

## Inquiry-Oriented Learning in Classical Islamic Educational Thought: A Conceptual Model of Three Learning Orientations

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### ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes the orientations of learning experience in classical Islamic educational thought through the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina. It examines their conceptual affinity with inquiry-oriented learning. It employs a qualitative library-based approach using conceptual analysis of classical Islamic educational texts and relevant contemporary educational literature. The analysis was conducted through three stages: identifying each thinker's core concepts of learning, classifying them into major dimensions of learning experience, and synthesizing their conceptual relationship with the principles of inquiry-oriented learning. The findings show that Ibn Khaldun emphasizes social experience, action, and life context as media for the formation of intellectual habits; Al-Ghazali places reflective experience, internalization of meaning, and self-formation at the center of learning; while Ibn Sina highlights observation, reasoning, and empirical experience as the basis for knowledge formation. These findings indicate that although the three thinkers do not explicitly use the term inquiry-oriented learning, their educational thought has a strong conceptual affinity with its core principles, particularly regarding active learner engagement, meaningful experience, self-reflection, and the search for knowledge through observation and reason. Theoretically, this study redefines inquiry-oriented learning in Islamic education as an integrative framework that combines social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational dimensions. This article concludes that classical Islamic educational thought should not be viewed merely as a normative-historical legacy; rather, it can be reinterpreted as a productive epistemological and pedagogical source for formulating a more active, reflective, and meaningful contemporary Islamic inquiry learning framework.*

## INTRODUCTION

Learning in the contemporary era increasingly emphasizes the importance of students' active involvement in building knowledge through observing, interpreting, reflecting, and independently

testing their understanding. In this context, inquiry-oriented learning is considered important because it positions students not as passive recipients of information but as subjects actively engaged in seeking meaning and constructing knowledge. At the same time, the discourse of modern Islamic education shows that the study of Islamic education is no longer adequate if it is only placed on the normative dimension and doctrinal transmission alone, but needs to be read as a conceptual field rich in pedagogical, ethical, and epistemological ideas (Agbaria, 2024; Zaman, 2024). Historically, Islamic educational thought has also built a conceptual framework regarding the relationship between knowledge, manners, teachers, students, and educational goals in the formation of the whole human being, which is re-read today through contemporary studies on tarbiyah, religious education, and the philosophy of Islamic education (Abdalla, 2025; Agbaria et al., 2022). In its development, this discourse is increasingly connected to contemporary pedagogical issues, including Islamic teacher education, curriculum development, and epistemological reconstruction of Islamic education (A. Ahmed, 2025; Memon et al., 2024). Such integration requires a rereading of the intellectual heritage of Islam to remain relevant to the needs of more reflective, contextual, and meaningful learning (F. Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025; Succarie, 2024). Thus, Islamic educational thought remains important to study because it shows how the Islamic intellectual tradition continues to adapt without losing its ethical, spiritual, and epistemological basis.

The development of active learning studies in modern education makes an inquiry orientation even more important to discuss, especially because this approach relies on students' active engagement in asking questions, exploring problems, reflecting on findings, and building knowledge through meaningful learning experiences. (Aidoo et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2024). However, discussions of inquiry-oriented learning in the educational literature are still more often dominated by modern pedagogical frameworks rooted in Western educational traditions. Meanwhile, the contribution of Islamic educational thought to the epistemological foundations of active, reflective, and experiential learning has not been systematically elaborated in direct dialogue with contemporary inquiry frameworks, although several studies have begun to emphasize the importance of reconstructing Islamic pedagogy in the face of the challenges of globalization and changes in modern education (F. Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2025; Budak, 2025). In fact, the Islamic educational tradition has a wide spectrum of concepts, such as tarbiyah, ta'lim, tadrīs, and ta'dīb, each of which contains certain assumptions about the nature of learning, the purpose of education, and the process of human formation (Abdalla, 2025; Karwadi et al., 2025). In the contemporary context, the tendency to redevelop Islamic educational concepts in a more dialogical, reflective, and contextual direction is gaining strength, especially in an effort to address the need for a more existential, transformative, and meaningful religious education (Angin, 2025; Saada, 2023). Therefore, the study of the orientation of learning experiences within the treasures of Islamic educational thought is important for showing that the Islamic intellectual tradition also has conceptual sources relevant to today's inquiry learning.

The development of Islamic educational thought also shows that the intellectual heritage of classical scholars was not always oriented solely towards the transmission of memorization, but encompassed a broader understanding of learning experiences, self-formation, and reasoning processes. In this case, Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina are three important figures who represent different but complementary learning experiences. Ibn Khaldun emphasized the close relationship between knowledge, the social environment, habits, and actions, so that learning is understood as a process that takes place in the reality of life and social interaction (Bensaid, 2021; Lahmar, 2020). Al-Ghazali places the experience of learning within a reflective, spiritual, and ethical framework, where knowledge is not enough just to be known, but must be lived, internalized, and embodied in moral-spiritual transformation (Chanifah et al., 2021; Sahin, 2018). Meanwhile, Ibn Sina shows the importance of observation, reasoning, and structured empirical experience in the process of forming knowledge, especially within the framework of systematic scientific rationality (F. Ahmed

& Chowdhury, 2025; Shoja et al., 2011). This difference in orientation shows that classical Islamic educational thinking actually has a variety of epistemological foundations that can be re-read in dialogue with inquiry-oriented learning. Therefore, the development of Islamic educational thought not only demonstrates the continuity of tradition but also opens the possibility of a more relevant conceptual reinterpretation of contemporary learning theory.

