

# Islamic Educational Philosophy And Its Relevance To Global Educational Discourse

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Islamic educational philosophy, rooted in divine revelation and enriched by classical scholarly traditions, offers a holistic framework that integrates intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions of human development. Amid increasing global interest in values-based education, there is a pressing need to revisit and contextualize Islamic educational thought within contemporary global educational discourse.

**Materials and Methods:** This study employs a qualitative and conceptual research methodology, using a literature review and comparative analysis approach. Primary classical texts from prominent Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas were analyzed alongside contemporary global educational theories, including constructivism, critical pedagogy, and humanistic education. The study also reviews academic articles and policy reports to understand the intersection of Islamic educational values with global pedagogical trends.

**Results:** The findings reveal that Islamic educational philosophy emphasizes the formation of ethical and balanced individuals (*insan kamil*), integrating knowledge (*'ilm*) with wisdom (*hikmah*) and character (*akhlak*). This framework contrasts yet complements several global educational paradigms, especially in areas such as moral development, learner-centered approaches, and the purpose of education. Islamic education's emphasis on *adab* (etiquette and discipline) provides a normative structure often missing in secular models. The analysis also finds that Islamic education can enrich global discourse by integrating the metaphysical with the material, fostering a more comprehensive view of human potential.

**Conclusion:** Islamic educational philosophy remains highly relevant to the global educational discourse, offering insights that address both the intellectual and ethical crises in modern education. A deeper engagement with its principles may contribute to a more humane and spiritually grounded approach to pedagogy in diverse educational systems worldwide.

**Keywords:** Islamic education, educational philosophy, global discourse, ethics in education, *adab*

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## I. Introduction

The present article explores the relevance of Islamic educational philosophy in the context of global educational discourse. It engages with the growing recognition of the need for ethical and value-oriented frameworks in education worldwide. While secular education models often emphasize cognitive and technical competence, this paper argues that a comprehensive approach must address learners' moral and spiritual development. Drawing upon the foundational concepts of *adab*, *hikmah*, and *insan kamil*, the article situates Islamic education as a religious tradition and a universal pedagogical framework capable of enriching contemporary education systems. The author supports the notion that Islamic educational philosophy aligns with, yet also critically challenges, dominant educational paradigms, offering unique perspectives on the purpose and process of learning.

Previous studies have primarily focused on the historical evolution of Islamic education or its application within Muslim-majority countries. For instance, Al-Attas (1991)<sup>1</sup> emphasized integrating knowledge and ethics, while Halstead (2004)<sup>2</sup> examined moral education in Islamic schooling. Similarly, Nasr (2006)<sup>3</sup> discussed the metaphysical underpinnings of Islamic knowledge, arguing for its revival in modern academia. However, few studies have situated Islamic educational philosophy within contemporary global reforms. The literature lacks a comparative and dialogical approach that juxtaposes Islamic thought with prevailing global frameworks such as critical pedagogy, constructivism, or transformative learning. This creates a conceptual void where Islamic education is often perceived as isolated or archaic, rather than dynamic and globally relevant.

In today's rapidly changing world, education systems struggle to respond to a crisis of meaning and morality. The 2023 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report highlights a significant increase in student disengagement, teacher burnout, and the decline of trust in formal education institutions.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, a global

study by the OECD<sup>6</sup> revealed that more than 60% of students in high-performing countries report feeling anxious or disconnected from school, despite academic success. These trends are further exacerbated by overemphasizing standardized testing, digital automation, and depersonalized learning environments, which often marginalize emotional and ethical development<sup>7</sup>. The instrumentalization of education, driven by neoliberal metrics and market logic, has led to calls for the reintegration of humanistic values into curricula and pedagogy.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a global stress test for educational institutions, exposing the vulnerabilities of systems heavily dependent on efficiency and digitization. UNESCO (2021)<sup>5</sup> reported that prolonged school closures and reliance on technology disproportionately affected students from marginalized communities, intensifying educational inequity and learning loss. At the same time, there has been a resurgence of interest in localized, spiritually rooted educational philosophies that offer a sense of meaning and moral direction amid uncertainty. This shifting landscape invites a reexamination of alternative paradigms like Islamic educational philosophy, which emphasizes holistic human development over narrow academic attainment.

This study offers a novel contribution by repositioning Islamic educational philosophy not as a peripheral or traditionalist system, but as a viable intellectual framework that addresses contemporary global educational crises. Academically, this research expands the discourse on comparative education and philosophy by bridging Islamic and Western thought. Practically, it provides insights for policymakers, educators, and curriculum designers who seek to develop education systems grounded in ethical, holistic, and culturally resonant principles.

