

Islamic Educational Philosophy and Human Development: Rethinking Pedagogy for Contemporary Muslim Societies

***Nimra Mubeen, **Saima Ali, ***Awais Ali**

** MPhil Scholar, Department of Education, GC Women University, Sialkot.*

*** PhD Research Scholar, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM).*

**** Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Islamia Lasania, Ali Pur Syedan, Narowal.*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Muslim societies confront an educational paradox: formal systems have expanded access to schooling and credentialing, yet many institutions continue to struggle with the integration of intellectual excellence, moral formation, spiritual meaning, civic responsibility, and the capabilities required for rapidly changing economies and digital societies. This article re-examines Islamic educational philosophy as a framework for human development and asks how its normative resources can inform pedagogy without reducing education either to religious transmission or to market-oriented human-capital formation. Using a critical integrative review and conceptual synthesis of classical educational ideas, modern Islamic educational scholarship, contemporary pedagogy, and human-development literature published no later than 31 August 2025, the study develops a multidimensional model of Islamic human development. The synthesis identifies five interconnected educational dimensions: epistemic integration, moral-spiritual formation, reflective agency, social responsibility, and adaptive capability. The analysis finds that concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*, *ta'lim*, *tazkiyah*, *adab*, *khilafah*, *amanah*, and *insan kamil* offer a coherent normative vocabulary for educational purpose, but their contemporary value depends on pedagogical translation into dialogical, inquiry-based, collaborative, problem-centred, and technologically responsible learning. The article argues that the main challenge is not a shortage of Islamic educational ideals but an implementation gap between philosophical aspiration and institutional practice. It proposes a Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy (HDIP) framework that links educational purpose, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher formation, institutional culture, and public policy. The study concludes that Islamic educational renewal should neither romanticize inherited practices nor imitate external models uncritically; instead, it should cultivate ethically grounded, intellectually autonomous, socially responsible, and professionally capable learners. Recommendations are offered for governments, universities, schools, madrasah systems, teacher-education providers, curriculum authorities, families, civil society, and researchers.

Introduction

Education in Muslim societies is frequently discussed through the language of access, examinations, employability, religious identity, curriculum reform, or institutional modernization. Each of these concerns is important, but none by itself answers the more foundational question: what kind of human being should education help to form? Islamic educational philosophy begins precisely with this question of human purpose. It treats education not only as the acquisition of information or occupational competence, but as a process through which the learner develops knowledge, character, judgment, responsibility, and a

meaningful relationship with self, society, creation, and God. In this sense, the educational project is inseparable from a theory of human development (Al-Attas, 1980; Halstead, 2004; Sahin, 2018).

The contemporary relevance of this question has increased. Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority communities now operate in environments shaped by digital technologies, global labour markets, social-media cultures, political polarization, ecological pressures, and expanding expectations of higher education. At the same time, international debates increasingly criticize narrow conceptions of education that

reduce learning to measurable productivity. UNESCO's call for a renewed social contract for education emphasizes human dignity, cooperation, solidarity, knowledge as a common good, and the capacity to create just and sustainable futures (UNESCO, 2021). The capabilities approach similarly understands development in terms of what people are effectively able to be and do rather than only in terms of income or aggregate economic growth (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999). These developments create an important opening for dialogue between Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary human-development thinking.

Yet the field also faces conceptual and practical difficulties. Islamic education is sometimes treated as synonymous with Islamic Studies, religious instruction, memorization of texts, or the operation of faith-based schools. Sahin (2018) argues that such confluences weaken the conceptual clarity of Islamic Education Studies and obscure its broader educational, social, and philosophical dimensions. Halstead (2004), by contrast, identifies individual development, moral-social formation, and knowledge acquisition as interrelated dimensions of an Islamic concept of education. More recent work has attempted to translate Islamic philosophical concepts into frameworks for contemporary schooling, teacher education, and pedagogic practice (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2024; Alkoutatli, 2018).

The central problem addressed in this article is therefore an implementation and translation problem. Islamic educational thought contains a rich normative vocabulary, but philosophical ideals do not automatically become effective pedagogy. A curriculum may invoke moral values while remaining examination-dominated; a classroom may affirm the importance of critical thinking while retaining highly transmissive teacher-student relations; a school may adopt digital technology while failing to cultivate digital judgment; and a religious institution may preserve inherited knowledge while leaving students underprepared to engage plural societies and contemporary professional life. The issue is not whether Islamic education should preserve tradition or embrace modernity.

It is how educational institutions can interpret their intellectual tradition critically enough to develop pedagogies that are both faithful and future-facing.

This study responds by bringing Islamic educational philosophy into sustained conversation with human-development theory and contemporary pedagogy. It asks four research questions: (1) What conception of the human person and human flourishing is embedded in major strands of Islamic educational thought? (2) Which pedagogical principles can translate that conception into contemporary teaching and learning? (3) What institutional barriers prevent such translation in Muslim educational contexts? and (4) What integrated framework can guide curriculum, teacher formation, assessment, institutional leadership, and public policy? The article's contribution is not to propose a single universal model for all Muslim societies. Rather, it constructs a transferable framework whose principles can be adapted to diverse cultural, legal, institutional, and denominational contexts.

