

MODERNIZATION WITHOUT WESTERNIZATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION: RECONSTRUCTING ERBAKAN'S VALUE-BASED MODERNIZATION MODEL

Esra Polat Onbasi^{1*}, Alparslan Onbasi²

¹Department of History and Civilization, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

²Department of Islamic Philosophy, Bartın University, Türkiye

*Corresponding Email: onbasipolat@gmail.com

Received: . Accepted: . Published: .

ABSTRACT

This study addresses a persistent gap in Islamic education scholarship: although modernization, Westernization, epistemic dependency, and Islamic educational reform have been widely discussed, Necmettin Erbakan's educational thought has not been adequately reconstructed into an integrated framework that links scientific advancement, moral-spiritual formation, epistemic autonomy, and institutional reform. Using qualitative document analysis, the study examines Erbakan's major writings, parliamentary speeches, and selected National Outlook documents through theoretically informed thematic analysis. Multiple Modernities, epistemic dependency, and *ta'dib* function as complementary analytical lenses while allowing themes to emerge inductively from the corpus. The findings reveal three interconnected dimensions: the critique of the imitative mentality as a source of educational and intellectual dependency; the integration of scientific competence with spiritual, moral, and cultural formation; and the reconstruction of curricula, knowledge-producing institutions, and transnational academic cooperation to strengthen educational autonomy. These findings are synthesized into an emergent model of Value-Based Modernization. The study's theoretical contribution lies in integrating dimensions usually treated separately, alternative modernity, epistemic autonomy, Islamic human formation, and institutional reconstruction, into a coherent educational model. It thereby extends contemporary debates on Islamic modernities and decolonial education by positioning Islamic education as an active mechanism for culturally grounded modernization within contemporary Muslim educational contexts undergoing rapid change.

Keywords: Epistemic autonomy, Islamic education, Multiple modernities, *Ta'dib*, Value-based modernization, Westernization

INTRODUCTION

Across Muslim-majority and other non-Western societies, educational modernization has long involved a fundamental tension between participation in scientific, technological, and institutional advancement and the preservation of locally grounded epistemologies, ethical traditions, and cultural identities. This tension has become increasingly significant in contemporary education as systems adopt internationally circulating curricula, governance models, pedagogies, and standards that are often presented as universally transferable. Although such borrowing can facilitate institutional development, uncritical transplantation may also create forms of epistemic dependency in which educational reform is evaluated primarily against externally produced models rather than local intellectual and moral priorities. Recent studies of policy borrowing and decolonization in Muslim educational contexts demonstrate that this problem remains contemporary rather than merely historical (Niyozov & Khan, 2024; Almoaibed & Keating, 2025), while emerging scholarship on Islamic emancipation similarly questions the assumption that educational advancement must occur

through dominant Western epistemological categories (R'boul & Barnawi, 2025). The educational problem, therefore, is not whether Muslim societies should engage modern science and institutional development, but how such engagement can occur without reducing modernization to cultural or epistemic imitation.

This problem is situated within a wider theoretical debate concerning the relationship between modernity and cultural difference. Classical modernization perspectives frequently conceptualized modernization as a relatively linear transformation involving industrialization, rationalization, institutional differentiation, and changing social orientations (Lerner, 1958; Eisenstadt, 1966). Subsequent scholarship challenged the assumption that these processes necessarily converge toward a singular Western cultural model. Eisenstadt's (2000) theory of Multiple Modernities reconceptualized modernity as capable of generating institutionally and culturally differentiated trajectories, thereby creating theoretical space for societies to appropriate modern institutions while interpreting them through distinctive historical and normative traditions. This perspective has particular relevance for Muslim societies. Jung (2024), for example, develops the notion of Islamic modernities to explain how religious traditions remain active resources in the constitution of modern social orders rather than residual elements destined to disappear through modernization. Consequently, the modernization–Westernization relationship is better understood not as a binary choice between tradition and progress but as an unresolved question concerning how scientific advancement, cultural autonomy, religious commitments, and institutional transformation can be negotiated within different educational traditions.