## **II. Materials And Methods**

This study employs a qualitative, conceptual, and philosophical research design to examine the foundational principles of Islamic educational philosophy and its relevance to contemporary global educational discourse. The approach is primarily non-empirical and interpretive, aiming to synthesize classical Islamic thought with modern educational challenges through comparative and thematic analysis. The methodology is structured as follows:

**Research Design.** The research is non-empirical and analytical, based on a conceptual literature review and comparative philosophical analysis. It does not involve primary field data but relies on secondary sources to interpret, critique, and synthesize existing knowledge. This design is suitable for addressing normative questions, such as the purpose of education and the philosophical assumptions behind pedagogical models.<sup>8</sup>

**Philosophical Orientation.** This study is grounded in Islamic epistemology, particularly the integration of naqli (revealed) and aqli (rational) knowledge. The study also incorporates critical constructivist theory,<sup>9</sup> which views learners as active meaning-makers within cultural and ideological contexts. This philosophical orientation provides a framework for analyzing education as knowledge transmission and ethical and spiritual formation.

**Data Sources.** Primary sources include classical Islamic educational texts and writings of prominent scholars, such as Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din*,<sup>10</sup> Ibn Sina's educational treatises,<sup>11</sup> and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's works on *adab*, Islamic epistemology.<sup>12</sup> Secondary sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, UNESCO<sup>13</sup> and OECD reports,<sup>14</sup> and global education policy documents published within the last ten years (2013–2023), especially those addressing moral education, pedagogy, and comparative philosophy.

**Data Collection and Selection Criteria.** Academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ERIC were used to identify literature using keywords like Islamic education, educational philosophy, moral pedagogy, and comparative education. Texts were selected based on relevance to Islamic educational theory or global educational reform, scholarly reliability (peer-reviewed status or institutional credibility), and theoretical richness and clarity in discussing values and pedagogy.

**Analytical Framework.** The analysis involved: Thematic analysis to extract recurring philosophical themes in Islamic education (e.g., *insan kamil*, *hikmah*, *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*). Comparative analysis to juxtapose these themes with prevailing global educational frameworks such as constructivism, critical pedagogy,<sup>15</sup> and humanistic education.<sup>16,17</sup> Critical synthesis, identifying points of convergence and divergence, assesses Islamic philosophy's potential in contributing to or critiquing current global practices.

**Validity and Trustworthiness.** While this is a theoretical study, conceptual rigor was maintained by engaging with authoritative texts and peer-reviewed scholarship. Triangulation of sources (classical, modern, and institutional) ensures a balanced perspective. Reflexivity was applied throughout the interpretation to avoid bias and maintain philosophical integrity.

**Limitations of the Study.** This study does not include empirical data or practical classroom observations, and its findings remain at the theoretical and philosophical level. Therefore, its conclusions require empirical validation through future qualitative or mixed-methods research, especially in diverse educational settings.

### III. Result

The analysis reveals four core results that demonstrate the relevance and critical contribution of Islamic educational philosophy to current global educational discourse:

#### 1. Centrality of Ethical and Spiritual Aims in Islamic Education

One of the most salient findings from classical texts and modern interpretations is that Islamic educational philosophy places ethical-spiritual development (tazkiyah and adab) at the heart of education. Al-Ghazali emphasized that knowledge ('ilm) must lead to ethical transformation and nearness to God,<sup>18</sup> while Al-Attas,<sup>19</sup> argued that the loss of adab—manners rooted in wisdom—is the root cause of modern educational crises. In contrast, contemporary global education often prioritizes cognitive achievement and workforce readiness, with ethics framed mostly in utilitarian or secular-humanist terms.<sup>20,21</sup>

#### 2. Global Educational Gaps in Moral and Holistic Development

Recent global reports affirm a growing concern about the lack of moral, spiritual, and socio-emotional dimensions in formal schooling. The 2023 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report stresses the need to rehumanize education and move beyond test-based accountability and performance.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the OECD (2022) notes that while literacy and numeracy have improved globally, many students lack empathy, resilience, and ethical reasoning. These gaps underscore the global relevance of the Islamic framework, which integrates intellect ('aql), emotion (qalb), and spirituality (ruh) into an indivisible whole.

