



Ibn Khaldun's Islamic Educational Thought and Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education in Indonesia

Hermanto Hasib¹, Amran Papua¹, Sahjad M. Aksan¹, Muhdi Alhadar¹

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ternate, Indonesia

✉ hermantohasib28@gmail.com *

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Abstract

Ibn Khaldun's educational thought provides an important Islamic perspective on knowledge, human development, teaching, and the role of educators. This study aims to analyze his educational thought and examine its conceptual relevance to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis of *Al-Muqaddimah* and relevant scholarly literature. Data were analyzed through identification, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis. The findings show that Ibn Khaldun viewed education as an integrative process that connects religious and rational knowledge, intellectual and practical development, and spiritual and social objectives. His concept of *malakah* emphasizes learning through gradual development, practice, and experience, while his criticism of coercive teaching highlights the importance of learners' capacities and psychological development. His views on educators also emphasize intellectual competence and professional recognition. These principles remain conceptually relevant to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly in integrating knowledge, promoting learner-centered teaching, and strengthening teacher professionalism. The study concludes that Ibn Khaldun's educational thought remains a valuable conceptual resource for addressing contemporary educational needs.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process that plays an important role in developing human intellectual, moral, and social capacities. Through education, individuals not only acquire knowledge but also develop their thinking abilities, shape their attitudes, and prepare themselves to participate in social life (Alouzi et al., 2026; Baroud et al., 2025; Masani & Fabanjo, 2026). This process takes place across various environments, particularly the family, school, and community, which collectively contribute to individual development. Therefore, education cannot be understood merely as a process of knowledge transfer but also as a process of holistic human development (Miller & Krajcik, 2019; Prihantoro & Suyadi, 2021; Seman et al., 2018).

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From an Islamic perspective, education encompasses a broader dimension by connecting intellectual development with moral and spiritual formation. Education is not solely directed toward producing individuals with academic competencies but also toward developing individuals who are able to use knowledge responsibly in their personal and social lives (Luthfiyah, 2019; Rosdiana & Muzakkir, 2019). Accordingly, Islamic educational thought has developed through the contributions of various Muslim scholars and intellectuals who have offered perspectives on human nature, knowledge, educational aims, curriculum, teaching methods, and the role of educators (Arifin, 2018; Islam, 2024; Jalil, 2024; Nasikhin et al., 2022).

One Muslim thinker who made a significant contribution to the development of educational thought was Ibn Khaldun. His ideas, particularly those presented in *Al-Muqaddimah*, address not only history and the development of society but also provide extensive perspectives on human beings, knowledge, learning, teaching, and the development of individual capacities Zahraini, (2014). His intellectual and socio-political experiences also shaped his understanding of the relationship between human beings, knowledge, society, and education. Several studies indicate that Ibn Khaldun's thought is characterized by rational, empirical, and spiritual dimensions, distinguishing it from educational approaches that emphasize only one dimension of human development (Masnila & Sassi, 2025; PS & Aliah, 2021; Rahmawanti & Nurzaelani, 2021).

In Ibn Khaldun's thought, education is closely associated with the development of human reasoning and the formation of *malakah*, understood as a capacity or disposition developed through learning, practice, and experience. He also distinguished between knowledge derived from revelation (*al-'ulum al-naqliyyah*) and knowledge acquired through rational faculties (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah*). This classification demonstrates that education in his thought was not based on a rigid separation between religious and rational knowledge but instead positioned the two as complementary domains (Luthfiyani et al., 2025). Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun's attention to teaching methods, learners' capacities, and the effects of violence in education indicates that his educational thought was not merely philosophical but also contained a practical dimension (Nafsaka et al., 2023).

Although Ibn Khaldun's educational thought has been widely examined, existing studies tend to address particular aspects separately, such as the classification of knowledge, educational aims, teaching methods, or his conception of human beings. An analysis that connects these aspects within a coherent framework of educational thought while simultaneously examining their relevance to the needs of contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia requires further development (Engkizar et al., 2026). Moreover, the relevance of classical thinkers should not be understood as the direct application of historical educational concepts to modern educational systems. Rather, their ideas need to be examined in terms of the underlying principles that retain conceptual value for contemporary educational issues.