Islamic educational scholarship further demonstrates that this negotiation is fundamentally educational because it concerns not only what knowledge should be transmitted but also what kinds of persons, ethical dispositions, and intellectual communities education should cultivate. Al-Attas's conception of ta'dib understands education as the integrated formation of knowledge, ethical orientation, spiritual consciousness, and proper human conduct rather than the acquisition of technical competence alone (Al-Attas, 1980, 1993). Contemporary scholarship has extended this concern by examining Muslim selfhood, spiritual and social transformation, and the reconstruction of schooling through Islamic conceptual categories (Ahmed, 2021; Alkouatli, 2022; Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025). At the same time, decolonial studies of Muslim education have drawn attention to the intellectual consequences of externally borrowed knowledge systems and educational reforms (Niyozov & Khan, 2024; Nur, 2022; R'boul & Barnawi, 2025). These strands of scholarship converge around an important question: how can educational systems engage modern science, technology, and institutional development while sustaining epistemic agency, ethical formation, and culturally grounded educational purposes? Nevertheless, these conversations remain relatively fragmented across theories of modernity, decolonial critique, and Islamic educational philosophy, leaving considerable scope for examining intellectual projects that attempt to connect these dimensions within a coherent educational vision.

Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011), best known as the founder of Türkiye's National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement, offers an underexamined educational response to the tension between modernization and cultural Westernization. His writings link the critique of an “imitative mentality” (*taklitçi zihniyet*) with the integration of scientific advancement, moral-spiritual formation, curriculum reform, indigenous knowledge production, and educational cooperation across Muslim societies. However, these elements have rarely been reconstructed as a coherent educational philosophy. This study addresses that gap through qualitative document analysis and theoretically informed thematic interpretation using Multiple Modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000; Jung, 2024), epistemic dependency and decolonial critique (Alatas, 1977; Niyozov & Khan, 2024; R'boul & Barnawi, 2025), and ta'dib (Al-Attas, 1980,

1993; Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025) as complementary analytical lenses. Rather than imposing Value-Based Modernization as a predetermined theory, the study allows it to emerge from the relationships among the identified themes, thereby contributing to Islamic education scholarship by theorizing modernization as the integration of scientific progress, epistemic autonomy, moral formation, and institutional reconstruction.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative document analysis to reconstruct Necmettin Erbakan's educational philosophy and examine how his writings connect modernization, epistemic autonomy, spiritual formation, and educational reform (Bowen, 2009). The purposively selected corpus included *Milli Görüş* [National Outlook] (Erbakan, 1975), *Türkiye'nin Meseleleri ve Çözümleri* [Turkey's Issues and Solutions] (Erbakan, 1991), selected parliamentary speeches from 1970–1995, and official National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) publications (Müslüman Topluluklar Birliği, 1992, 1994). Later edited collections were used only when they reproduced relevant speeches or arguments and were analytically distinguished from contemporaneous primary documents. Documents were selected based on authorship or institutional authority, conceptual relevance to education and modernization, chronological coverage, and identifiable provenance. Consistent with purposive qualitative sampling (Patton, 2015), the aim was to construct an authoritative and conceptually relevant corpus rather than achieve statistical representativeness.

The documents were analyzed through theoretically informed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) iterative procedures of familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and interpretive synthesis. A deductive–inductive strategy was used: Multiple Modernities sensitized the analysis to distinctions between scientific modernization and cultural Westernization (Eisenstadt, 2000; Jung, 2024), epistemic dependency guided attention to imitation, intellectual dependence, and *taklitçi zihniyet* (Alatas, 1977), and ta'dib informed analysis of knowledge, morality, spirituality, character, and educational purpose (Al-Attas, 1980, 1993). Additional codes were allowed to emerge inductively from the texts, with coded segments recorded by source and location to maintain an audit trail. Cross-document comparison generated three interrelated themes, Critique of the Imitative Mentality, Spiritual and Moral Development, and Integrated Indigenous Education, which were subsequently synthesized into the emergent model of Value-Based Modernization, linking epistemic autonomy, scientific advancement, ethical-spiritual formation, cultural rootedness, and curricular and institutional reconstruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Documentary Analysis and Thematic Structure

The document analysis identified three interrelated themes in Erbakan's educational thought: critique of the imitative mentality, spiritual and moral development, and integrated indigenous education. Together, these themes link educational reform to the distinction between modernization and cultural Westernization: uncritical imitation produces intellectual and cultural dependency, moral-spiritual formation provides the basis for integrated human development, and curricular and institutional reconstruction supports epistemic autonomy. Recurring patterns concerning scientific advancement, cultural identity, knowledge integration, indigenous research institutions, and transnational educational cooperation further indicate that Erbakan's educational philosophy constitutes an interconnected system rather than a set of isolated political propositions.

