

AIK (Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah) as the Ideological Foundation of Higher Education: A Thematic Synthesis

Gigih Setianto

Universitas Muhammadiyah Pekajangan Pekalongan, Indonesia

gigihsetianto@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) as the ideological foundation of Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyah higher education. AIK is commonly described as a compulsory group of courses, yet official documents and empirical studies assign it a wider function: it articulates institutional purpose, shapes the moral identity of the academic community, mediates the relationship between Islam and science, and distinguishes Muhammadiyah higher education from religiously neutral models. First, AIK codifies the normative worldview of Muhammadiyah through faith, *tajdid*, social responsibility, and the movement's history. Second, it operates as value education intended to connect cognitive understanding with worship, character, and public conduct. Third, AIK is expected to integrate Islamic ethics with disciplinary knowledge and professional formation. Fourth, it functions institutionally through the Catur Dharma, campus culture, leadership, and quality assurance rather than through classroom instruction alone. Fifth, experiences with non-Muslim students show that ideological distinctiveness can coexist with dialogical and multicultural pedagogy when learning goals and methods are differentiated. The synthesis proposes the concept of an ideological educational ecosystem: a chain connecting normative foundations, curricular codification, pedagogical mediation, institutional culture, and graduate formation. Its principal weakness is the implementation gap between AIK's expansive institutional claims and its frequent reduction to content-heavy courses. The article concludes that AIK can serve as a credible ideological foundation only when its values are visible in scientific practice, governance, professional ethics, and inclusive civic engagement.

Keywords: *Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, AIK, Muhammadiyah higher education, ideology, value education, institutional identity, thematic synthesis.*

INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah and 'Aisiyah higher education institutions are simultaneously universities and organizational expressions of an Islamic reform movement. They provide professional and scientific education under the national higher-education system, yet they also carry a religious and movement-based mission. Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah, commonly abbreviated as AIK, occupies the institutional space in which these two identities are expected to meet. AIK introduces Islamic teachings, Muhammadiyah's history and worldview, ethical conduct, and the relationship between religion and knowledge. It is therefore frequently described as the distinctive characteristic, spirit, or ideological foundation of Muhammadiyah higher education.

The designation ideological foundation requires clarification. In ordinary political language, ideology may imply rigid doctrine, partisan loyalty, or closed consciousness. Within Muhammadiyah education, however, ideology more appropriately refers to an organized set of normative commitments that explains institutional identity, purpose, and preferred forms of action. These commitments include monotheistic faith, fidelity to the

Qur'an and Sunnah, *tajdid*, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, social service, knowledge, and the creation of a progressive and morally responsible society. AIK translates those commitments into educational objectives and institutional practices. It is ideological because it provides orientation and identity, not because it should prevent inquiry or demand uniform personal affiliation.

The 2013 *Pedoman Pendidikan Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah* formalized AIK as a structured educational field in Muhammadiyah higher education. The guideline situates AIK beyond the limited provision of generic Islamic religious education. It offers a curricular sequence covering faith and humanity, worship and ethics, Muhammadiyah, and Islam in relation to science. It also presents a new paradigm that emphasizes the formation of persons with character, ethical awareness, and intellectual capability. Individual institutions are expected to follow common standards while retaining room for contextual enrichment (Majelis Pendidikan Tinggi PP Muhammadiyah, 2013).

The formal curriculum is only one dimension of AIK. Muhammadiyah's guidance for higher education describes a *Catur Dharma* consisting of education, research, community service, and the development of Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah. This formulation implies that AIK cannot be confined to several compulsory subjects. It should shape research ethics, disciplinary development, institutional leadership, academic behavior, human-resource development, and the social orientation of the university. A course may communicate the ideology, but the credibility of that ideology depends on whether institutional practice embodies it.

Academic research has examined several parts of this problem. Arifin (2015) reconstructed AIK as value education and criticized a model dominated by cognitive transmission. Amirudin (2017), Amini et al. (2019), and Saswandi and Sari (2019) studied its relationship with religiosity, worship, character, and the internalization of values. Pinem (2019) and Nisa' (2020) discussed learning methods and value-based course design. Nuryana (2017) called for revitalization because AIK was often treated as a secondary or formal requirement rather than the foundation of Muhammadiyah education. Other writers argued that AIK should respond to contemporary Islamic studies, scientific development, and the changing social environment of students (Rozy & Kurniawan, 2018; Saputra, 2020).

A second body of literature concerns religious diversity. Muhammadiyah universities in East Nusa Tenggara, Palopo, Kupang, and Metro educate significant numbers of non-Muslim students. Studies in these settings show that AIK may function as an introduction to Islam, Muhammadiyah, humanitarian values, and interreligious understanding. Dialogical rules of study, comparative engagement with sacred texts, peer learning, multicultural education, and residential programmes have been used to avoid treating non-Muslim students as objects of conversion (Dacholfany et al., 2020; Pajarianto & Muhaemin, 2020; Syahrul, 2020; Tamrin, 2019). These cases challenge the assumption that a strong institutional ideology necessarily produces exclusion.