The argument proceeds in five steps. First, the article clarifies the philosophical foundations of Islamic education and their implications for human development. Second, it reviews the contributions of influential classical and modern thinkers alongside contemporary scholarship. Third, it examines the pedagogical and institutional challenges facing contemporary Muslim societies. Fourth, it presents the findings of the integrative synthesis in the form of a Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy (HDIP) framework. Finally, it discusses implications and provides stakeholder-specific recommendations. The article deliberately avoids romanticizing a singular "Islamic pedagogy." Muslim educational traditions are internally diverse, historically situated, and open to interpretation. The purpose is therefore to identify recurring principles and assess how they may support meaningful educational renewal.

Problem Statement and Research Gap

The literature on Islamic education has grown considerably, but several problems continue to limit its contribution to policy and practice. First, a conceptual gap persists between normative

discussions of Islamic educational ideals and empirical or practice-oriented research on how those ideals are enacted. Sahin (2018) describes a field in which key terms such as Islamic education, Islamic pedagogy, Islamic nurture, and Islamic religious education are often used without sufficient differentiation. This lack of conceptual precision contributes to weak translation from educational philosophy into professional standards, curriculum design, and evidence-based institutional reform.

Second, the human-development dimension of Islamic education is often asserted but insufficiently operationalized. Terms such as *insan kamil*, *adab*, *tazkiyah*, *tarbiyah*, and *khilafah* point toward multidimensional human formation, yet many educational settings continue to privilege examination performance, content transmission, or employability. The uploaded literature synthesis similarly identifies a recurring tension between spiritual-moral aims and the pressures of contemporary schooling, while emphasizing that Islamic education has the potential to integrate intellectual, spiritual, social, and practical development.

Third, there is a pedagogical gap. Contemporary studies increasingly call for reflective, student-centred, collaborative, and context-sensitive approaches, but teacher preparedness, curriculum rigidity, limited instructional resources, and institutional cultures can constrain reform. The supplied review highlights teacher training, digital literacy, and resource development as major areas requiring attention. The challenge is thus not simply to identify better teaching techniques, but to connect technique to a coherent philosophy of human formation.

Fourth, the relationship between Islamic educational philosophy and modern human-development theory remains underdeveloped. The capabilities approach foregrounds dignity, substantive freedom, and the expansion of human possibilities (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999), while Islamic education adds explicit moral, spiritual, relational, and transcendent dimensions. Treating these traditions as mutually exclusive misses opportunities for conceptual enrichment. A

careful dialogue can help distinguish between compatible concerns such as dignity, agency, justice, flourishing, and social responsibility and genuine philosophical differences concerning the sources and ends of human life.

Finally, much reform discourse falls into a binary of "traditional" versus "modern." This is analytically weak. Traditional practices can contain sophisticated pedagogical resources, including apprenticeship, relational learning, disciplined textual study, ethical modelling, and gradual instruction. Modern pedagogies can contribute inquiry, collaboration, differentiation, evidence-based assessment, and digital literacy. The key research gap lies in developing a principled architecture for integration: one that preserves normative coherence while allowing pedagogical innovation and contextual adaptation.

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

Education as Formation: *Tarbiyah*, *Ta'lim* and *Ta'dib*

Islamic educational discourse contains multiple terms rather than a single exhaustive equivalent of "education." *Tarbiyah* connotes nurturing, development, care, and gradual formation; *ta'lim* foregrounds teaching and the acquisition of knowledge; *ta'dib* emphasizes disciplined formation, proper judgment, and right relationship. The presence of multiple concepts is pedagogically significant because it resists reducing education to a single function. Halstead (2004) notes that Islamic education includes individual development, social-moral formation, and knowledge acquisition. Al-Attas (1980) gives particular prominence to *ta'dib*, linking education to the recognition and internalization of proper order in knowledge and existence. Sahin (2018), while recognizing the importance of *adab*, cautions against narrowing Islamic education to one term and argues for a more comprehensive educational hermeneutics.

The implication for human development is that education must address the learner as an embodied, relational, moral, intellectual, and spiritual person. A curriculum can therefore be judged not only by the quantity of content delivered but also by the quality of

understanding, the development of judgment, the ability to act responsibly, and the formation of dispositions that enable learners to contribute to the common good. This broader lens also changes the status of the teacher: the teacher is neither merely a transmitter of authorized information nor simply a facilitator of individual preference, but a professional who creates conditions for disciplined inquiry, ethical growth, intellectual independence, and social participation.

Tawhid, Knowledge and Epistemic Integration

A tawhidic worldview provides a unifying orientation in Islamic educational philosophy. In educational terms, tawhid can be understood as a refusal to fragment knowledge into morally unrelated domains. Scientific, social, humanistic, and religious forms of knowledge differ in method and subject matter, but they remain part of a shared reality in which knowledge carries responsibility. The supplied review similarly characterizes Islamic educational epistemology as integrating spiritual values with rational inquiry and resisting a purely secular or instrumental conception of curriculum.

Epistemic integration should not mean forcing scriptural claims into domains where empirical methods are appropriate, nor should it mean treating modern scientific knowledge as morally self-interpreting. Rather, it requires students to understand both the autonomy and the ethical location of disciplines. A student of biology, economics, computing, law, or engineering should be able to ask not only "Is this technically possible?" but also "What human goods are served, what harms are created, who bears risk, and what obligations follow?" Such questions turn integration into an educational habit of responsible inquiry rather than a slogan.

