Holistic Education in Buya Hamka's Thought: Integration of Reason, Faith, and Deeds in Modern Life

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze Buya Hamka's thoughts on holistic education, which emphasizes the integration of reason, faith, and good deeds, and their relevance in modern life. In the context of globalization and technological advances that often give rise to moral and spiritual crises, Hamka's ideas present an educational alternative that is not only oriented towards intellectual aspects, but also towards the formation of character and human spirituality as a whole. This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. Data were obtained from Hamka's main works such as Lembaga Budi, Tafsir Al-Azhar, and Falsafah Hidup, as well as secondary literature discussing Islamic educational thought and a holistic approach. Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method through the processes of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that Hamka's holistic education emphasizes a balance between intellectual abilities, spiritual orientation, and concrete actions in everyday life. Education that integrates reason, faith, and good deeds can shape students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess moral integrity, social responsibility, and a strong humanitarian orientation. This approach is relevant in addressing the challenges of modern education, while also preparing a generation capable of facing the complexities of life with wisdom, ethics, and concern for others.

Keywords: Holistic Education, Character Education, Modern Life

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Introduction

Education, in essence, aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape whole human beings who think rationally, have a soul with faith, and act with charity. In the modern context, the main challenge in education is the tendency toward fragmentation of values, where intellectualism develops rapidly but is often detached from the moral and spiritual dimensions. This phenomenon raises concerns about the emergence of a generation that is academically intelligent but lacking in social and spiritual sensitivity (Azra, 2021). Therefore, an educational paradigm is needed that can harmoniously integrate intellectual, spiritual, and ethical aspects—an approach known as holistic education.

Holistic education emphasizes the development of all human potential as a whole, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects rooted in humanitarian values and spirituality. In Miller's (2021) view, holistic education aims to shape individuals who balance rationality and life values, enabling them to live in harmony with themselves, society, and their environment. This concept is relevant to the idea of Islamic education, which positions humans as beings of thought ('aql), faith (qalb), and action ('amal shalih), all of which must go hand in hand.

One figure who deeply articulated the synergistic relationship between reason, faith, and good deeds was Buya Hamka. Through his works, such as Lembaga Budi (1973), Tafsir AlAzhar (1982), and Falsafah Hidup (1984), Hamka emphasized that true education is one that fosters spiritual awareness while simultaneously honing rational intelligence and social ethics. According to him, reason without faith is directionless, while faith without good deeds has no real meaning in life (Hamka, 1984). Therefore, an ideal education must be able to shape individuals who think critically, have strong faith, and act for the benefit of others.

In the context of modern life characterized by globalization, technological advancement, and changing social values, Hamka's thoughts offer profound relevance. He reminded us that modernity should not be interpreted as a secularization of values, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen the integration of knowledge and faith (Nata, 2019). Education that balances reason, faith, and good deeds not only produces knowledgeable individuals but also individuals with noble personalities and useful contributions to society (Yusuf, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the concept of holistic education in Buya Hamka's thinking and its relevance to the challenges of modern life. This study is important because it offers an alternative perspective in developing an educational paradigm that not only produces intelligent individuals but also individuals with morals, social conscience, and spiritual orientation, in accordance with the vision of Islamic education as rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for the universe).

Literature Review

1. Holistic Education

The concept of holistic education stems from the realization that humans are not merely intellectual beings, but also spiritual, social, and moral beings. True education must cultivate the full potential of humanity in a balanced way, encompassing reason, heart, and behavior, so that students become not only intelligent individuals but also individuals of character, faith, and benefit to their environment (Miller, 2021). In a global context marked by technological advancements and a moral crisis, a holistic approach is increasingly important to develop individuals with high intellectual capacity without losing human values.

Terminologically, holistic education comes from the Greek word "holos," meaning "whole" or "entire." This approach rejects reductionist views of humans that emphasize only the cognitive aspect. Instead, it seeks to foster a balance between the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of students (Forbes, 2020). Within an Islamic framework, this concept aligns with the view that humans were created as beings with the potential for 'aql (intellect), qalb (faith), and 'amal (action), all of which must be developed harmoniously.

Several contemporary studies emphasize that holistic education in Islam is not simply the integration of science and religion, but also the process of developing self-awareness and social responsibility. Hasan et al. (2024) state that holistic Islamic education aims to shape individuals who think critically, are spiritually oriented, and are oriented toward righteous deeds. This aligns with the view of Kurnianingsih et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual, intellectual, and social values in learning so that education can address modern challenges without losing its moral dimension.

In Islam, the integration of knowledge and faith is not a new idea. The Quran emphasizes the importance of balancing knowledge and piety, as reflected in the command to read (iqra') accompanied by acknowledgment of God's sovereignty (Surah Al-'Alaq: 1–5). Thus, ideal education not only transfers knowledge but also fosters spiritual awareness and human ethics (Mariani, 2024).