Despite the breadth of this literature, AIK is often discussed in fragments. Curriculum studies emphasize course structures, character studies focus on student behavior, institutional documents articulate ideals, and multicultural studies examine particular campuses. The conceptual relationship among these components remains underdeveloped. If AIK is the ideological foundation of a university, it is necessary to explain how an ideological principle moves from an official statement into curriculum, pedagogy, campus culture, scientific practice, professional identity, and relations with a plural society.

The literature also exposes an implementation problem. AIK is assigned expansive purposes but is frequently delivered as a dense collection of concepts, historical facts, ritual rules, and organizational information. The curriculum may be formally present while institutional behavior remains inconsistent with its values. Lecturers may be competent in religious content but weak in value pedagogy, contemporary issues, or disciplinary integration. Assessment may measure recall more effectively than integrity, social responsibility, or professional ethics. The phrase ideological foundation can therefore become ceremonial unless the organization specifies mechanisms and evidence of internalization.

This article conducts a thematic synthesis of literature published no later than 2020 to answer four questions. First, how does the literature conceptualize AIK as an ideological foundation? Second, through what curricular, pedagogical, and institutional mechanisms is AIK expected to shape higher education? Third, how does AIK negotiate scientific specialization, professional formation, and religious diversity? Fourth, what tensions limit the realization of its ideological claims? The article proposes that AIK should be understood as an ideological educational ecosystem rather than a collection of courses. Its contribution lies in connecting normative commitments, educational processes, institutional governance, and graduate formation within one analytical framework.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative thematic synthesis. This design was selected because the literature contains normative documents, conceptual articles, qualitative case studies, curriculum analyses, and studies of student perceptions that cannot be combined through statistical meta-analysis. The review followed the stages of problem formulation, source identification, eligibility assessment, data extraction, coding, descriptive synthesis, and higher-order interpretation commonly recommended for systematic literature reviews in the social sciences (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003). The movement from line-by-line concepts toward analytical themes was informed by thematic synthesis and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019; Thomas & Harden, 2008).

The temporal boundary included sources published no later than December 31, 2020. Searches used combinations of the terms Al-Islam dan Kemuhammadiyah, AIK, Perguruan Tinggi Muhammadiyah, PTM, PTMA, pendidikan nilai, kurikulum AIK, ideologi Muhammadiyah, karakter mahasiswa, religiusitas, non-Muslim, multikultural, Catur

Dharma, and Islam dan ilmu pengetahuan. Sources were identified through academic search engines, Indonesian journal portals, publisher and university journal websites, institutional repositories, the official Majelis Diktilitbang portal, and backward reference searching.

A source was included when it met four criteria: it was published by 2020; its authorship or institutional origin was traceable; it substantively addressed AIK in Muhammadiyah higher education or an official ideological framework directly governing that education; and it contributed evidence to at least one review question. Studies limited to primary or secondary schools were excluded unless their argument was indispensable to the conceptual definition, and later publications were excluded even when relevant. Popular reports, unsourced commentaries, duplicate versions, and materials that mentioned AIK only incidentally were not included in the analytical corpus.

The final analytical corpus contained sixteen sources: thirteen academic publications and three official Muhammadiyah documents. The official documents were treated as evidence of organizational intention, identity, and prescribed standards, not as independent proof that the prescribed values had been implemented. Empirical articles were used to examine pedagogy, institutional practice, student response, and implementation problems. Conceptual and philosophical works were used to identify assumptions concerning value education, knowledge, ideology, and the scope of AIK.

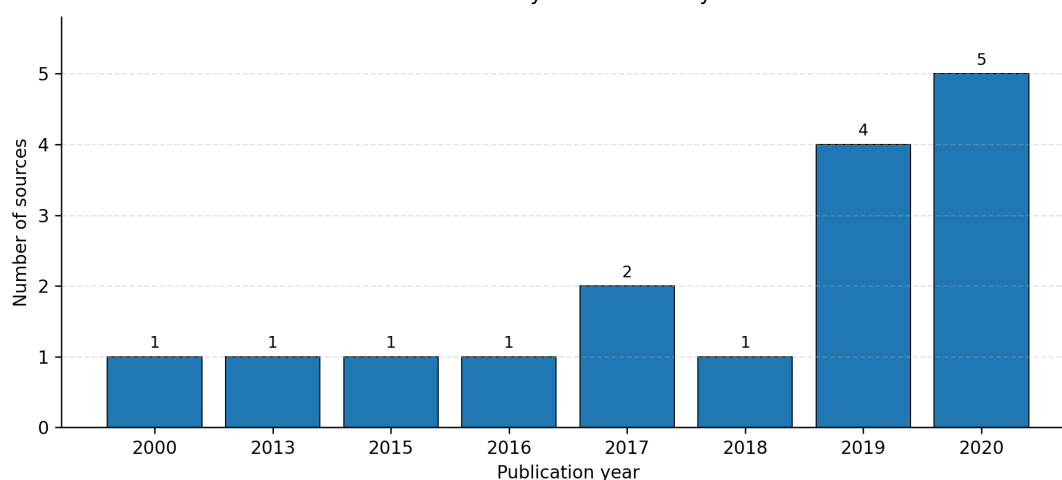
Data were extracted into a matrix containing bibliographic identity, source type, institutional context, definition of AIK, ideological claim, curriculum function, pedagogical mechanism, institutional level, intended outcome, evidence of implementation, treatment of diversity, and reported limitations. Initial codes included ideological identity, Muhammadiyah worldview, value education, curriculum sequence, knowledge-practice integration, religiosity, lecturer competence, contemporary issues, Catur Dharma, scientific integration, organizational literacy, non-Muslim students, dialogical learning, multicultural education, and formalism.