Critique of the Imitative Mentality: Educational Dependency and Epistemic Autonomy

A dominant pattern across Erbakan's writings is the critique of the "imitative mentality" (*taklitçi zihniyet*) as a source of educational and intellectual dependency. The problem, in his view, lies not in engagement with Western knowledge itself but in the uncritical adoption of external educational models, cultural assumptions, and institutional structures without sufficient consideration of indigenous intellectual, moral, and cultural contexts (Erbakan, 1991). Such imitation weakens cultural confidence and reinforces dependence on externally defined forms of knowledge, making educational reform dependent on the ability to evaluate knowledge critically from within locally grounded ethical and cultural frameworks.

At the same time, Erbakan clearly distinguishes scientific advancement from cultural imitation. Scientific, technological, and industrial development are treated as necessary dimensions of modernization, whereas Westernization becomes problematic when cultural borrowing displaces indigenous moral and spiritual foundations (Erbakan, 1991). This distinction is also reflected in National Outlook educational proposals, which retain science and technology within the curriculum while integrating them with Islamic ethical teachings and culturally grounded content. Scientific competence and cultural rootedness are therefore presented as complementary rather than opposing educational objectives.

This distinction ultimately leads to epistemic autonomy as a central educational objective. Across the documentary corpus, autonomy is associated with producing rather than merely importing knowledge, developing contextually responsive curricula, and strengthening independent scholarly institutions through research centers, documentation networks, academic exchanges, and joint publications. Epistemic autonomy thus denotes the capacity to engage external knowledge selectively and critically while maintaining control over educational purposes, knowledge production, and institutional development. Within Erbakan's educational philosophy, modernization therefore begins not with rejection of modern knowledge but with overcoming uncritical imitation and developing the capacity to appropriate, evaluate, and produce knowledge independently.

Spiritual and Moral Development: Reintegrating Knowledge and Ethical Formation

Erbakan's critique of materially reductionist education centers on the separation of scientific and technical competence from moral and spiritual responsibility. Across the analyzed documents, he treats material development as a legitimate educational goal but rejects materialism as an adequate philosophical foundation for education. In his parliamentary discourse, Erbakan argues that educational reform must address the ethical roots of individual and social problems rather than rely only on legal or administrative solutions, thereby positioning moral judgment as an essential complement to technical knowledge (Erbakan, 1976).

Against this limitation, Erbakan presents spirituality and morality as foundational educational purposes. His writings emphasize national and spiritual values, moral responsibility, cultural continuity, and the development of individuals capable of acting in accordance with ethical principles. This orientation also appears in proposals to revise subjects such as ethics, sociology, philosophy, and psychology so that they contribute to learners' worldview and moral formation, indicating that spiritual development extends beyond formal religious instruction into the wider intellectual and cultural environment of education.

The documentary evidence further shows that Erbakan seeks to integrate scientific knowledge with spiritual formation rather than place them in opposition. He supports scientific, technological, and industrial advancement while insisting that such progress remain

connected to ethical and cultural foundations. This is reflected in proposals for science curricula that retain modern scientific knowledge while also acknowledging Muslim contributions to scientific development and linking scientific learning with broader moral and cultural formation. Scientific competence and spiritual development are therefore presented as mutually reinforcing dimensions of educational modernization.

This integration ultimately produces a distinctive conception of the educated person. Across the corpus, the intended educational subject can be reconstructed as scientifically competent, spiritually grounded, morally responsible, culturally confident, and intellectually independent. Education is thus expected not merely to transmit knowledge but to cultivate learners capable of engaging modern science without becoming detached from their ethical, spiritual, and cultural traditions. In Erbakan's educational philosophy, spiritual and moral formation therefore functions as the formative dimension through which scientific advancement contributes to integrated human and social development.