This need has become increasingly important in the context of contemporary Islamic education, which faces demands to develop learners in an integrated manner. Education requires not only mastery of religious knowledge but also critical thinking skills, practical competencies, adaptability, character development, and social responsibility. In Indonesia, the national education objectives likewise emphasize the development of learners' potential to become individuals who possess faith, piety, noble character, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, and responsibility as citizens (Alatise & Akinfolarin, 2025; Harun et al., 2026). This convergence of orientations provides a basis for reconsidering Ibn Khaldun's educational thought in relation to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze Ibn Khaldun's

Islamic educational thought by examining the concepts of knowledge and curriculum, human nature and educational aims, teaching methods, and the role and professional status of educators, and then identify the conceptual relevance of these ideas to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. The study is expected to contribute to the broader scholarship on Islamic educational thought by connecting Ibn Khaldun's classical ideas with contemporary educational needs while maintaining attention to the historical context in which his thought developed.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on developing an in-depth understanding of the ideas, concepts, and educational principles contained in Ibn Khaldun's works and interpreting them within the context of contemporary education. Content analysis was employed to identify, categorize, interpret, and synthesize the major themes related to Ibn Khaldun's educational thought (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Kara, 2023; Pohontsch, 2019).

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary sources. The primary source was Ibn Khaldun's work, particularly *Al-Muqaddimah*, which contains discussions of human nature, knowledge, education, learning, teaching, and social life. Secondary sources included relevant scholarly journal articles, academic books, and educational policy documents addressing Ibn Khaldun's educational thought and contemporary Islamic education. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research focus and was used to support the interpretation of concepts identified in the primary source (Allsop et al., 2022; Bengtsson, 2016; Uiboleht et al., 2016).

Data were collected through document analysis. The researchers identified textual passages related to the concepts of knowledge, knowledge classification, curriculum, human nature, educational aims, teaching methods, learners, and the role of educators. Relevant data were subsequently recorded, grouped, and organized according to the analytical themes. Secondary literature was used as a comparative source to examine existing interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's thought and its relationship to contemporary Islamic education.

Data analysis was conducted through four stages. First, data identification involved selecting textual passages directly related to the research focus. Second, categorization involved organizing the data into predetermined analytical themes, including the classification of knowledge and curriculum, human nature and educational aims, teaching methods, and the role and professional status of educators. Third, interpretation involved examining the meaning and relationships among the identified themes within the context of Ibn Khaldun's educational thought. Fourth, synthesis involved connecting the findings from the analysis of Ibn Khaldun's thought with the characteristics and needs of contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia (Engkizar et al., 2024; Engkizar, Muslim, et al., 2025; Neuendorf, 2019).

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by comparing information obtained from Ibn Khaldun's primary works with relevant secondary sources. This comparison was conducted to minimize interpretations based solely on a single source and to assess the consistency of meanings across texts. The analysis was also conducted contextually by considering the historical and intellectual background of Ibn Khaldun so that his ideas were not separated from the context in which they were developed (Kyngäs, 2020; Renz et al., 2018).

The findings were presented thematically and interpretively. Each theme was used to explain the major characteristics of Ibn Khaldun's educational thought, while

the relevance analysis was conducted by comparing these principles with the orientations and needs of contemporary Islamic education and the educational objectives of Indonesia. Accordingly, the study did not seek to directly apply Ibn Khaldun's concepts to the contemporary educational system but rather to identify the principles of his thought that have conceptual relevance to current educational issues and needs (Engkizar et al., 2023; Parry et al., 2014; Preiser et al., 2021; Selvi, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Intellectual and Biographical Formation of Ibn Khaldun

The analysis of the literature indicates that Ibn Khaldun's educational thought cannot be separated from his intellectual formation, family background, political experience, and extensive engagement with different scholarly and social environments. Ibn Khaldun, whose full name was Abu Zaid 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, was born in Tunis in 732 AH (1332 CE). He came from a scholarly family whose ancestry was associated with Hadramaut in Yemen and whose members had previously been involved in the political and intellectual life of al-Andalus and North Africa. His family background exposed him to religious scholarship, political affairs, and intellectual traditions from an early age (Stuurman, 2020).

The literature further shows that the political displacement of Muslim families from al-Andalus contributed to the intellectual environment in which Ibn Khaldun and his family developed. Members of the Khaldun family migrated to North Africa following the decline of Muslim political authority in al-Andalus. This migration brought together scholars, political figures, and intellectual traditions from different regions, contributing to the cultural and scholarly development of North Africa. Thus, Ibn Khaldun's intellectual development was shaped not only by formal education but also by a social environment characterized by political change, migration, and interaction among diverse scholarly traditions.

His early education was strongly rooted in Islamic sciences. The literature reports that Ibn Khaldun studied Qur'anic recitation and memorization, *tajwid*, *qira'ah*, jurisprudence, hadith, Arabic language, literature, and related disciplines. Among his teachers was Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Jabir ibn Sultan al-Qaysi al-Wadiyashi, a prominent hadith scholar in Tunis. Ibn Khaldun also received *ijazah* from several scholars, enabling him to transmit knowledge in language and law. His educational experience subsequently expanded beyond religious sciences to include philosophy, politics, history, and other intellectual disciplines (Bacik, 2024).