Codes were compared across source types and grouped into five analytical themes: normative-ideological orientation; curricular and pedagogical internalization; integration of knowledge and professional ethics; institutionalization through the Catur Dharma; and inclusive civic identity. Contradictory findings were retained. In particular, the synthesis distinguished official aspirations from evidence that students or institutions actually achieved those aspirations. The review also avoided treating AIK's compulsory status as evidence of ideological effectiveness.

The principal limitation of the method is the uneven evidentiary quality of the corpus. Most empirical studies are single-campus cases, rely heavily on interviews or perceptions, and rarely follow students over time. The synthesis is consequently strongest in reconstructing the conceptual architecture of AIK and identifying implementation tensions. It cannot establish a uniform causal effect across all Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education institutions.

Table 1. Review Design and Analytical Boundaries

Component	Specification
Review type	Qualitative thematic synthesis of normative, conceptual, and empirical literature.
Temporal boundary	Publications and official documents issued no later than 31 December 2020.
Languages	Indonesian and English.
Core corpus	16 sources: 13 academic publications and 3 official Muhammadiyah documents.
Primary focus	AIK in Muhammadiyah/'Aisiyyah higher education, including curriculum, pedagogy, institutional identity, scientific integration, and religious diversity.
Exclusions	Post-2020 works, school-only studies without higher-education relevance, duplicate versions, and passing references.
Evidence rule	Official sources represent prescribed ideology; empirical sources represent localized implementation and perceptions.
Synthesis output	Five themes and an integrative model of AIK as an ideological educational ecosystem.

Distribution of the 16 Analytical Sources by Publication Year

Figure 1. Distribution of the analytical corpus by publication year.

Characteristics of the Analytical Corpus

The corpus reflects the consolidation of AIK as a distinct field of study after the publication of the 2013 national guideline. Earlier organizational documents provide the ideological and institutional background, while the post-2015 literature focuses increasingly on value education, learning methods, religiosity, multicultural settings, and the relationship between AIK and contemporary knowledge. The concentration of publications in 2019 and 2020 indicates growing concern with implementation rather than the sudden appearance of the concept. AIK had existed earlier, but its educational assumptions and institutional consequences became more explicit objects of research.

Table 2. Core Sources and Their Functions in the Synthesis

Source	Type	Principal contribution
PP Muhammadiyah (2000)	Official guidance	Defines Islamic conduct for personal, organizational, professional, and public life.
Majelis Dikti PP Muhammadiyah (2013)	Official curriculum	Standardizes the paradigm, competencies, content, and sequence of AIK in Muhammadiyah higher education.
Arifin (2015)	Conceptual/document study	Reconstructs AIK as value education and critiques cognitive dominance.
Majelis Diktilitbang PP Muhammadiyah (2016)	Official higher-education guidance	Places AIK within the identity and Catur Dharma of Muhammadiyah higher education.
Amirudin (2017)	Qualitative case study	Links AIK with worship, moral behavior, discipline, and consistent habituation.
Nuryana (2017)	Conceptual article	Calls for revitalization of AIK as the spiritual and cadre-forming foundation of Muhammadiyah education.
Rozy & Kurniawan (2018)	Critical conceptual paper	Argues for contemporary Islamic studies and curricular renewal in AIK.
Amini et al. (2019)	Mixed-method case study	Examines curriculum implementation and student religiosity at UMSU.
Pinem (2019)	Qualitative educational study	Analyzes teaching methods and the need for active, contextual learning.
Saswandi & Sari (2019)	Qualitative case study	Examines structured and integrative internalization of AIK values in university courses.
Tamrin (2019)	Qualitative multi-site study	Frames AIK as rahmatan lil 'alamin for Muslim and non-Muslim students in NTT.
Dacholfany et al. (2020)	Qualitative perception study	Explores non-Muslim student responses to an AIK residential learning model.
Nisa' (2020)	Conceptual curriculum study	Develops value-based learning for AIK I and identifies imbalance among cognitive, affective, and personality dimensions.
Pajarianto & Muhaemin (2020)	Qualitative case study	Documents dialogical and comparative models of AIK for non-Muslim students.
Saputra (2020)	Philosophical analysis	Examines AIK in relation to Islamic philosophy of knowledge and institutional intellectual orientation.
Syahrul (2020)	Qualitative multicultural study	Analyzes the teaching of Kemuhammadiyah to non-Muslim students through multicultural education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. AIK as Normative-Ideological Orientation

The first theme is that AIK provides an account of why Muhammadiyah higher education exists and what kind of person it seeks to form. The official curriculum does not present AIK as an isolated body of religious information. It connects theological belief with humanity, worship with ethics, Muhammadiyah's organizational identity with social action, and Islam with the development of knowledge. The sequence represents an

educational anthropology: the student is addressed as a believer or moral subject, a member of society, a learner, a future professional, and a citizen.