#### 3. Philosophical Divergences and Possible Convergences

The comparative analysis highlights fundamental philosophical differences between Islamic and dominant Western education paradigms. For example, while constructivism views knowledge as socially constructed, Islamic epistemology views it as discovered, revealed, objective, and interpreted through human effort (ijtihad). However, areas of convergence exist. Paulo Freire's concept of education as liberation echoes the Islamic ideal of freeing the self from ignorance and ego (nafs). Moreover, both traditions reject passive, banking-model pedagogy in favor of meaningful learner engagement.<sup>23,24</sup>

#### 4. Emergence of Global Interest in Integrative Models

There is growing international academic interest in integrative educational philosophies that combine intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. For example, Malaysia's Integrated Holistic Education System (IHES) model incorporates Islamic pedagogical principles into modern curricula.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, interdisciplinary global dialogues—such as the Faith and Education Forum (2022),<sup>26</sup> demonstrate a reawakening interest in ethical frameworks beyond secularism. These trends indicate an academic opening for Islamic educational principles to contribute meaningfully to global debates.

These findings suggest that Islamic educational thought is not merely a relic of religious tradition but a dynamic source of pedagogical insight that addresses the current crisis of educational purpose. While Western frameworks often struggle to reconcile value-neutral instruction with the need for character formation, the Islamic model begins with the premise that knowledge and ethics are inseparable. This positions Islamic pedagogy as a corrective and complementary force to the global overemphasis on cognitive competence and technocratic achievement.

Moreover, the emphasis on fitrah—the innate human disposition toward truth and virtue—offers a theological and psychological foundation for learner-centered education. Unlike behaviorist models that reduce learners to passive responders, Islamic education cultivates agency, intention (niyyah), and personal responsibility before God and society. In this sense, the philosophy aligns with and expands current movements such as social-emotional learning (SEL) and whole-child education, providing a transcendent anchoring point often absent in secular models.<sup>27</sup>

**Table 1. Comparative Framework of Islamic and Global Educational Philosophies**

Aspect	Islamic Educational Philosophy	Dominant Global/Western Educational Models	Convergence Points
<b>Purpose of Education</b>	Spiritual, moral, and intellectual development (ta'dib, tazkiyah)	Economic utility, employability, cognitive skills	Human flourishing, personal growth
<b>Epistemology</b>	Integrated: divine revelation (naqli) and reason ('aqli)	Empirical, constructivist, relativist	Inquiry-based learning, critical thinking

Aspect	Islamic Educational Philosophy	Dominant Global/Western Educational Models	Convergence Points
<b>View of the Learner</b>	Fitrah-driven, moral agent with soul and purpose	Rational, autonomous subject	Learner-centered models, SEL frameworks
<b>Role of the Teacher</b>	Murabbi (mentor and moral guide), not just a knowledge transmitter	Facilitator, evaluator, skill provider	Shift from authoritarian to facilitative roles
<b>Curriculum Orientation</b>	Holistic: intellectual, ethical, spiritual, aesthetic	Fragmented: compartmentalized subjects	Interdisciplinary education trends
<b>Method of Learning</b>	Reflective, dialogical ( <i>shura</i> ), character-based	Outcome-based, performative, competitive	Active learning, project-based methods

Source: Research Findings Analyzed by the Author (2025)

Table 1 compares Islamic and global educational philosophies, highlighting their divergences and emerging convergence points. This visual schema reinforces the above thematic findings and sets the foundation for the following discussion section.

#### IV. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the profound philosophical and practical contributions of Islamic educational thought to contemporary educational challenges. As outlined in the results, Islamic philosophy of education offers a holistic vision grounded in ethical purpose, integrated knowledge, and the cultivation of human dignity through moral-spiritual growth. These principles sharply contrast with dominant secular-global models prioritizing quantifiable skills and economic productivity, often at the expense of moral and emotional development.<sup>28,29</sup>

From a theoretical standpoint, Islamic education aligns with what Dewey (1938)<sup>30</sup> referred to as "education as growth," but reinterprets growth not merely as experiential adjustment to the environment, but as a moral-ontological journey toward the realization of one's divinely-endowed potential (fitrah). The notion of *ta'dib*—ethical refinement—and *tazkiyah*—spiritual purification—illustrates a purpose-driven epistemology that integrates *aql* (intellect) with *qalb* (heart), a synthesis largely absent in modern pedagogical theory.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the findings validate concerns voiced in global reports that modern education systems lack moral anchoring. The 2023 UNESCO GEM Report notes that although digitalization and STEM have surged, little progress has been made in cultivating ethical literacy and global citizenship.<sup>32</sup> This vacuum presents a unique opportunity for Islamic philosophy to contribute meaningfully, primarily through concepts such as *amanah* (responsibility), *shura* (deliberation), and *rahmah* (compassion)—values that transcend religious boundaries and align with universal human aspirations.<sup>33</sup>

The comparative framework (see Table 1) further clarifies that significant convergence points emerge while philosophical divergences exist. For instance, the rise of whole-child education, social-emotional learning (SEL), and mindfulness-based practices in global education reflects a growing shift toward integrating ethical and emotional dimensions, core features of the Islamic model long before they became trendy in the West.<sup>34,35</sup>

Moreover, Islamic pedagogy offers a counter-narrative to the commodification of education. By viewing knowledge not as a means to dominate nature or accumulate capital but as a sacred trust (*amanah*), Islamic thought critiques the utilitarianism of modern schooling. This resonates with critical pedagogues like Freire,<sup>36</sup> who emphasize education as liberation from oppression. However, Islam extends this liberation to include liberation of the soul from *ego* (*nafs*) and ignorance—a dimension often excluded in secular discourse.