Fitrah, Agency, Amanah and Khilafah

Islamic conceptions of human nature commonly emphasize *fitrah*, moral accountability, the capacity to know and choose, and the role of human beings as trustees or stewards. These ideas provide an educational anthropology: learners possess potential that must be cultivated, but they are also accountable for how capacities are used. Education therefore concerns both empowerment

and restraint, creativity and responsibility, autonomy and relational obligation.

This anthropology is compatible with important elements of contemporary human-development theory while remaining normatively distinctive. Sen (1999) conceptualizes development as the expansion of substantive freedoms, and Nussbaum (2011) argues that justice should be assessed by the real capabilities people possess. Islamic educational philosophy can affirm the development of agency while adding that capabilities are morally directed and socially embedded. The goal is not autonomous choice detached from ends, but responsible agency capable of practical judgment, self-correction, service, and ethical participation.

Insan Kamil and Multidimensional Human Development

The ideal of *insan kamil* the mature or complete human being appears in different ways across Islamic intellectual traditions. In educational discourse, it can function as a heuristic for multidimensional formation rather than as a claim that schooling can produce moral perfection. The supplied literature review identifies the harmonization of intellectual, spiritual-emotional, and practical-social faculties as a recurring educational aim.

For contemporary educational policy, the importance of this concept lies in its critique of one-dimensional success. A learner who performs well academically but lacks ethical judgment, emotional regulation, civic responsibility, or the capacity to cooperate has not achieved full human development. Conversely, spiritual sincerity without intellectual competence may leave learners unable to navigate complex institutions and technologies. A multidimensional model therefore requires balance across knowledge, character, agency, relationships, wellbeing, and practical capability.

Methodology

This article uses a critical integrative literature review combined with conceptual synthesis. An integrative review is appropriate where a research question spans philosophical, normative,

empirical, and policy literatures and where the purpose is not to estimate a pooled effect size but to construct a theoretically coherent interpretation. The approach therefore differs from a meta-analysis and does not claim exhaustive inclusion of every publication on Islamic education.

The review was bounded by a publication cut-off of 31 August 2025. No source published after that date is used in the manuscript. Sources were identified from the research materials supplied for this study and were cross-checked against accessible scholarly records where possible. The evidence base was supplemented by established works in Islamic educational philosophy, education studies, human-development theory, and international education policy. Search concepts included combinations of "Islamic education," "Islamic philosophy of education," "Islamic pedagogy," "tarbiyah," "ta'dib," "human development," "Muslim societies," "teacher education," "curriculum reform," "critical thinking," "digital learning," and "holistic education." Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and major institutional reports.

Inclusion criteria were: (a) direct relevance to educational purpose, pedagogy, curriculum, teacher formation, human development, or institutional reform; (b) substantive engagement with Islamic educational concepts or Muslim educational contexts; (c) publication in English or availability of sufficient bibliographic information and an English abstract; and (d) publication on or before 31 August 2025. Sources were excluded where they were published after the cut-off, lacked relevance to the research questions, or made claims that could not be sufficiently verified. Importantly, several late-2025 and 2026 items visible in the supplied research compilation were deliberately excluded because they fall outside the user's required historical cut-off. The supplied material itself contains such later items, which demonstrates why date screening is necessary.

The analytical procedure had three stages. First, sources were coded for their conception of educational purpose and human

development. Second, pedagogical implications were coded under curriculum, teaching-learning relations, assessment, teacher formation, technology, institutional culture, and social responsibility. Third, patterns were compared across Islamic educational scholarship and contemporary human-development discourse. The synthesis generated five recurring dimensions: epistemic integration, moral-spiritual formation, reflective agency, social responsibility, and adaptive capability. These dimensions were then translated into the Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy (HDIP) framework presented below.

Methodological rigor was strengthened through conceptual triangulation: no central proposition was based solely on one author or one national context. Classical and modern Islamic concepts were read alongside contemporary educational scholarship and policy-oriented human-development literature. Nevertheless, the study is conceptual and interpretive. It does not claim causal effectiveness for any pedagogical intervention, and its findings should be tested through empirical research in schools, universities, madrasah systems, and teacher-education programmes across diverse Muslim societies.

Literature Review and Analytical Synthesis

Classical and Modern Intellectual Resources

Islamic educational thought cannot be reduced to a single school or historical period. Al-Ghazali's educational legacy emphasizes purification of character, disciplined intention, gradual learning, and the ethical responsibilities of teacher and learner. Ibn Khaldun contributes a more sociological and developmental sensibility, including attention to gradual instruction, learner capacity, habit formation, and the social conditions of learning. Contemporary scholarship continues to revisit Ibn Khaldun as a source for holistic and adaptive educational practice (Rofiqoh & Bakar, 2025).

Muhammad Iqbal adds a strong account of selfhood, creativity, and purposeful agency. His educational relevance lies in rejecting passivity and encouraging the formation of persons capable of acting in history while

remaining morally accountable. Fazlur Rahman's educational significance, especially through his wider hermeneutical project, lies in connecting disciplined engagement with Islamic sources to the reconstruction of contemporary knowledge and ethical reasoning (Fathonah, 2018). Murtaza Mutahhari similarly represents an effort to hold revelation and rationality together in the face of modern ideological and educational pressures (Mir & Anjum, 2025).