The findings therefore suggest that Ibn Khaldun's educational philosophy developed from an integration of religious scholarship, rational inquiry, practical experience, and social observation. His later intellectual position cannot be understood solely as a product of theological learning, because his experiences in political administration, diplomacy, judicial institutions, and interaction with different societies also contributed to his understanding of human development and education (Kamridah et al., 2025; O'Connor, 2016).

Classification of Knowledge and Its Implications for Curriculum

A central finding concerns Ibn Khaldun's classification of knowledge. The literature identifies two major categories: *al-'ulum al-naqliyyah* (transmitted sciences) and *al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah* (rational sciences), accompanied by linguistic sciences as important instruments for acquiring and communicating knowledge (Kabba, 2024).

The transmitted sciences are primarily based on religious revelation and authoritative Islamic sources. They include Qur'anic interpretation, Qur'anic recitation, hadith, jurisprudence, inheritance law, principles of jurisprudence, theology, Sufism, and related disciplines. In contrast, the rational sciences are

developed through human intellectual activity and include logic, natural sciences, metaphysics, and mathematics. Linguistic sciences, including grammar, lexicography, rhetoric, and literature, function as supporting disciplines for understanding and transmitting knowledge.

This classification demonstrates that Ibn Khaldun did not conceptualize education through a rigid separation between religious and rational knowledge. Although religious sciences occupy an important position because of their contribution to moral and spiritual development, rational sciences are also recognized as legitimate fields of knowledge. Both dimensions ultimately originate from the intellectual capacities granted by God. Consequently, knowledge is not merely an instrument for intellectual achievement but is expected to contribute to human conduct, social responsibility, and spiritual development (Azhari et al., 2026).

The analysis further identifies four characteristics of Ibn Khaldun's conception of curriculum. First, theoretical and practical knowledge are interconnected. Knowledge is expected to develop into *malakah*, namely a cultivated capacity or intellectual disposition acquired through repeated learning and practice. Second, religious and rational sciences are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. Third, education has a practical and socioeconomic dimension, because knowledge and skills can support individuals in fulfilling their material needs. Fourth, the curriculum should be broad and functionally oriented, incorporating religious knowledge together with language, logic, and other intellectual disciplines (Fadli, 2021).

These findings indicate that Ibn Khaldun's curriculum conception is characterized by an integrative orientation. Education is not limited to the accumulation of information but is directed toward the development of intellectual competence, practical skills, moral formation, and the ability to participate effectively in social life.

Human Nature, Reason, and the Purpose of Education

Another major finding concerns Ibn Khaldun's conception of human nature as the philosophical foundation of education. Human beings are distinguished from other creatures by their capacity for thought and reflection. Through reason, humans are able to distinguish between beneficial and harmful actions, develop knowledge, organize social life, and pursue activities necessary for individual and collective survival.

The literature describes three levels of human intellectual capacity in Ibn Khaldun's thought. The first is *al-'aql al-tamyizi*, or the discriminative intellect, through which humans distinguish between things that are useful and harmful. The second is the experimental intellect, through which individuals develop practical knowledge and social understanding. The third involves a higher level of intellectual activity through which human beings engage in abstract reasoning and develop more sophisticated forms of knowledge (Hussin & Tamuri, 2019).

This conception places human intellectual development at the center of the educational process. Education therefore should not merely transfer information but cultivate the capacity to think, understand experience, solve problems, and participate in social life. Ibn Khaldun's educational orientation can consequently be characterized as practical and functional, because knowledge is assessed partly according to its contribution to human life and social organization (Adrivat et al., 2024).

The analysis also indicates that Ibn Khaldun's philosophical orientation combines rational, empirical, and spiritual dimensions. His educational thought is influenced by intellectual traditions associated with Muslim philosophers and theologians, while simultaneously reflecting his own empirical observations of society

and political life. Several studies consequently characterize his thought as combining rational-empirical inquiry with spiritual considerations (Skrzypińska, 2021).

This synthesis is important because it demonstrates that, for Ibn Khaldun, intellectual development does not imply the abandonment of religious values. Instead, rational inquiry and empirical observation operate within a broader Islamic worldview in which knowledge is ultimately connected to human responsibility before God.

Teaching Methods and Learner Development

The findings show that Ibn Khaldun paid considerable attention to the methods through which knowledge is transmitted. He criticized educational practices that imposed excessive physical or intellectual pressure on learners. According to the literature, prolonged instruction, excessive demands, and coercive practices may inhibit the development of learners and negatively influence their character (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Ibn Khaldun's criticism of harsh educational practices is particularly significant. Excessive punishment and violence may produce fear, passivity, deception, and avoidance behaviors rather than genuine understanding. Learners who are constantly threatened by punishment may become more concerned with avoiding consequences than with developing knowledge and intellectual competence (Navarro et al., 2016).