According to Nur Fahmi and Sukandar (2025), classical Islamic educational thought, as proposed by Ibn Khaldun, has provided the foundation for holistic education, where the learning process is not only cognitive but also gradual (tadrīj), iterative (takrīr), and based on social solidarity ('asabiyyah). This concept can be used as a reference in developing an educational model that combines rationality with spiritual values, as advocated by modern Muslim thinkers, including Buya Hamka.

Holistic education, from a modern Islamic perspective, has developed into a paradigm that combines reason, faith, and good deeds as the three main pillars of developing a civilized human being (Nurhasanah, 2025). Reason plays a role in understanding reality and developing knowledge; faith serves as a moral and spiritual guide; and good deeds serve as the concrete manifestation of internalized knowledge and beliefs. The integration of these three produces a holistic individual who is intelligent, moral, and oriented towards the common good.

Thus, holistic education is not merely a pedagogical model, but also a philosophical and spiritual approach that places humans at the center of value transformation. He became a bridge between modern rationality and religious spirituality, thus shaping a generation with global thinking, strong faith, and noble behavior amidst the fast-paced and complex currents of modern life.

2. Biography of Buya Hamka

Buya Hamka, or Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, was born in Maninjau, West Sumatra, on February 17, 1908, and died in Jakarta on July 24, 1981. He is known as one of Indonesia's Muslim scholars with a significant influence in the fields of Islamic thought, literature, and education. Hamka was known not only as a religious scholar and writer, but also as an educator and modernist thinker who bridged Islamic values with the dynamics of modern life (Latif, 2020).

From childhood, Hamka grew up in a religious and intellectual environment. His father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul), was a reformist cleric from the Kaum Muda movement who championed the renewal of Islamic thought in Minangkabau. His father's upbringing shaped Hamka's character, making him critical of formalistic and ritualistic religious practices lacking in meaningful understanding (Nata, 2019). However, unlike his father, who was highly rational and strict, Hamka grew up as a person who combined rationality with spiritual refinement and universal human values.

Hamka's works, such as Lembaga Budi (1973), Falsafah Hidup (1984), and Tafsir AlAzhar (1982), demonstrate his profound insights into the importance of balancing reason, faith, and good deeds in shaping a complete human being. For Hamka, education was not merely a process of transferring knowledge, but a path to self-improvement and devotion to God. He rejected the dichotomy between religious knowledge and general knowledge, as both share the same goal to guide humanity toward truth and well-being (Hamka, 1984; Darajat, 2024).

Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with library research. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study lies in analyzing the thoughts of the figure, namely Buya Hamka, and their relevance to the concept of holistic education in the context of modern life. A qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the meaning, value, and context of the ideas studied in depth and reflectively. The data sources in this study consist of primary sources, namely Buya Hamka's original works, such as the Budi Institute, Tafsir Al-Azhar, and Falsafah Hidup. Secondary data sources include literature and related scientific studies discussing Nurcholis Madjid's thoughts, including books, journal articles, theses, and dissertations.

The data collection technique used was documentation, which involved collecting, identifying, and reviewing various relevant written sources. All data obtained was analyzed and classified according to the main research theme. After data collection, it was analyzed using content analysis. To ensure data validity, the researcher employed source triangulation, which involves comparing and evaluating data from various literary sources to obtain valid information and objective interpretations.

Results

1. Holistic Education from the Perspective of Buya Hamka's Thought

Based on a review of Buya Hamka's works, it was found that his educational concept is holistic and integral, encompassing the balanced development of reason, faith, and good deeds. Buya Hamka believes that education should not be solely oriented toward intellectual intelligence but should also shape the personality, morals, and spirituality of students. Education, he argued, is a comprehensive process for developing humans to be able to fulfill their roles as individuals, social beings, and servants of God simultaneously (Hamka, 1983).

In Buya Hamka's thinking, humans are understood as whole beings, inseparable from the physical and spiritual dimensions. These two aspects complement each other and shape the human personality as a whole. Therefore, Hamka rejected educational models that emphasize solely intellectual development, as education that ignores the spiritual and moral dimensions has the potential to produce individuals who are rationally intelligent but lack values and direction in life. According to him, this inequality can lead to a humanitarian crisis, where knowledge no longer serves as a means of liberation but instead becomes a tool that distances humanity from noble values (Hamka, 1984).

The holistic education offered by Buya Hamka aims to shape the perfect human being (insan kamil), a human being who develops in balance between reason, faith, and good deeds. Intellectual intelligence is directed toward a critical understanding of science and social reality, faith serves as a spiritual foundation that guides life's orientation, while good deeds become the concrete manifestation of the integration of both in daily life. With this approach, education not only produces knowledgeable individuals but also individuals with morals, responsibility, and the ability to make a positive contribution to society. This concept of insan kamil is the core of holistic education in Buya Hamka's thinking and is relevant to addressing the increasingly complex challenges of modern life.