Integrated Indigenous Education: From Philosophy to Institutional Reconstruction

Curriculum integration emerges as a central mechanism through which Erbakan translates his educational philosophy into institutional practice. The analyzed documents advocate curricula that integrate science and technology with Islamic ethical teachings and culturally grounded knowledge, while responding to the historical and social realities of Muslim societies. This orientation also includes revising humanities and social science subjects and acknowledging Muslim contributions to scientific development, thereby situating modern knowledge within a broader framework of cultural continuity, ethical awareness, and intellectual confidence.

Pedagogical orientation and character formation are also evident, although the documents provide less detail on specific classroom methods. Erbakan's emphasis on moral responsibility, spiritual development, and value internalization suggests a pedagogy concerned with shaping conduct and character rather than transmitting information alone. The available texts therefore indicate a normative pedagogical direction centered on moral reflection and ethical judgment, while leaving teaching methods, assessment, and classroom implementation comparatively underdeveloped.

Indigenous knowledge-producing institutions constitute a further dimension of Erbakan's educational vision. National Outlook documents call for independent research institutes, documentation centers, academic exchange offices, and scholarly publications to strengthen the capacity of Muslim societies to generate, validate, and circulate knowledge through their own institutions. In this sense, epistemic autonomy requires not only curricular reform but also institutional infrastructures that enable active participation in knowledge production rather than continued dependence on externally produced knowledge.

Transnational educational cooperation complements this institutional agenda through student and faculty exchanges, collaborative research, shared educational resources, and coordinated scholarly publishing across Muslim societies. Erbakan's concept of indigenous education therefore combines local cultural rootedness with wider academic cooperation rather than national isolation. Together, curriculum integration, character-oriented education, indigenous knowledge production, and transnational collaboration position educational modernization as an institutional project aimed at strengthening scientific capacity, cultural continuity, and intellectual independence.

Cross-Theme Synthesis: From Imitative Mentality to Value-Based Modernization

The three themes form a coherent sequence in Erbakan's educational thought. The critique of the imitative mentality identifies uncritical educational borrowing as a source of intellectual dependency. At the same time, epistemic autonomy represents the capacity to engage scientific and technological knowledge critically without losing cultural and ethical agency. This autonomy is strengthened through the integration of scientific competence with spiritual and moral formation. It is subsequently institutionalized through curriculum integration, character-oriented education, indigenous knowledge production, and transnational academic cooperation. Taken together, the findings indicate that modernization is neither rejected nor equated with cultural assimilation, but is reconstructed as a value-oriented educational process that combines scientific advancement, ethical formation, cultural rootedness, and institutional independence.

Emergent Conceptual Model of Value-Based Modernization

Based on these relationships, Figure 1 presents the emergent Value-Based Modernization model reconstructed from the documentary analysis. The model traces a progression from imitative mentality and epistemic dependency toward epistemic reorientation, integrated scientific and moral-spiritual formation, curricular and institutional reconstruction, and ultimately the formation of learners who are scientifically competent, spiritually grounded, morally responsible, culturally confident, and intellectually independent.



Figure 1. Emergent Conceptual Model of Value-Based Modernization Reconstructed from Erbakan's Educational Thought

The model should be understood as an analytical synthesis derived from recurring relationships across the documentary corpus rather than as a pre-existing theory imposed on Erbakan's writings. It summarizes how the rejection of imitation, epistemic autonomy, integrated human formation, and institutional reconstruction combine into a coherent educational approach to modernization. It also examines its relationship to Multiple Modernities, epistemic dependency, *ta'dib*, and contemporary Islamic educational scholarship.

The findings reconstruct Erbakan's educational thought as a coherent response to the interrelated challenges of modernization, epistemic dependency, and cultural continuity. Rather than treating the identified themes as separate propositions, the discussion interprets them through three complementary theoretical lenses: epistemic dependency, Multiple Modernities, and *ta'dib*. Together, these perspectives illuminate Erbakan's critique of uncritical imitation, his distinction between modernization and Westernization, and his emphasis on

integrating scientific competence with moral and spiritual formation. Building on these interpretations, the discussion then considers how epistemic autonomy and integrated human formation are translated into curriculum, knowledge production, and institutional reconstruction before synthesizing these dimensions into the emergent concept of Value-Based Modernization and assessing its contemporary relevance and limitations for Islamic education.