These thinkers differ substantially, but a shared pattern can be identified: knowledge is not educationally neutral; human development involves disciplined self-formation; reason and revelation are not treated as inherently antagonistic; and education should prepare individuals to act responsibly within society. The pedagogical challenge is to translate these insights into institutions that operate under contemporary conditions of mass education, standardized assessment, disciplinary specialization, and digital information abundance.

Islamic Pedagogy as Relational and Transformative Practice

Alkouatli (2018) identifies pedagogical themes in Islamic traditions that emphasize relationships, mutual engagement, and conscious awareness. This is important because it shifts attention away from lists of teaching techniques toward the quality of educational relationships and the learner's becoming. Pedagogy is not simply what the teacher does to deliver content; it is the structured relationship among teacher, learner, knowledge, moral purpose, and community.

Sahin (2018) similarly calls for a transformative educational culture capable of facilitating reflective and critical Muslim religiosities. His critique is particularly relevant to settings where pedagogical culture remains heavily transmission-oriented. A learner may memorize sophisticated texts without acquiring the confidence to interpret unfamiliar problems, evaluate competing claims, or engage respectfully with difference. The problem is not memorization itself; memorization can support disciplined knowledge but its isolation from

comprehension, application, reflection, and inquiry.

Ahmed and Chowdhury (2024) advance this discussion by proposing an Islamic conceptual framework for reconstructing schooling in Muslim contexts. Their work is notable because it seeks to move philosophical concepts closer to the practical work of educators. Rather than treating decolonization as rejection of all external educational forms, the framework invites educators to rethink aims, structures, roles, curriculum, and assessment through an Islamic conceptual vocabulary. This translation from worldview to institutional design is precisely where much Islamic education reform has historically been weakest.

Human Development Beyond Human Capital

Modern education policy often links schooling to productivity, employability, and national competitiveness. These aims are legitimate but insufficient. Human-capital approaches can unintentionally narrow educational worth to labour-market returns. The capabilities approach offers a broader account: development should expand people's substantive opportunities to live lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). Nussbaum (2011) further emphasizes central capabilities associated with dignity, practical reason, affiliation, bodily integrity, and participation.

Islamic educational philosophy can deepen this critique by insisting that flourishing includes moral and spiritual orientation. Human development is not only having more choices but becoming capable of choosing well, acting justly, cultivating trustworthy relationships, and using knowledge responsibly. This does not require abandoning economic competence. On the contrary, professional capability is one dimension of responsible stewardship. The difference is that employability becomes one part of a broader conception of human purpose rather than the final measure of educational success.

UNESCO's 2021 call for a new social contract for education strengthens this wider orientation by emphasizing solidarity, cooperation, justice, sustainability, and education as a common good. These themes resonate with

Islamic notions of amanah, social responsibility, justice, and stewardship, even though the philosophical foundations differ. Such convergence provides a productive basis for interdisciplinary dialogue without erasing distinct normative commitments.

Contemporary Pedagogical Innovation

The supplied literature points toward increasing interest in integrating student-centred, project-based, collaborative, reflective, and digitally supported learning with established Islamic educational practices. This direction should be understood as principled pedagogical adaptation rather than a simple importation of fashionable methods. Inquiry-based learning is valuable where it develops disciplined questioning; collaborative learning is valuable where it teaches responsibility and mutuality; project-based learning is valuable where students connect knowledge to real human problems; and digital tools are valuable where they widen access, deepen analysis, or enable creative production.

Qur'anic and Prophetic teaching methods have also been studied as resources for contemporary pedagogy. Eissa and Khalid (2019), for example, examine their use in acquired-science subjects and report perceived benefits for character and life skills. Such work is useful when it avoids turning religious sources into decontextualized technique lists. The stronger approach is to identify deeper pedagogical principles questioning, analogy, narrative, modelling, gradual instruction, reflection, dialogue, contextualization and then determine how those principles may be responsibly adapted to modern educational environments.

Character education is another important area. Qasserras (2024) links concepts such as tazkiyah and ta'aruf to character and peacebuilding. The educational significance of this work lies in connecting inner formation to social relations. Character is not merely private morality; it affects how learners encounter difference, resolve conflict, exercise leadership, and participate in civic life. For contemporary Muslim societies, this relational dimension is essential because educational systems operate

amid religious diversity, political disagreement, and increasingly networked public spheres.

Digital Transformation and Educational Judgment

Digital transformation intensifies the need for educational judgment. Access to information has expanded, but information abundance does not automatically produce knowledge, wisdom, or discernment. Learners encounter misinformation, algorithmic amplification, persuasive media, generative artificial intelligence, and new forms of academic misconduct. Islamic educational philosophy can contribute a language of responsibility, intention, verification, trust, and ethical accountability; contemporary digital-literacy research contributes tools for source evaluation, media analysis, and responsible participation.

The supplied review emphasizes the growing role of digital technology in Islamic education and the need to preserve a spiritual and ethical core while developing future-oriented competencies. The challenge is therefore not whether technology should be used but how. A human-development approach evaluates technology by its effects on attention, agency, relationships, learning quality, equity, and moral responsibility. Technology should serve pedagogy and human flourishing rather than become the pedagogical purpose itself.