The ideological core is derived from Muhammadiyah's understanding of Islam as a religion of guidance, renewal, and public benefit. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide the normative foundation, while *tajdid* requires continual intellectual and institutional response to changing circumstances. *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* is not confined to verbal preaching; it includes education, health, social service, and the production of knowledge. Kemuhammadiyah introduces the historical form through which these commitments have been organized. The purpose is not merely to memorize the dates and names of the movement but to understand the relationship between belief, reform, association, and service.

The *Pedoman Hidup Islami Warga Muhammadiyah* extends this orientation to conduct in personal life, family, work, organization, society, and the environment. When linked with higher education, ideology therefore concerns habits of academic honesty, responsibility, cooperation, justice, and service. AIK is ideological to the extent that it offers a coherent normative vocabulary for judging institutional and professional actions. A university that teaches Muhammadiyah history but tolerates corruption, humiliation, discrimination, or irresponsible science would preserve ideological symbols while contradicting their substantive meaning.

Nuryana (2017) describes AIK as a foundation that requires revitalization because Muhammadiyah education has functions of intellectual formation, social service, *da'wah*, and cadre development. This position supports the claim that AIK is essential to institutional identity. At the same time, it creates a risk of equating ideological success with organizational loyalty. Muhammadiyah universities educate students from diverse religious and organizational backgrounds. The ideological objective is more defensibly understood as Muhammadiyah literacy, ethical affinity, and the capacity to interpret professional life through the movement's values, rather than compulsory recruitment into organizational membership.

The literature thus distinguishes ideological foundation from ideological closure. The foundation supplies direction and criteria, but *tajdid* requires openness to evidence, social change, and intellectual criticism. Rozy and Kurniawan (2018) argue that AIK must engage contemporary Islamic studies and current public issues. Their criticism implies that ideological transmission becomes weak when it repeats inherited formulations without enabling students to examine new realities. A living ideology must be able to interpret the present rather than only preserve the vocabulary of the past.

2. Curricular Codification and Value-Based Pedagogy

The second theme concerns the curricular translation of ideology. The 2013 guideline organizes undergraduate AIK into four broad fields: faith and humanity; worship, ethics, and social relations; Kemuhammadiyah; and Islam in relation to science. The structure

provides a common identity across institutions while allowing enrichment according to programme, region, and student background. The larger credit allocation compared with generic Islamic religious education reflects the expectation that AIK will produce sustained formation rather than a one-semester introduction (Arifin, 2015; Majelis Pendidikan Tinggi PP Muhammadiyah, 2013).

The literature consistently identifies a gap between this formative ambition and content-heavy implementation. Arifin (2015) argues that AIK should be reconstructed as value education. Nisa' (2020) similarly observes that curricular materials may be dense yet lack a unifying spirit, and that cognitive, affective, and personality dimensions are not always balanced. The problem is not simply excessive information. It is the assumption that knowledge of doctrine or organizational history will automatically become conviction and conduct.

Value-based pedagogy requires several movements. Students first encounter concepts and texts; they then interpret their ethical significance, relate them to lived situations, exercise judgment, practice relevant behavior, and reflect upon its consequences. Learning methods reported in the literature include discussion, mentoring, worship practice, case analysis, habituation, assignments connected with social action, and reflective evaluation. Pinem (2019) emphasizes methodological variety, while Saswandi and Sari (2019) show the importance of structured and integrative learning. These methods are not inherently transformative, but they create opportunities for students to connect meaning with practice.

Empirical studies suggest that AIK can influence religious conduct when learning is continuous and supported by campus habits. Amirudin (2017) reports relationships with communal prayer, daily religious practice, ta'awun, discipline, and moral behavior. Amini et al. (2019) connect the curriculum with student religiosity, but they also indicate the importance of input, process, and learning products. Such findings should be interpreted cautiously. Single-campus studies and self-reported behavior do not prove that AIK alone caused the observed outcomes. They do, however, support a mechanism in which coursework interacts with modelling, routine, social environment, and institutional reinforcement.

Assessment remains a central weakness. Written examinations can evaluate conceptual understanding, but ideological formation requires evidence of judgment, consistency, professional conduct, and social responsibility. These qualities cannot be measured through one instrument or one lecturer's impression. A stronger assessment design would combine conceptual work, reflective writing, observed practice, collaborative projects, ethical case analysis, and feedback over time. The purpose is not surveillance of personal piety but evaluation of whether students can reason and act responsibly in situations relevant to their education.