2. Integration of Reason in Buya Hamka's Holistic Education

Reason holds a crucial place in Buya Hamka's educational thinking. He emphasized that Islam highly values reason as a means to understand science, social reality, and the signs of God's greatness. Education should encourage students to think critically, rationally, and be open to developments in science, including modern science (Hamka, 1990).

Buya Hamka emphasized that freedom of thought is an important gift that must be developed through education, but this freedom must not be separated from moral and spiritual values. According to him, reason plays a strategic role in understanding science and the realities of life, but reason without the guidance of faith has the potential to give rise to intellectual

arrogance, namely an attitude of self-righteousness and a disregard for human values. In Hamka's view, this condition can lead to a moral crisis when intellectual progress is no longer aligned with ethical and spiritual responsibilities (Hamka, 1990).

Therefore, intellectual education, from Buya Hamka's perspective, is not secular, separating science from religious values. Instead, he emphasized the importance of integrating reason, faith, and morals as an inseparable whole. Such education will shape individuals who are not only rationally intelligent but also possess spiritual awareness and social concern. By integrating Islamic and humanitarian values into the educational process, reason is directed to become a means of devotion to God and the welfare of humanity, not merely a tool for pursuing worldly interests.

3. The Role of Faith as the Foundation of Education

Faith is the primary foundation of Buya Hamka's holistic education. He viewed faith not merely as theological conviction, but also as a source of inner strength that shapes attitudes, ethics, and social responsibility. Education that instills faith will produce individuals with a clear life orientation and who are not easily swayed by the changing times (Hamka, 1983). In the context of modern education, faith serves as a driving force for the development of science and technology. Buya Hamka warned that progress without faith can lead to dehumanization and a crisis of values. Therefore, education must instill the awareness that science and material progress must be devoted to the welfare of humanity and the common good (Yunus, 2017).

4. Charity as a Manifestation of Education

The integration of holistic education in Buya Hamka's thinking culminates in the aspect of charity. According to him, educational success is not measured solely by mastery of theory, but by the extent to which knowledge and faith are realized in concrete actions. Charity reflects the quality of one's personality and serves as concrete evidence of a successful educational process (Hamka, 1984). Buya Hamka emphasized the importance of cultivating noble morals, social responsibility, and concern for others in the educational process. Education must produce individuals who are not only personally pious but also possess social sensitivity and make real contributions to society. In the context of modern life, charity serves as a bridge between Islamic values and evolving social challenges (Nata, 2005).

5. The Relevance of Buya Hamka's Holistic Education in Modern Life

Research results show that Buya Hamka's concept of holistic education has strong relevance to the challenges of modern life. Amidst globalization, modernization, and moral crises, the integration of reason, faith, and charity is an educational approach that can maintain a balance between intellectual progress and moral maturity. Buya Hamka's holistic education offers a relevant alternative to current trends in modern education, which often overemphasizes cognitive or intellectual aspects alone, while neglecting the spiritual, moral, and character development dimensions. According to Hamka, education that focuses solely on mastering knowledge or academic skills can produce individuals who are intellectually intelligent but lack integrity, social responsibility, and moral awareness. This situation has the potential to create individuals who are technically skilled but vulnerable when faced with ethical dilemmas, social pressures, or humanitarian challenges (Yunus, 2017).

With a holistic approach, education is directed at developing students holistically by integrating reason, faith, and good deeds. Reason is used for critical thinking and understanding knowledge, faith serves as a spiritual foundation that guides attitudes and life orientations, while good deeds are the concrete manifestation of the application of knowledge and spiritual values in daily life. This approach ensures that students are not only academically competent but also possess strong character, a strong social awareness, and a clear humanitarian orientation. Thus, Buya Hamka's holistic education is an effective strategy for forming individuals who are

balanced, intelligent, have noble morals, and are able to make positive contributions to society and face the challenges of modern life wisely.

Conclusion

Holistic education in Buya Hamka's thinking emphasizes the integration of reason, faith, and good deeds as the foundation for developing a complete human being (insān kāmil). Education that focuses solely on the cognitive aspect without considering the spiritual and moral dimensions risks producing individuals with imbalanced character and ethics. With a holistic approach, students are equipped with intellectual abilities as well as integrity, moral awareness, social responsibility, and a strong humanitarian orientation. Buya Hamka's thinking is relevant to addressing the challenges of modern education, which often emphasizes academic achievement alone. Holistic education enables schools and educational institutions to become spaces for developing individuals who are balanced in their intellectual intelligence, steadfast in their faith, and committed in their deeds. Thus, Buya Hamka's holistic education not only produces students with academic competence but also possess the character, ethics, and social awareness necessary to navigate modern life.

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