Findings of the Integrative Synthesis

The integrative analysis yielded five interdependent findings. Because the study is conceptual rather than experimental, "results" refers to recurring patterns and propositions generated through synthesis of the literature rather than statistically measured outcomes.

Epistemic Integration

The first finding is that Islamic human development requires epistemic integration. Learners need disciplinary competence, but they also need the capacity to connect knowledge to ethical purpose, social consequences, and a coherent worldview. Fragmentation occurs when religious learning is isolated from contemporary disciplines or when professional knowledge is detached from moral reasoning. An integrated

pedagogy therefore develops both disciplinary literacy and cross-disciplinary ethical judgment.

Moral-Spiritual Formation

The second finding is that moral and spiritual formation is not an optional co-curricular addition. Across Islamic educational scholarship, concepts such as *adab*, *tazkiyah*, *amanah*, and sincerity position character formation within the educational core. However, moral formation is weakened when it is reduced to exhortation. It becomes educationally meaningful when institutional practices, assessment, relationships, leadership, and opportunities for service reinforce the values being taught.

Reflective Agency

The third finding is the centrality of reflective agency. Contemporary learners need to interpret complex information, ask responsible questions, recognize uncertainty, and make reasoned judgments. Critical thinking should not be framed as rebellion against tradition, nor should tradition be used to suppress inquiry. Reflective agency involves disciplined engagement with authoritative knowledge together with the ability to apply, compare, evaluate, and respond to new situations. This finding is consistent with Sahin's call for critical and reflective educational cultures and with contemporary human-development emphasis on practical reason.

Social Responsibility and Civic Relation

The fourth finding is that Islamic human development is relational and civic. Education should prepare learners to cooperate across difference, contribute to community wellbeing, and understand the social consequences of individual action. This extends the educational aim beyond private piety or individual achievement. It also provides a basis for dialogue with international educational frameworks emphasizing solidarity and common goods (UNESCO, 2021).

Adaptive Capability

The fifth finding is adaptive capability: the capacity to learn continuously, use technology responsibly, participate in changing economies, and respond to new social problems without losing ethical orientation. Adaptive capability

does not mean uncritical accommodation to every technological or market trend. It means the ability to engage change intelligently and selectively. Teacher education, digital literacy, interdisciplinary learning, and authentic problem-solving are therefore central to contemporary Islamic human development.

Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy (HDIP) Framework

The findings can be operationalized through a seven-domain Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy (HDIP) framework. The model is not a fixed curriculum. It is a design architecture that links philosophical purpose to educational practice.

Curriculum Design

Curriculum reform should begin with educational purpose rather than with content accumulation. An HDIP curriculum asks what forms of knowledge, understanding, skill, and disposition students need to live responsibly and competently. Religious and general subjects need not be collapsed into one another, but curricular architecture should create structured points of connection. For example, environmental science can be linked to stewardship and justice; economics to ethics, distribution, and social welfare; computing to privacy, truth, bias, and responsibility; history to memory, pluralism, and critical source evaluation.

This approach also requires curricular selectivity. A curriculum overloaded with factual content leaves little time for analysis, discussion, application, and reflection. Contemporary Muslim educational institutions should therefore distinguish foundational knowledge from expandable content and create protected space for inquiry, projects, writing, dialogue, and community-based learning.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching within the HDIP model combines authoritative guidance with active learning. The teacher retains intellectual and ethical responsibility but does not monopolize thinking. Students are expected to listen carefully, read deeply, question responsibly, explain reasoning, test claims, collaborate, and apply knowledge.

Classical practices such as direct textual study, memorization, repetition, and teacher modelling can coexist with discussion, case analysis, inquiry, projects, simulations, and digital production when each method is used for an appropriate educational purpose.

The emphasis on active learning is not a rejection of teacher authority. Rather, it differentiates authority from authoritarianism. Educational authority is legitimate when grounded in knowledge, care, fairness, and responsibility. It should create conditions in which learners gradually develop intellectual independence rather than permanent dependence.

Assessment for Human Development

Assessment is one of the strongest signals of what an institution truly values. If examinations reward only recall, students will rationally prioritize recall regardless of official claims about creativity or critical thinking. Human-development-oriented assessment therefore requires constructive alignment between philosophical aims, learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessment.

A balanced system can combine examinations with analytical essays, oral presentations, portfolios, reflective writing, case-based tasks, collaborative projects, community engagement, and research assignments. Character and spirituality should not be reduced to simplistic numerical scoring. Instead, institutions can assess observable professional and social practices academic integrity, reliability, respectful communication, teamwork, service participation while preserving the personal and non-coercive dimensions of faith.

Teacher Formation

Teacher quality is the decisive bridge between philosophy and classroom practice. The supplied research identifies teacher readiness and professional development as recurring implementation challenges. Suhid et al. (2021) similarly examine challenges and readiness among Islamic education teachers, while Salleh et al. (2025) emphasize curriculum development, teacher training, and strategic pedagogical practice.