3. Integration of Islamic Values, Knowledge, and Professional Formation

The third theme is the expectation that AIK should influence the development and use of knowledge. Muhammadiyah universities do not educate only religious specialists; they train doctors, teachers, engineers, economists, lawyers, artists, and scientists. If AIK remains separated from disciplinary learning, students receive two parallel messages: professional knowledge is learned in the programme, while Islam and Muhammadiyah are learned in compulsory general courses. Such separation weakens the claim that AIK is the ideological foundation of higher education.

The fourth component of the national AIK curriculum, commonly concerned with Islam and science, provides an entry point for integration. Saputra (2020) examines AIK from the perspective of Islamic philosophy of knowledge, while Rozy and Kurniawan (2018) call for greater engagement with contemporary scholarship and public questions. Their arguments indicate that integration should not consist of attaching scriptural quotations to established scientific content. It requires examination of the purposes, assumptions, methods, uses, and consequences of knowledge.

At least three forms of integration can be distinguished. The first is ethical integration: students evaluate professional decisions through honesty, justice, protection of life, public benefit, and responsibility. The second is epistemic integration: religious and scientific knowledge are examined in relation to their different questions, methods, and limits. The third is institutional integration: research agendas, community engagement, and professional training are directed toward problems consistent with Muhammadiyah's humanitarian mission. These forms are related but should not be collapsed into one formula.

Professional ethics is the most immediate bridge. AIK can help medical students discuss dignity, access, consent, and care; business students examine trust, exploitation, and distributive justice; engineering students consider safety and environmental consequences; and education students analyze equality, character, and human development. The ideological contribution lies in the moral grammar through which technical competence is directed. The relevant test is not how many Islamic terms appear in the syllabus but whether students can identify moral stakes and justify responsible action.

The corpus provides stronger conceptual support for this integrative vision than direct evidence of implementation across disciplines. Most empirical studies examine AIK courses rather than laboratories, clinical training, professional placements, or research governance. This gap is important. It means that AIK's status as the ideological foundation of scientific development is an institutional aspiration that requires further evidence. A university cannot demonstrate integration merely by assigning AIK courses while leaving disciplinary curricula and research culture unchanged.

4. AIK as Institutional Culture and Catur Dharma

The fourth theme moves from curriculum to institution. Muhammadiyah higher education is described through the Catur Dharma: education, research, community service, and Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah. AIK is therefore both a distinct responsibility and a value framework intended to animate the other responsibilities. This dual status is significant. It permits specialized AIK courses and units, but it also requires AIK to influence leadership, employment, quality assurance, student services, research, and community relations.

An ideological foundation becomes institutionally credible through congruence. The values taught to students should correspond with the conduct of lecturers, administrators, and leaders; employment and promotion systems should not reward behavior that contradicts declared ethics; financial and academic governance should be transparent; and community service should express empowerment rather than ceremonial charity. When such congruence is absent, AIK is reduced to a compensatory course expected to repair contradictions created elsewhere in the institution.

The role of lecturers is especially important. AIK educators require competence in Islamic studies and Muhammadiyah, but also in higher-education pedagogy, student diversity, contemporary issues, and reflective assessment. They are interpreters between organizational ideology and student experience. Yet ideological formation is not their exclusive responsibility. Disciplinary lecturers, supervisors, professional mentors, and institutional leaders also communicate what the university truly values. Students learn institutional ideology through regulations, examples, rewards, and everyday interactions as much as through course content.

The literature's repeated call for revitalization reflects this systemic problem. Nuryana (2017) argues that AIK may be formally present but functionally weak. Arifin (2015) similarly proposes a shift from transmission toward value practice. The implication is that institutionalization requires more than increasing credit hours. AIK should be incorporated into strategic planning, staff development, orientation, curriculum review, research ethics, community-service design, and internal quality assurance. Each area needs indicators that are observable without reducing religious identity to bureaucratic checklists.

Quality assurance should examine both provision and coherence. Provision asks whether AIK courses, lecturers, facilities, and programmes exist. Coherence asks whether institutional decisions embody the same values. Useful evidence could include curriculum mapping, ethical case assessment, inclusion policies, academic-integrity systems, community impact, staff development, and student perceptions of fairness and respect. The ideological foundation is strongest when multiple forms of evidence converge rather than when one administrative unit alone is declared responsible for it.

5. Ideological Distinctiveness and Inclusive Civic Identity

The fifth theme concerns the relationship between ideological distinctiveness and plural participation. Muhammadiyah universities are Islamic institutions, but several operate in regions where substantial numbers of students are Christian, Catholic, Hindu, or affiliated with Islamic traditions other than Muhammadiyah. A compulsory AIK curriculum in such settings raises questions of educational purpose, freedom of conscience, fairness, and institutional hospitality.

Studies in East Nusa Tenggara describe AIK as an introduction to Islam and Muhammadiyah for non-Muslim students, with emphasis on universal humanitarian values and Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin (Tamrin, 2019). Syahrul (2020) frames the teaching of Kemuhammadiyah through multicultural education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kupang. In Palopo, Pajarianto and Muhaemin (2020) report dialogical rules of study, comparative engagement with sacred texts, and peer tutoring. Dacholfany et al. (2020) find that non-Muslim students generally responded positively to an AIK residential model and reported broader understanding of Islam.

