imitates foreign cultural values without truly comprehending them. The consequence is the distortion of the goals and principles of Islamic education and a shallowness in creativity.

The limitations of this study lie in its failure to explore the actual best practices of Dynamic-Stabilism as the foundation of Islamic education ideology in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. In other words, this study is conceptual and requires further examination by future researchers. However, the findings of this study can serve as an introductory foundation for subsequent researchers.

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