Within this framework, Erbakan's concept of *taklitçi zihniyet* (imitative mentality) can be understood as a form of epistemic dependency in education, whereby externally derived curricula, institutional models, and intellectual assumptions are adopted without sufficient critical engagement with local educational purposes and cultural contexts. This interpretation resonates with Alatas's (1977) notion of the *captive mind*, while extending the problem more explicitly to curriculum design, institutional structures, knowledge production, and the formation of future generations. Its contemporary relevance is reflected in Niyozov and Khan's (2024) analysis of policy borrowing in Pakistan and Almoaibed and Keating's (2025) study of educational reform in Saudi Arabia, both of which emphasize the importance of contextual agency in adapting externally circulating models. These studies reinforce Erbakan's central concern that dependency arises not from engagement with external knowledge itself, but from asymmetrical borrowing that privileges imported frameworks while constraining local capacity to define educational priorities and produce knowledge autonomously.

This interpretation also aligns with recent decolonial scholarship in Muslim education. R'boul and Barnawi (2025) advocate epistemic emancipation through the recovery of Islamic intellectual resources, whereas Erbakan's critique emphasizes that such emancipation should not entail withdrawal from modern science or global knowledge exchange. Instead, his distinction between scientific learning and cultural imitation frames epistemic autonomy as the critical appropriation, evaluation, and production of knowledge. The theoretical significance of this finding, therefore, lies in extending epistemic dependency from a condition of intellectual consciousness to a broader educational-institutional problem that requires curriculum reconstruction, autonomous research capacity, and active participation in knowledge production. This provides the conceptual basis for understanding modernization as compatible with intellectual agency rather than cultural Westernization.

Erbakan's distinction between scientific advancement and cultural imitation can be understood through the lens of Multiple Modernities, which rejects the assumption that modernization must follow a single Western trajectory (Eisenstadt, 2000). His educational thought reflects this perspective by accepting scientific, technological, and institutional progress while maintaining Islamic ethical commitments and cultural rootedness. Jung's (2024) concept of "Islamic modernities" further supports this interpretation by showing that religion can remain constitutive within modern social formations, while Ambya et al. (2025) demonstrate the continuing interaction between Islamic education, modernization, and national identity. Erbakan's distinctive contribution lies in giving this plurality of modernity an educational form: education becomes a mechanism for cultivating scientific competence without cultural assimilation, integrating modern knowledge with Islamic ethical foundations, and sustaining culturally grounded institutions. His framework can therefore be read as an educational expression of alternative modernity in which modernization is achieved through the integration of scientific progress, ethical formation, and cultural continuity rather than through Westernization.

Erbakan's integration of scientific competence with moral and spiritual formation can be interpreted through the Islamic educational concept of *ta'dib*, which views education as the integrated cultivation of knowledge, ethical responsibility, spiritual orientation, and proper

conduct (Al-Attas, 1980, 1993). From this perspective, Erbakan's critique of materially reductionist education is not a rejection of science or technology, but a rejection of educational models that detach technical capability from ethical purpose and human formation. Scientific advancement remains essential, yet its educational value depends on whether it contributes to the development of persons capable of exercising moral judgment and responsible agency. This orientation resonates with contemporary Islamic educational scholarship that emphasizes Muslim selfhood and moral agency (Ahmed, 2021), as well as pedagogical approaches directed toward self, social, and spiritual transformation (Alkouatli, 2022). It also aligns with recent attempts to reconstruct modern schooling through the interconnected concepts of *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dib* (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025), as well as efforts to integrate Islamic ethics more systematically into contemporary curricula (Zul et al., 2026).

Erbakan's distinctive contribution, however, lies in connecting this integrated conception of human formation directly to the broader project of modernization. The educated person in his framework is not defined solely by mastery of scientific knowledge, nor by religious commitment in isolation, but by the combined development of scientific competence, moral responsibility, spiritual rootedness, cultural confidence, and intellectual independence. This shifts the discussion from the integration of religious and scientific content toward the deeper question of the formation of the educational subject: what kind of person should modern Islamic education seek to cultivate? In this sense, moral and spiritual development are not supplementary elements added to an otherwise technical model of education; they constitute the normative foundation through which scientific and technological advancement acquires educational meaning. Erbakan's thought therefore extends *ta'dib* into the context of modernization by linking integrated personhood with the capacity to participate in modern scientific life without surrendering ethical, spiritual, and cultural agency.