These studies demonstrate that institutional ideology does not have only one pedagogical form. Muslim students may be invited to deepen worship and Islamic commitment, whereas non-Muslim students may study Islam, Muhammadiyah, ethics, and civic cooperation without being required to affirm Islamic doctrine. Differentiation does not dilute institutional identity. It clarifies the distinction between teaching about an institution's worldview and coercing personal belief.

The inclusive potential of AIK is linked with Muhammadiyah's public orientation. The movement's educational and social institutions historically serve communities beyond formal membership. AIK can therefore cultivate civic virtues such as respect, service, cooperation, nonviolence, and responsibility across religious boundaries. Muhammadiyah literacy for non-Muslim students may explain why the university values education, health, social welfare, renewal, and national commitment. Such literacy supports participation in campus life without erasing difference.

The evidence also requires caution. Positive perceptions in selected campuses do not eliminate the possibility of discomfort, unequal treatment, or doctrinal teaching that is insensitive to diversity. Inclusivity depends on lecturer competence, materials, assessment, language, and the ability to distinguish institutional knowledge from personal confession. An ideological foundation becomes educationally legitimate when it is transparent about its commitments while respecting the moral agency of learners.

AIK thus contributes to a civic identity that combines particularity and openness. Students are expected to understand Muhammadiyah as a specific Islamic movement, yet the public expression of that identity is service, learning, ethical professionalism, and peaceful cooperation. The relationship is not automatic. It must be produced through pedagogy and institutional practice.

Table 3. Thematic Synthesis of AIK as an Ideological Foundation

Theme	Mechanism	Expected outcome	Principal tension
Normative-ideological orientation	Connects Islamic belief, tajdid, Muhammadiyah history, and social mission.	Institutional purpose and Muhammadiyah literacy.	Ideological orientation versus doctrinal closure.
Curricular and pedagogical internalization	AIK I–IV, value education, reflection, practice, mentoring, and assessment.	Religious integrity, character, and moral judgment.	Cognitive mastery versus lived values.
Knowledge and professional formation	Relates Islamic ethics to disciplinary knowledge and professional decisions.	Ethically directed competence and socially responsible science.	Symbolic integration versus transformation of disciplinary practice.
Institutional culture and Catur Dharma	Embeds AIK in leadership, staff development, governance, research, and service.	Institutional congruence and distinctive campus culture.	Whole-institution responsibility versus delegation to AIK lecturers.
Inclusive civic identity	Uses dialogical and multicultural pedagogy for diverse learners.	Hospitality, religious literacy, cooperation, and public service.	Strong identity versus freedom of conscience and equal participation.

Discussion

1. AIK as an Ideological Educational Ecosystem

The synthesis supports a shift from viewing AIK as a compulsory subject toward understanding it as an ideological educational ecosystem. An ecosystem contains differentiated components whose effects depend on their relationships. Official values, curriculum, pedagogy, lecturer example, campus regulations, disciplinary knowledge, professional practice, and community engagement jointly communicate institutional ideology. No single component is sufficient. Courses without institutional congruence produce formalism; institutional symbols without conceptual education produce shallow identity; and ethical aspirations without disciplinary competence produce moral language detached from practice.

The ecosystem begins with a normative-ideological core. This core identifies ultimate commitments and institutional purposes. It is then codified through curriculum so that students can encounter concepts, histories, practices, and questions in a systematic form. Pedagogy mediates the curriculum through dialogue, interpretation, practice, and reflection. The institutional ecosystem reinforces or contradicts what is taught. Contextual adaptation connects shared standards with disciplinary fields, regions, and religious diversity. These processes generate graduate outcomes in religious integrity, professional ethics, Muhammadiyah literacy, and civic participation.

The model explains why AIK should not be judged only by student grades in AIK courses. High scores may indicate knowledge but not necessarily internalization or institutional impact. Conversely, positive institutional culture without systematic learning may produce habits whose conceptual basis is weak. Evaluation should examine a chain of alignment: Are the ideological goals clear? Are they represented in the curriculum? Do

learning methods enable judgment and practice? Do campus systems model the values? Can graduates apply them in professional and civic contexts?

The term foundation also requires reinterpretation. A foundation is not visible only at the beginning of a building; it supports the whole structure. Similarly, AIK should not be limited to early-semester orientation or general education. Its principles should reappear at increasing levels of complexity in disciplinary ethics, research, professional placements, leadership, and final projects. This does not require every lecturer to become an AIK specialist. It requires programme-level collaboration in identifying where ideological and ethical questions are educationally relevant.

2. Five Persistent Tensions

First, AIK must distinguish ideology from indoctrination. Ideology supplies a reasoned worldview and institutional identity; indoctrination discourages questioning and treats assent as the only acceptable outcome. Muhammadiyah's commitment to *tajdid* provides an internal basis for critical inquiry. AIK should teach students to understand, interpret, and evaluate the movement's positions, including their historical development and contemporary challenges. Critical engagement can strengthen rather than weaken identity when the institution is confident in its intellectual tradition.