Teacher education for Islamic institutions should therefore contain at least four elements: strong subject knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; reflective and ethical professionalism; and digital/media competence. Teachers also need structured opportunities to observe practice, receive feedback, conduct classroom inquiry, and participate in professional learning communities. One-off workshops are insufficient for deep pedagogical change.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the central educational challenge in contemporary Muslim societies is not a simple conflict between Islam and modernity. It is a problem of institutional coherence. Philosophical commitments, curriculum, classroom practice, assessment, teacher education, and governance often operate according to different logics. A school may proclaim holistic Islamic development while rewarding only examination scores; a university may promote critical thinking while using lecture-dominated pedagogy; a madrasah may value moral formation while providing limited preparation for contemporary civic and professional environments. Reform must therefore align the whole educational ecology.

The HDIP framework also reframes the relationship between Islamic education and human-development theory. The capabilities approach helps clarify why education should expand meaningful agency rather than merely transmit credentials. Islamic educational philosophy adds that agency is ethically and spiritually situated. This synthesis avoids two extremes: a purely instrumental model that values education for economic output, and an inward model that treats spiritual formation as detached from social and professional competence. Human flourishing requires both.

A further implication concerns decolonization. Ahmed and Chowdhury (2024) rightly call for educational reconstruction grounded in an Islamic worldview, but decolonization should not become intellectual isolation. Educational traditions grow through encounter, translation, critique, and selective appropriation. Historically, Muslim intellectual

cultures engaged diverse knowledge traditions rather than refusing them categorically. A contemporary Islamic pedagogy can therefore learn from educational psychology, curriculum studies, digital pedagogy, and human-development theory while subjecting borrowed concepts to critical normative evaluation.

This point is especially important for critical thinking. In some contexts, critical inquiry is perceived as threatening to religious authority. Yet responsible critical thinking can be framed as disciplined verification, comparison, reasoning, interpretation, and recognition of evidence. These practices are compatible with serious Islamic scholarship. The real pedagogical question is how to cultivate inquiry without collapsing into relativism or superficial contrarianism. This requires teachers who can model intellectual humility, distinguish certainty from interpretation, and guide students through disagreement.

Technology introduces a parallel challenge. Digital tools can widen access and personalize learning, but they can also fragment attention, accelerate misinformation, and weaken intellectual effort. Islamic educational philosophy contributes important ethical questions about intention, truthfulness, responsibility, privacy, harm, and justice. Yet ethical discourse must be joined to technical literacy. Students should understand how algorithms, data systems, generative AI, and platforms shape what they see and do. Human-development-oriented Islamic education therefore requires digital ethics and digital competence together.

The framework also has implications for social cohesion. Muslim societies are not socially homogeneous, and Muslim learners increasingly inhabit plural local and global environments. Education that cultivates strong identity without relational competence can produce defensiveness; education that promotes tolerance without intellectual grounding can produce superficiality. A mature educational model should enable learners to understand their tradition deeply, encounter difference respectfully, and participate confidently in shared

civic life. The Qur'anic concept of ta'aruf and the broader Islamic emphasis on justice and dignity provide resources for such engagement, while contemporary peace and citizenship education can contribute tested pedagogical methods.

Finally, institutional reform requires attention to incentives. Teachers cannot be expected to implement inquiry-based learning if syllabi are overloaded, class sizes are unmanageable, examinations reward memorization, and promotion systems ignore teaching quality. Similarly, universities cannot claim a research-led learning culture while providing students little access to research methods, databases, supervision, or academic writing support. Policy reform must therefore address structures, not only values.

Dialogue with Contemporary Educational Theory

The synthesis developed here should not be read as an attempt to create a sealed educational system. A serious philosophy of Islamic education must be capable of dialogue with contemporary educational theory precisely because many pedagogical questions are shared across traditions: how learners develop understanding, how motivation is sustained, how prior knowledge affects learning, how classroom relationships shape participation, and how assessment influences behaviour. Constructivist and sociocultural theories, for example, emphasize that learners actively build understanding through interaction with ideas, experiences, teachers, and peers. Islamic educational thought can engage these insights without accepting the assumption that knowledge is merely subjective construction. The point of convergence is pedagogical: learners require opportunities to interpret, explain, apply, and discuss knowledge rather than only receive it.

Similarly, dialogical and critical pedagogies draw attention to power, voice, and the learner's capacity to participate in meaning-making. In Islamic settings, these concerns need careful contextualization. A dialogical classroom need not erase scholarly authority or the asymmetry between novice and expert. It can instead create a disciplined form of participation

in which students learn how to ask questions, identify evidence, distinguish interpretation from established knowledge, and disagree with intellectual courtesy. The educational outcome is not unrestricted skepticism but mature judgment.

Experiential and problem-based learning also have strong relevance. Many moral and social concepts remain abstract until learners encounter situations that require judgment. Case studies in business ethics, environmental stewardship, healthcare, media, family life, or technology can require students to identify stakeholders, analyze competing goods, consult relevant sources, and justify decisions. Such pedagogy can connect Islamic ethical concepts with professional and civic realities while avoiding superficial "Islamization" in which a verse or moral slogan is simply added to otherwise unchanged content.

The same principle applies to social-emotional learning and wellbeing. Islamic traditions contain rich resources concerning intention, self-knowledge, patience, gratitude, responsibility, hope, and regulation of conduct. Contemporary psychology offers empirical insights into motivation, belonging, feedback, stress, and learner development. Productive integration requires methodological humility: theological and ethical claims should not be reduced to psychological variables, while psychological evidence should not be dismissed simply because it originates outside Islamic scholarship. The educational task is to identify where different forms of knowledge can inform practice without collapsing their distinct epistemic status.