The findings therefore indicate that effective teaching, from Ibn Khaldun's perspective, requires attention to the learner's psychological and intellectual capacity. Learning should occur progressively and should provide sufficient opportunity for understanding and practice. The teacher is not merely responsible for delivering content but also for creating conditions that allow learners to develop intellectual dispositions and practical competencies.

This perspective suggests a learner-oriented dimension in Ibn Khaldun's educational thought. Although developed in a medieval context, his criticism of coercive teaching practices can be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of gradual instruction, learner readiness, repetition, practice, and avoidance of excessive pressure.

The Role and Professional Status of Educators

The analysis also identifies the educator as an important component of Ibn Khaldun's educational system. The effectiveness of curriculum and teaching methods depends substantially on the competence and character of the teacher. The teacher is therefore expected not only to possess knowledge but also to understand the appropriate ways of transmitting knowledge to learners.

In contemporary discussions, this perspective corresponds with the emphasis on teacher professionalism and pedagogical competence. Indonesian educational policy similarly recognizes teachers as professional educators who require appropriate competencies and adequate professional support (Ping et al., 2018; Saleh et al., 2025).

Another relevant aspect is Ibn Khaldun's recognition of teaching as a profession that deserves appropriate remuneration. Teaching is not necessarily detached from economic considerations; rather, educators require income to sustain their professional and personal lives. This position is particularly relevant when considered alongside Indonesian regulations concerning teachers' salaries, professional allowances, and other forms of compensation under Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers (Arifai, 2018; Engkizar et al., 2025).

The finding indicates that Ibn Khaldun's conception of the educator extends beyond the traditional image of the teacher as a transmitter of religious knowledge. The teacher occupies a professional role involving intellectual competence, pedagogical responsibility, moral conduct, and socioeconomic recognition.

Contemporary Relevance to Islamic Education in Indonesia

The comparative analysis identifies several areas in which Ibn Khaldun's educational thought remains conceptually relevant to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia. The relevance is particularly visible in four dimensions: educational aims, curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher professionalism (Arif et al., 2024; Ibnudin & Akhmad Syatori, 2023).

First, Ibn Khaldun's conception of educational aims integrates worldly and spiritual dimensions. Education is expected to prepare individuals for their responsibilities toward God while simultaneously equipping them to respond to practical challenges in social life. This orientation corresponds with the broader objectives of Indonesian national education, which emphasize the development of faith, morality, knowledge, competence, creativity, independence, democratic citizenship, and responsibility.

Second, his curriculum conception supports the integration of religious and rational knowledge. Rather than positioning Islamic sciences and intellectual disciplines as competing domains, Ibn Khaldun's framework allows them to function complementarily. This perspective is relevant to contemporary Islamic education, which increasingly requires learners to develop religious literacy alongside scientific, technological, linguistic, and analytical competencies (Morton, 2016).

Third, Ibn Khaldun's critique of coercive teaching provides a conceptual basis for learner-centered educational practices. His emphasis on gradual learning, attention to learner capacity, and avoidance of excessive punishment is compatible with contemporary approaches that emphasize psychological safety, active learning, learner participation, and constructive teacher–student interaction.

Fourth, his conception of teachers as knowledgeable and professionally recognized individuals remains relevant to current Indonesian educational policy. The recognition of teachers as professionals, together with the provision of appropriate remuneration and professional support, reflects the broader principle that educational quality depends partly on the capacity and working conditions of educators (Affifah et al., 2025; Friyandini, 2025; Snow & Matthews, 2016).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Ibn Khaldun's educational thought is characterized by an integrative relationship between religious knowledge, rational inquiry, practical competence, moral development, and social responsibility. Its contemporary relevance does not lie in transferring his medieval educational system directly into the modern Indonesian context, but rather in adapting its underlying principles to current educational needs. In this sense, Ibn Khaldun's thought provides a conceptual foundation for understanding Islamic education as a process that develops intellectually capable, morally responsible, socially engaged, and practically competent individuals.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Ibn Khaldun's Islamic educational thought is characterized by an integrative view of knowledge, human development, teaching, and the role of educators. His classification of knowledge into transmitted and rational sciences demonstrates that religious and intellectual knowledge can be developed in a complementary manner, while his concept of *malakah* emphasizes the importance of gradual learning, practice, and the development of intellectual and practical capacities. His criticism of coercive teaching practices further highlights the importance of considering learners' abilities and psychological development, while his view of educators emphasizes intellectual competence, pedagogical responsibility, and professional recognition. These principles have conceptual relevance to contemporary Islamic education in Indonesia, particularly in efforts to integrate religious and rational knowledge, develop learner-centered teaching, strengthen

teacher professionalism, and balance spiritual, intellectual, practical, and social objectives. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's educational thought remains valuable not as a system to be directly replicated, but as a conceptual resource that can be critically adapted to the needs and challenges of contemporary Islamic education.

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