Second, the national curriculum must balance standardization and contextualization. Common standards protect the integrity of AIK across institutions, but student backgrounds, regional religious composition, and professional programmes differ substantially. The cases of non-Muslim students show why identical materials and assessment may be inappropriate. Contextualization should not mean arbitrary removal of core values; it should mean responsible adaptation of learning outcomes, examples, methods, and depth.

Third, AIK faces the gap between cognitive knowledge and lived values. Value education requires knowledge, but the movement from knowledge to practice involves motivation, example, community, repetition, and reflection. The literature repeatedly recommends active and experiential learning, yet systematic evidence regarding long-term internalization is limited. Institutions should therefore avoid claiming moral transformation based solely on course completion.

Fourth, identity formation must be reconciled with inclusion. A university has the right to communicate its religious and organizational identity, while students retain moral agency and freedom of conscience. The most defensible model is transparent and differentiated: all students learn the institution's worldview and public values; Muslim students may engage confessional Islamic formation; non-Muslim students receive respectful religious literacy and space for comparative reflection. Assessment should evaluate learning, not simulated belief.

Fifth, AIK must be owned by the whole institution without losing specialist competence. When every unit is declared responsible, responsibility may become diffuse; when AIK is delegated exclusively to one unit, the rest of the university may remain unaffected. The solution is distributed responsibility with defined roles. AIK lecturers provide conceptual and pedagogical expertise; programme lecturers integrate professional ethics; leaders ensure policy congruence; quality units evaluate evidence; and students participate in reflective and social practice.

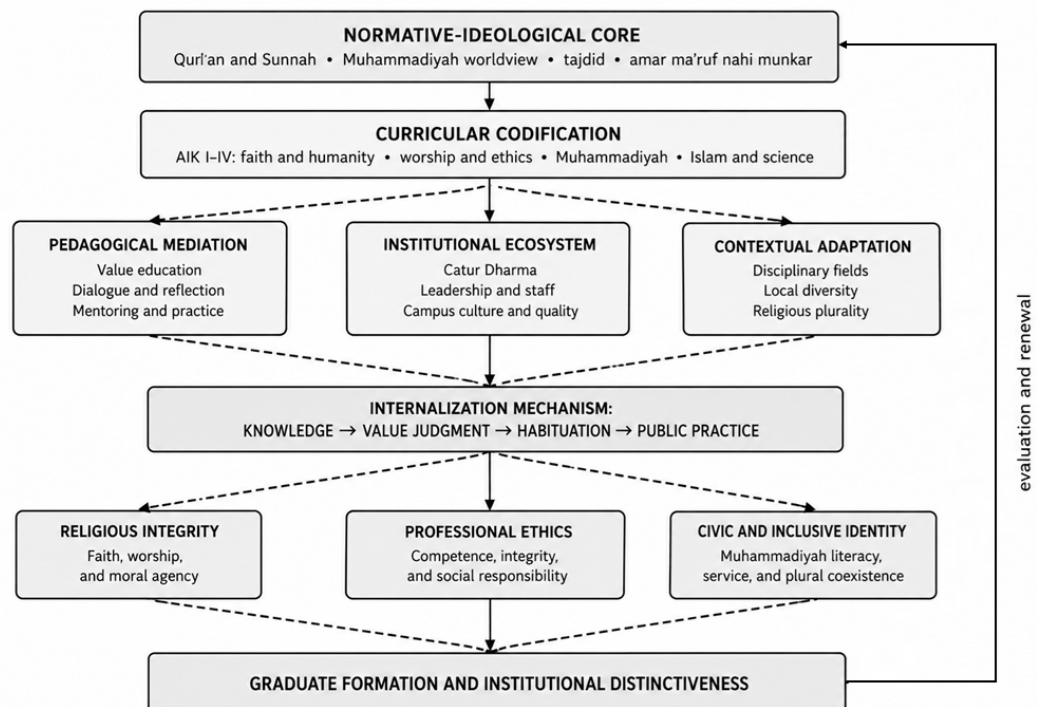


Figure 2. AIK as an ideological educational ecosystem in Muhammadiyah higher education.

3. Conceptual Propositions

Proposition 1. AIK functions as an ideological foundation only when Muhammadiyah's normative commitments are translated consistently across curriculum, pedagogy, governance, disciplinary learning, and public service.

Proposition 2. The internalization of AIK values is more likely when conceptual knowledge is mediated through reflection, exemplary conduct, repeated practice, and engagement with authentic professional or social problems.

Proposition 3. Standardized AIK outcomes gain educational legitimacy when institutions retain contextual flexibility regarding disciplinary field, regional culture, and the religious background of learners.

Proposition 4. AIK strengthens professional identity when Islamic and Muhammadiyah values operate as criteria for evaluating the purposes, methods, and consequences of disciplinary knowledge rather than as decorative religious references.

Proposition 5. Institutional distinctiveness and religious inclusion become mutually reinforcing when AIK communicates a clear worldview through dialogical pedagogy, differentiated learning goals, and equal respect for the conscience of Muslim and non-Muslim students.