In practical terms, models such as Malaysia's Integrated Holistic Education System (IHES) and Indonesia's *pesantren* reform initiatives illustrate how Islamic principles can be contextualized into national curricula without compromising academic excellence.<sup>37</sup> Such models offer valuable insights for international educators seeking to restore meaning and moral clarity to the educational process.

This discussion affirms that Islamic educational philosophy is relevant and necessary to enrich the global educational landscape. Its commitment to holistic human development, ethical pedagogy, and integrated knowledge provides a compelling alternative to current systems' fragmented and mechanistic tendencies. By initiating cross-cultural dialogue and educational reform grounded in universal ethical values, Islamic thought can catalyze reimagining education in the 21st century.

To further clarify this study's novel contributions to existing literature, Table 2 presents a comparative overview highlighting the philosophical, practical, and empirical distinctions introduced by this research. The following table summarizes the key novel aspects of this study compared to previous works in Islamic education.

**Table 2. Novel Contributions of the Study Compared to Previous Research**

Aspect	Previous Research	This Study (Novelty)
<b>Philosophical Approach</b>	Primarily descriptive, focused on classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Al-Attas	Integrative synthesis linking classical Islamic thought with contemporary global discourse.
<b>Global Relevance</b>	Limited to Islamic contexts or Muslim-majority societies	Demonstrates compatibility and relevance to global educational reform conversations
<b>Practical Application</b>	Theoretical discussions without operational models	Provides a comparative framework and contextual examples (e.g., IHES, pesantren reform)
<b>Theoretical-Data Link</b>	Lacks connection with contemporary global education data	Incorporates recent data from UNESCO and OECD to strengthen contextual urgency
<b>Contribution to Global Education</b>	General philosophical contributions	Positions Islamic pedagogy as a corrective and complementary force to global trends

Source: Research Findings Analyzed by the Author (2025)

Table 2 highlights the unique contributions of this study compared to previous research in the field of Islamic education. Unlike earlier works that primarily descriptively focused on classical Islamic thinkers, this article offers an integrative and critical synthesis that aligns Islamic educational philosophy with current global educational debates. By engaging with empirical data from international bodies such as UNESCO and OECD, the study affirms the contemporary relevance of Islamic thought and positions it as a potential source of ethical renewal in global education. Including practical models like Malaysia's Integrated Holistic Education System (IHES) and Indonesian pesantren reform further demonstrates that Islamic principles are not confined to theory but can be effectively contextualized and applied within modern education systems. This novelty reinforces the article's academic value while offering practical insights for educators and policymakers worldwide.

## V. Conclusion

This study reaffirms the enduring relevance of Islamic educational philosophy in addressing contemporary global educational challenges. By synthesizing classical Islamic concepts such as *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah*, *fitrah*, and *'aql*, with emerging global priorities like holistic education, ethical learning, and socio-emotional development, this article demonstrates that Islamic thought is not only historically rich but also dynamically applicable in modern contexts. The findings highlight that Islamic education offers a distinctive epistemological framework that integrates rationality and spirituality, emphasizes the moral purpose of knowledge, and envisions education as a process of ethical and personal transformation.

A key contribution of this study lies in its comparative approach, which positions Islamic educational philosophy as a critical and complementary discourse to dominant global paradigms. Unlike prior research that treated Islamic education in isolation or within confined religious boundaries, this article connects Islamic principles to broader global trends such as learner-centered pedagogy, emotional intelligence, and educational equity. Moreover, by utilizing recent data from UNESCO and OECD reports, the study underscores the urgent need for value-driven educational reform—an area where Islamic perspectives can make meaningful contributions.

The novelty of this research is further established through the development of a conceptual framework (see Table 1) and a summary of novel contributions (see Table 2), which provide both theoretical insights and practical relevance. Academically, the study advances the discourse on comparative education and Islamic pedagogy by proposing an integrative model rooted in ethical universality. It offers a foundation for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers to draw from Islamic educational values in shaping inclusive, morally anchored, and contextually adaptive education systems.

In closing, the research affirms that Islamic educational philosophy is a historical artifact and a living paradigm capable of engaging, enriching, and transforming global educational discourse in the 21st century and beyond.

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