Erbakan's conception of epistemic autonomy extends beyond individual intellectual independence to the reconstruction of educational structures capable of producing and circulating knowledge. Curriculum integration, character-oriented pedagogy, indigenous research institutions, academic publishing, and transnational cooperation therefore function as institutional mechanisms of autonomy. This emphasis aligns with broader Islamic educational reform concerned with knowledge fragmentation and institutional reconstruction (Al-Faruqi, 1982; Rahman, 1982; Nur, 2022), while contemporary studies similarly show that externally designed reforms may reproduce dependency when local institutions lack sufficient capacity to adapt and generate knowledge (Niyozov & Khan, 2024; Almoaibed & Keating, 2025). Erbakan's distinctive contribution lies in placing comparatively greater emphasis on the institutional conditions required to operationalize epistemic autonomy, linking curriculum, research capacity, scholarly infrastructure, and educational cooperation to sustainable modernization. In this sense, educational reconstruction becomes the bridge between intellectual independence and active participation in knowledge production.

Value-Based Modernization emerges as a conceptual synthesis of three complementary perspectives: epistemic dependency explains the problem of uncritical imitation, Multiple Modernities explains the possibility of scientific and technological advancement without necessary cultural Westernization (Eisenstadt, 2000; Jung, 2024), and *ta'dib* explains the integration of knowledge, morality, spirituality, and human formation (Al-Attas, 1980, 1993). The findings connect these perspectives through a sequence from imitative mentality and epistemic dependency to epistemic autonomy, to integrated scientific and moral-spiritual formation, to curricular and institutional reconstruction, and to the formation of scientifically competent, morally responsible, spiritually grounded, culturally confident, and intellectually

autonomous learners. The model's contribution lies not in replacing these theories, but in integrating them into a specifically educational framework in which curriculum reform, indigenous knowledge production, institutional capacity, and academic cooperation become mechanisms for sustaining epistemic agency and culturally grounded modernization. In this sense, Value-Based Modernization extends Islamic education scholarship by conceptualizing education as an active intellectual and institutional process through which Muslim societies can engage with modernity while preserving their ethical, spiritual, and cultural foundations.

Although Value-Based Modernization integrates scientific advancement, epistemic autonomy, and Islamic ethical formation, its contemporary relevance depends on how it addresses pluralism and internal diversity. Concepts such as "Islamic values," "national values," and "cultural authenticity" cannot be assumed to be socially uniform in Muslim societies marked by diverse theological, ethnic, ideological, and religious perspectives. Erbakan's framework therefore requires extension to accommodate disagreement without treating difference as deviation from a single cultural norm. Abdul-Jabbar's (2026) concept of *adab al-ikhtilaf* offers a useful direction by framing disagreement as an ethical educational practice grounded in respectful engagement, intellectual humility, and reasoned dialogue. Integrated into Value-Based Modernization, this perspective would allow culturally rooted Islamic education to support pluralistic engagement while preserving moral and intellectual orientation.

A key limitation of Value-Based Modernization lies in the translation of its normative aims into pedagogical and institutional practice. Although Erbakan emphasizes moral-spiritual formation, scientific competence, cultural confidence, and epistemic autonomy, his writings provide limited guidance on classroom pedagogy, teacher preparation, assessment, and governance. Contemporary Islamic education scholarship helps address this gap: Alkoutli (2022) emphasizes pedagogies of self, social, and spiritual transformation; Ahmed and Chowdhury (2025) show how *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah*, and *ta'dib* can inform contemporary schooling; and Zul et al. (2026) highlight challenges in integrating Islamic ethics into curricula. Operationalizing the model therefore requires explicit pedagogical principles, qualified teachers, appropriate assessment, and institutional support that sustain both ethical formation and intellectual openness; without these mechanisms, Value-Based Modernization risks remaining a normative vision rather than an actionable educational framework.