Table 4. Operational Implications of the Integrative Model

Domain	Illustrative evidence of implementation	Warning sign
Curriculum	Mapped AIK outcomes across general and disciplinary courses; contemporary ethical cases; progression from basic literacy to professional application.	AIK isolated in a few courses with repetitive content.
Pedagogy	Dialogue, reflection, practice, mentoring, case analysis, and community-based learning.	Lecture and memorization dominate; values are asserted but not examined.
Human resources	AIK competence for specialist lecturers and role-specific formation for all staff.	Ideological responsibility delegated only to an AIK unit.
Governance	Transparent decisions, academic integrity, fair treatment, social responsibility, and leadership modelling.	Institutional practices contradict values taught in class.
Science and professions	Ethical reasoning embedded in laboratories, clinics, placements, research, and professional projects.	Scriptural quotations added without changes to disciplinary reasoning or conduct.
Religious diversity	Differentiated outcomes, dialogical methods, non-coercive assessment, and equal campus participation.	Students are assessed according to simulated religious assent.
Quality assurance	Multiple evidence sources track alignment, student experience, ethical judgment, and community impact.	Success measured only by course availability, credits, or examination scores.

Implications for Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah Higher Education

Curriculum policy should define AIK as a progressive sequence that extends beyond general courses. The early curriculum may establish faith, ethics, and Muhammadiyah literacy, while later learning should examine disciplinary ethics, research responsibility, leadership, and public problems. Programme teams should identify points where AIK contributes substantively to professional competence rather than adding generic religious statements to every course.

Lecturer development requires differentiation. AIK specialists need strong grounding in Islamic studies, Muhammadiyah, value pedagogy, diversity, and contemporary issues. Disciplinary lecturers need the capacity to facilitate ethical reflection within their fields. Leaders and administrative staff need formation related to governance, service, and

organizational conduct. Baitul Arqam and similar programmes can support these goals when they are connected with role-specific practice and followed by institutional evaluation.

Quality assurance should move from compliance toward congruence. Institutions should continue to verify curriculum, staffing, and facilities, but should also examine whether academic integrity, student treatment, research practice, finance, partnerships, and community service embody the values claimed by AIK. Student and stakeholder perspectives are necessary because ideological culture is experienced through everyday institutional relations.

Religious diversity requires explicit guidelines. Institutions should clarify learning outcomes for Muslim and non-Muslim students, train lecturers in dialogical methods, review language and assessment, and create mechanisms for students to report discomfort or discrimination. Such safeguards do not weaken Muhammadiyah identity. They express the movement's public ethics and strengthen trust in its educational mission.

Finally, PTMA should invest in evidence. Longitudinal studies, graduate tracking, classroom observation, curriculum mapping, ethical-performance assessment, and comparative institutional studies are needed to determine which AIK practices produce durable outcomes. The field should move beyond repeated normative statements and single-site descriptions toward research capable of evaluating institutional transformation.

Limitations and Future Research

The synthesis is limited by the concentration of studies in selected Indonesian campuses and by the dominance of qualitative, perception-based, and normative research. The corpus does not establish a uniform picture of all Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education institutions. It also provides limited evidence concerning AIK in postgraduate education, research laboratories, professional placements, institutional finance, or graduate careers.

The review ends in 2020 and therefore does not analyze later curriculum revisions or the incorporation of the *Risalah Islam Berkemajuan* after the forty-eighth Muhammadiyah Congress. Future research should compare institutions, examine Muslim and non-Muslim learning outcomes separately, trace value formation longitudinally, and study the relationship between AIK, scientific culture, governance, and professional ethics. Research should also investigate unsuccessful or contested practices rather than focusing only on exemplary programmes.

CONCLUSION

This thematic synthesis shows that AIK occupies a position much broader than that of compulsory religious coursework. In Muhammadiyah and 'Aisyiyah higher education, it

codifies a normative worldview, forms religious and moral judgment, introduces the history and mission of Muhammadiyah, connects Islamic ethics with knowledge, and provides criteria for institutional conduct. Its ideological function is educational and organizational: AIK explains the university's purpose and the kind of public responsibility expected from its academic community.

The literature supports five connected dimensions: normative-ideological orientation, curricular and pedagogical internalization, integration of knowledge and professional ethics, institutionalization through the Catur Dharma, and inclusive civic identity. Together they form an ideological educational ecosystem. The ecosystem is effective only when official commitments, course content, lecturer example, governance, disciplinary practice, and student experience are mutually consistent.

The principal challenge is the implementation gap. AIK is frequently assigned transformative ambitions while being delivered through dense materials, cognitive assessment, and limited institutional ownership. The remedy is not simply more credit hours. It is alignment: value-based pedagogy, role-specific staff formation, disciplinary integration, evidence-based quality assurance, and inclusive learning for diverse students.

AIK can therefore serve as a credible ideological foundation without becoming an instrument of closure. Muhammadiyah's identity is strongest when it is intellectually articulate, ethically visible, professionally relevant, and hospitable to difference. Under those conditions, AIK does not merely distinguish a university by name; it shapes how the institution produces knowledge, treats people, serves society, and forms graduates capable of combining faith, competence, and public responsibility.

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