From Normative Ideals to Institutional Practice

One of the strongest conclusions of the review is that educational reform fails when institutions treat philosophy as rhetoric rather than as an operating system. A mission statement may promise holistic development, but the actual curriculum can remain overloaded, assessment can remain recall-dominated, and teachers can remain underprepared for active learning. The gap between declared values and organizational incentives is therefore a central object of reform.

Institutions should conduct periodic alignment audits asking whether their timetables, assessment policies, teacher appraisal, student discipline, extracurricular programmes, and leadership practices embody the educational values they claim.

This has consequences for leadership. Educational leaders in Muslim institutions need more than administrative competence. They require enough understanding of curriculum and pedagogy to protect instructional quality, enough ethical judgment to build trust, and enough strategic capacity to manage change. Reform imposed without consultation can produce resistance, particularly where communities fear that pedagogical innovation means religious dilution. Leaders should therefore explain the philosophical rationale for reform, involve teachers and parents in design, pilot changes, publish evidence, and revise policies in response to feedback.

Institutional culture is especially important for moral education. Students learn from how authority is exercised, how disagreement is handled, how staff treat one another, whether rules are applied fairly, and whether academic integrity is genuinely valued. An institution cannot credibly teach justice while tolerating favoritism, cannot teach consultation while suppressing all student voice, and cannot teach intellectual honesty while ignoring plagiarism. The hidden curriculum may therefore be more powerful than formal moral instruction. Human-development-oriented Islamic education requires coherence between taught values and lived institutional practices.

Equity also requires greater attention. Human development cannot be considered holistic if access to high-quality learning is strongly determined by wealth, gender, geography, disability, language, or digital connectivity. Islamic moral commitments to dignity and justice reinforce the policy case for inclusive education, while the capabilities approach helps reveal that equal formal provision does not necessarily create equal real opportunity. Institutions should therefore examine who can participate, whose needs are

invisible, and which learners face structural barriers to developing their capabilities.

A final implementation issue is evidence. Islamic educational reform is sometimes defended primarily through normative authority: a method is assumed to be effective because it is associated with an admired historical practice or religious concept. Normative legitimacy and empirical effectiveness, however, are different questions. A pedagogical practice may be ethically attractive but poorly implemented; a digital innovation may be technically impressive but educationally ineffective. Mature Islamic Education Studies should therefore normalize empirical evaluation. Classroom observation, student work, learning analytics, interviews, surveys, and longitudinal outcomes can all help determine whether educational intentions are being realized.

Research Propositions Emerging from the Framework

The HDIP framework generates a set of propositions that can guide future empirical research. First, institutions with stronger alignment between stated educational philosophy and assessment practices should show higher levels of student engagement and reflective learning. Second, teacher professional development that combines Islamic educational philosophy with pedagogical content knowledge should produce more substantive classroom change than training focused on values or techniques alone. Third, curricula that explicitly connect disciplinary knowledge to ethical and social reasoning should strengthen students' ability to transfer learning to unfamiliar problems. Fourth, institutional cultures characterized by fairness, consultation, academic integrity, and student dignity should reinforce moral-development outcomes more effectively than stand-alone character lessons. Fifth, digitally enriched learning should support human development only when accompanied by explicit attention to epistemic verification, attention, privacy, and ethical use.

These propositions are intentionally testable. They shift the field from broad claims that Islamic education is "holistic" toward

research questions about when, how, and under what conditions holistic development occurs. Such a shift would strengthen the international standing of Islamic Education Studies because it would connect philosophical depth to transparent methods and cumulative evidence. It would also help policymakers distinguish between symbolic reforms and interventions that genuinely improve learning and human development.

Stakeholder-Specific Recommendations

Ministries of Education and Regulatory Bodies

- Adopt a multidimensional definition of educational quality that includes intellectual, ethical, civic, and capability outcomes alongside attainment and employability.
- Create curriculum space for inquiry, interdisciplinary problem-solving, digital literacy, ethics, and community engagement rather than expanding content endlessly.
- Align examinations and quality-assurance systems with higher-order learning outcomes so that schools are not penalized for moving beyond memorization.
- Fund longitudinal research on Islamic education, learner wellbeing, social outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and graduate capabilities across different institutional types.

Universities and Higher-Education Institutions

- Develop general-education modules that connect disciplinary study with ethics, society, and human-development questions.
- Strengthen research-led teaching, undergraduate inquiry, academic writing, and responsible use of digital and AI tools.
- Support centres or programmes in Islamic Education Studies that are genuinely interdisciplinary, drawing on education, Islamic studies, sociology, psychology, policy, and technology.
- Reward teaching innovation and mentorship within promotion and appraisal systems rather than relying only on publication metrics.

Schools, Madrasahs and Islamic Seminaries

- Map existing curricula against the five HDIP dimensions and identify where spiritual, intellectual, social, or practical development is underrepresented.
- Retain valuable practices of memorization, textual discipline, teacher modelling, and apprenticeship while adding structured dialogue, application, writing, research, projects, and civic learning.
- Establish safeguarding, student-support, and professional teaching standards that protect dignity and strengthen trust.
- Build pathways that help graduates translate religious learning into further study, employment, community leadership, and public engagement.