The contemporary relevance of Value-Based Modernization ultimately depends on whether its core principles can be transferred to educational challenges that were not explicitly addressed in Erbakan's writings, including digital education, artificial intelligence, sustainability, global citizenship, social media, and multicultural education. These issues should not be treated as weaknesses of the original framework simply because they emerged after the historical period in which Erbakan developed his educational thought; rather, they constitute domains in which the model requires conceptual extension and empirical testing. Its emphasis on epistemic autonomy, ethical formation, scientific competence, and cultural rootedness could provide a basis for examining how Muslim educational institutions negotiate AI-enabled learning, digital knowledge environments, ecological responsibility, global interconnectedness, and increasingly plural social contexts without reducing modernization to technological adoption alone. Future research should compare the model across madrasahs, Islamic schools, universities, and other educational settings in Muslim-majority and minority contexts. Using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, it would assess how its principles are interpreted, operationalized, and contested. This work could confirm whether Value-Based Modernization serves as a transferable framework for understanding contemporary Islamic education amid rapid technological, social, and cultural change.

CONCLUSION

This study reconstructs Necmettin Erbakan's educational philosophy as an integrated response to the tension between modernization and cultural Westernization, showing that his educational thought is organized around three interconnected dimensions: the rejection of the *imitative mentality* and epistemic dependency, the integration of scientific competence with spiritual and moral formation, and the reconstruction of curricula and institutions to support indigenous knowledge production and educational autonomy. Interpreted through Multiple Modernities, epistemic dependency, and *ta'dib*, these findings demonstrate that Erbakan does not reject modern science or technological advancement, but seeks to situate them within an educational framework grounded in ethical responsibility, cultural rootedness, and intellectual agency. The study's principal conceptual contribution is the model of Value-Based Modernization, which integrates epistemic reorientation, scientific advancement, spiritual and moral formation, curricular and institutional reconstruction, and the formation of learners who are scientifically competent, morally responsible, spiritually grounded, culturally confident, and intellectually independent. By positioning education as a central mechanism through which culturally differentiated forms of modernity can be constructed, the model extends debates on Islamic modernities and decolonial education into the domains of curriculum, human formation, and institutional development. At the same time, its contemporary application requires further development in relation to pluralism, pedagogical operationalization, teacher preparation, institutional governance, and emerging challenges such as artificial intelligence, digital education, sustainability, and multicultural citizenship. Future research should therefore test and refine the model empirically across diverse Islamic educational settings to determine its explanatory value, contextual adaptability, and broader contribution to contemporary Islamic education scholarship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdul-Jabbar, W. K. (2026). The ethics of disagreement (*adab al-ikhtilaf*): Religious education for intercultural competence in Arabo-Islamic pedagogy. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 48(3), 344–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2026.2619036>
- Ahmed, F. (2021). Authority, autonomy and selfhood in Islamic education—Theorising *Shakhsiyah Islamiyah* as a dialogical Muslim-self. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(14), 1520–1534. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1863212>
- Ahmed, F., & Chowdhury, S. (2025). Rethinking contemporary schooling in Muslim contexts: An Islamic conceptual framework for reconstructing K–12 education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 57(2), 152–165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2024.2411325>
- Alatas, S. H. (1977). *The myth of the lazy native: A study of the image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th century and its function in the ideology of colonial capitalism*. London: Frank Cass.
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1980). *The concept of education in Islam: A framework for an Islamic philosophy of education*. Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM).
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1993). *Islam and secularism*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.
- Alkouatli, C. (2022). Muslim educators' pedagogies: Tools for self, social, and spiritual transformation. *Harvard Educational Review*, 92(1), 107–133. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-92.1.107>
- Alkouatli, C. (2024). Illuminating data beyond the tangible: Exploring a conceptually-relevant paradigmatic frame for empirical inquiry with Muslim educators. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 37(8), 2466–2484. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2024.2318301>