Teacher-Education Providers

- Design sustained professional development around pedagogical content knowledge, formative assessment, classroom dialogue, inclusive teaching, digital literacy, and reflective practice.
- Use coaching, lesson study, peer observation, and practitioner research rather than depending on short workshops.
- Train teachers to handle disagreement and sensitive religious-social questions with intellectual rigor, fairness, and pastoral sensitivity.

Curriculum Developers and Textbook Boards

- Move from value statements at the margins of textbooks to tasks that require ethical reasoning, evidence evaluation, and application.
- Represent the internal diversity of Islamic intellectual traditions and avoid presenting complex scholarly debates as simplistic binaries.
- Include contemporary case studies on technology, environment, economy, health, citizenship, and media so that students practice applying principles to real problems.

Parents, Families and Community Leaders

- Support educational goals beyond grades, including reading, curiosity, character,

service, communication, and independent responsibility.

- Avoid framing questioning as disrespect when it is conducted ethically and academically.
- Participate in school-community dialogue so that reform is understood as responsible development rather than abandonment of tradition.

Civil Society and Philanthropic Organizations

- Invest in teacher development, open educational resources, research capacity, and access to digital tools in underserved institutions.
- Support pilot programmes that can be independently evaluated before large-scale replication.
- Create partnerships among universities, schools, madrasahs, technology organizations, and community institutions.

Researchers

- Conduct comparative empirical studies across Muslim-majority and minority contexts rather than generalizing from single institutions.
- Develop validated measures for constructs such as reflective agency, ethical reasoning, civic responsibility, and multidimensional educational wellbeing.
- Study the effects of AI, social media, and digital platforms on Islamic learning, religious authority, student attention, and epistemic trust.

- Use mixed methods and longitudinal designs to test whether integrated pedagogies actually improve both academic and human-development outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The practical significance of this study lies in shifting the unit of reform from isolated subjects or techniques to educational alignment. Institutions should begin with a clear statement of human-development aims and then audit whether curriculum, teaching, assessment, teacher development, and institutional culture support those aims. Such an audit can reveal hidden contradictions for example, whether a stated

commitment to critical thinking is undermined by assessment systems that reward reproduction, or whether a stated commitment to ethical formation is undermined by unfair institutional practices.

Policy should also distinguish standardization from quality. Some common standards are necessary, particularly for safeguarding, teacher competence, academic integrity, and core learning outcomes. But excessive centralization can make adaptation difficult. The HDIP framework supports principled flexibility: institutions can pursue shared human-development outcomes through contextually appropriate curricula and pedagogies.

For Muslim educational institutions specifically, the framework offers a way to engage global educational debates without losing normative identity. It creates a language in which Islamic concepts can be translated into educational design while remaining open to empirical evaluation. This is important for international scholarly credibility: claims about the superiority of any educational model should be tested rather than assumed.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has four limitations. First, it is a conceptual integrative review rather than a systematic review with exhaustive database screening and meta-analysis. The framework therefore represents an analytically grounded synthesis, not a claim of comprehensive coverage. Second, Islamic educational traditions are diverse; concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah*, and *insan kamil* have different emphases across intellectual and institutional traditions. The framework should not be interpreted as eliminating those differences. Third, much contemporary empirical literature is concentrated in particular national contexts, especially Indonesia, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and selected Islamic-school settings. Generalization to all Muslim societies is therefore inappropriate. Fourth, the HDIP framework has not yet been validated through longitudinal implementation studies.

Future research should test the framework in varied settings using mixed

methods. Comparative studies could examine how Islamic educational philosophy is translated into curriculum and classroom practice in public schools, private Islamic schools, madrasahs, universities, and hybrid institutions. Longitudinal work should study graduate outcomes beyond examination scores, including ethical reasoning, civic participation, wellbeing, employability, and lifelong learning. Experimental or quasi-experimental studies may evaluate specific pedagogical interventions, while qualitative research should examine student and teacher experience in depth. Particular attention should be given to gender, socioeconomic inequality, disability inclusion, AI-mediated learning, and the educational experiences of Muslim minorities.

Conclusion

Islamic educational philosophy offers a substantial conceptual foundation for human development, but its contemporary relevance depends on educational translation. The central task is not to repeat classical terminology or to add religious language to conventional schooling. It is to build institutions in which knowledge, moral purpose, reflective agency, social responsibility, and adaptive capability reinforce one another.

The article has argued that *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah*, *amanah*, *khilafah*, *adab*, and the ideal of *insan kamil* collectively support a multidimensional understanding of education. Contemporary human-development and education literature adds useful concepts of capability, dignity, cooperation, sustainability, critical inquiry, and professional teacher formation. These traditions need not be collapsed into one another. Their productive dialogue can help Muslim educational institutions resist both narrow marketization and static traditionalism.

The proposed Human Development-Oriented Islamic Pedagogy framework translates this synthesis into seven institutional domains: purpose, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher formation, institutional culture, and policy. Its core proposition is simple: educational philosophy matters only when it shapes what institutions actually teach, how teachers teach,

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what students are asked to do, what assessment rewards, how people are treated, and what graduates become capable of contributing. For contemporary Muslim societies, educational renewal will be credible when it produces learners who are knowledgeable without arrogance, faithful without intellectual closure, technologically capable without ethical indifference, and professionally ambitious without losing responsibility to society.

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