- Almoaibed, H., & Keating, A. (2025). Education and policy borrowing in the Arabian Gulf: Technical and vocational education and training in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 14(2), 330–348. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21534764.2025.2495185>
- Ambya, R., Erihadiana, M., Priatna, T., & Nasir, T. M. (2025). Modernization and national identity: Quantitative insights into the role of Islamic education in Malaysia. *Al-Isblah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 17, 878–893. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6611>
- Berman, M. (1988). *All that is solid melts into air: The experience of modernity*. London: Penguin Books.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cook, J. B. (1999). Islamic versus Western conceptions of education: Reflections on Egypt. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 45(3/4), 339–357. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003808525407>
- Dalay, G., & Friedman, D. (2013). The AK Party and the evolution of Turkish political Islam's foreign policy. *Insight Turkey*, 15(2), 123–139. <https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/the-ak-party-and-the-evolution-of-turkish-political-islams-foreign-policy>
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (1966). *Modernization: Protest and change*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (2000). Multiple modernities. *Daedalus*, 129(1), 1–29. Retrived from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279625478_Multiple_Modernities
- Eisenstadt, S. N. (2002). Multiple modernities. In N. Göle (Ed.), *Snapshots of Islamic modernities* (pp. 91–118). Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Erbakan, N. (1973). *Mecliste ortak pazar* [Common Market in parliament]. Ankara: Tek Yol Neşriyat.
- Erbakan, N. (1975). *Milli görüş* [National outlook]. Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları.
- Erbakan, N. (1976). *Millet Meclisi Konuşması: Materyalizm ve Manevîyatçılık* [Speech to the National Assembly: Materialism and spiritualism]. Ankara: Başbakanlık Yardımcılığı Basın Müşavirliği.
- Erbakan, N. (1991). *Türkiye'nin meseleleri ve çözümleri* [Turkey's issues and solutions]. Ankara: Semih Ofset Matbaacılık.
- Erbakan, N. (2014). *Erbakan külliyatı: Cilt 1* [Erbakan collection: Volume 1] (T. Çetinkaya, Ed.). Ankara: MGV Yayınları.
- Erbakan, N. (2020). *Davamız* [Our cause] (Y. Aktaş, Ed.). Istanbul: Aktaş Yayınları.
- Faruqi, I. R. (1982). *Islamization of knowledge*. Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Heath, J. (2004). Liberalization, modernization, westernization. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 30(5–6), 665–690. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453704045760>
- Huntington, S. P. (1968). *Political order in changing societies*. Connecticut: Yale University Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Husain, S. S., & Ashraf, S. A. (1981). Islamic versus Western conceptions of education: Reflections on Egypt. *Islamic Quarterly*, 25(2), 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1003808525407>
- Jung, D. (2024). A theory of “Islamic modernities”: Religion and modernisation in Muslim history. *Intellectual Discourse*, 32(1), 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.31436/id.v32i1.2118>
- Latouche, S. (1996). *The westernization of the world* (R. Morris, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society*. New York: Free Press.

- Lerner, D. (1968). Modernization. In *The international encyclopaedia of the social sciences*. London: Macmillan.
- Mardin, Ş. (1991). *Türk modernleşmesi* [Turkish modernization]. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Müslüman Topluluklar Birliği. (1992). I. İşbirliği toplantısı: 31 Mayıs–1 Haziran 1992 [I. Cooperation meeting: May 31–June 1, 1992]. Ankara: ESAM Yayınları.
- Müslüman Topluluklar Birliği. (1994). II. İşbirliği toplantısı: 30–31 Mayıs 1994 [II. Cooperation meeting: May 30–31, 1994]. Ankara: ESAM Yayınları.
- Naofusa, H. (1983). Traditional cultures and modernization: Several problems in the case of Japan. In *Cultural identity and modernization in Asian countries: Proceedings of Kokugakuin University symposium*. Kokugakuin University. <https://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cimac/index.html>
- Niyozov, S., & Khan, A. W. (2024). Education faculty perspectives on a borrowed teacher education initiative in northern Pakistan: A call for engaging the discourses of policy borrowing and decolonization. *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies*, 5(2), 100–127. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jems.00006>
- Nur, B. M. (2022). Politics of epistemology in postcolonial Africa: The Islamisation of knowledge in the Sudan. *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 23(4), 475–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2022.2139688>
- Onbasi-Polat, E. (2026). *Rethinking modernization in Türkiye: The intellectual legacies of Attila İlhan (1925–2005) and Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011)*. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Rahman, F. (1982). *Islam and modernity: Transformation of an intellectual tradition*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press.
- R'boul, H., & Barnawi, O. Z. (2025). Islamic emancipation as alternative *Maarifa* in education: Decoloniality as a holy mission. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 47(3), 242–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2393176>
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). Zed Books.
- Touraine, A. (1995). *Critique of modernity*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Zul, Z., Najihul Huda, M., Fuad, Z., & Abdullah, M. (2026). Integration of Islamic ethics in modern education curriculum: Challenges and opportunities—A systematic literature review. *British Journal of Religious Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2026.2621177>