Although studies on Islamic education have advanced considerably, important research gaps remain. Previous scholarship has largely focused on Islamic education in general, on individual thinkers separately, or on institutional and curricular issues. As a result, limited attention has been given to the orientations of learning experience in classical Islamic educational thought and their conceptual relationship with inquiry-oriented learning. In addition, the existing literature remains analytically fragmented, particularly because classical Islamic thought is often discussed separately from contemporary learning theory, leaving the conceptual relationship between the two insufficiently defined. Such a rereading is important not to impose modern pedagogical terminology on classical texts, but to identify epistemological affinities that enable a productive dialogue between the Islamic intellectual heritage and contemporary pedagogy. Against this background, this article aims to analyze the orientations of learning experience in the thought of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, to identify the main epistemological characteristics of each thinker in understanding the learning process and knowledge formation, to examine their conceptual affinity with inquiry-oriented learning, and to explain how a rereading of classical Islamic educational thought can contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic learning theory.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative conceptual research design based on library research. The study was intended to examine how learning experience is represented in the educational thought of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, and to analyze its conceptual affinity with inquiry-oriented learning. Because the study did not seek to generate field-based evidence, its methodological focus was placed on the selection, close reading, comparison, and interpretation of relevant texts. In this design, library research functioned as the strategy for gathering sources, while conceptual analysis served as the main analytical approach for identifying key ideas, comparing epistemological orientations, and constructing an integrative interpretation of their relevance to contemporary pedagogy (Lim, 2024; Morgan, 2022).

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included classical works and authoritative texts associated with Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina that were relevant to educational ideas, knowledge formation, moral development, reflection, observation, and reasoning. The secondary sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and recent conceptual studies discussing Islamic education, learning experience, spirituality in education, empirical reasoning, and inquiry-oriented learning. The selection of sources was conducted purposively based on explicit criteria: direct relevance to the study focus, conceptual significance to the categories of learning experience under investigation, academic credibility of the publication outlet, and contribution to the interpretation of the three figures in relation to contemporary educational discourse. For contemporary secondary literature, priority was given to recent publications, while older sources were retained when they were foundational to the conceptual discussion (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Dahal et al., 2024).

Data collection was carried out through document analysis. At this stage, the researcher identified, screened, and inventoried literature related to the three main analytical domains of the study, namely social-practical experience in Ibn Khaldun, reflective-transformative experience in Al-

Ghazali, and empirical-rational experience in Ibn Sina. Each source was then read carefully to extract key concepts, central arguments, and recurrent educational orientations. Analytical notes were organized systematically to distinguish textual evidence, scholarly interpretation, and the researcher’s conceptual inferences. This procedure was intended to make the interpretive process more transparent and traceable (Annur, 2018; Delawala et al., 2023; Morgan, 2022).

The data analysis combined thematic conceptual analysis, comparative analysis, and philosophical interpretation. In the first stage, the researcher identified core concepts related to learning experience in each thinker’s educational framework. In the second stage, these concepts were coded and grouped into broader thematic categories. To strengthen analytical transparency, the researcher then developed a thematic matrix that mapped each thinker, the extracted key concepts, the main educational process, the thematic orientation, and its relevance to inquiry-oriented learning. This matrix served as an analytical bridge between document reading, categorization, comparison, and final synthesis, thereby making the interpretation process more systematic and academically accountable (Ayre & McCaffery, 2022; Bingham, 2023; Nicmanis, 2024).

**Table 1.** Thematic Matrix of Conceptual Analysis

Thinker	Extracted Key Concepts	Main Educational Process	Thematic Orientation	Relevance to Inquiry-Oriented Learning
Ibn Khaldun	social engagement, habituation, action, contextual learning	learning through social interaction, repetition, and engagement in real-life situations	Social-practical	supports inquiry through contextual engagement, active participation, and learning grounded in lived experience
Al-Ghazali	reflection, tafakkur, internalization of meaning, self-formation	learning through contemplation, ethical reflection, and inner transformation	Reflective-transformative	supports inquiry through reflective thinking, meaning-making, self-awareness, and ethical evaluation of knowledge
Ibn Sina	observation, reasoning, empirical experience, intellectual inference	learning through observation, evidence processing, and rational explanation	Empirical-rational	supports inquiry through observation, analysis, evidence-based reasoning, and conclusion drawing

In the third stage, the analysis compared the three thinkers to identify both their distinctive emphases and their complementary contributions. From this process, three major orientations of learning experience were formulated: social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational. In the fourth stage, the findings were synthesized to construct an integrative conceptual framework showing how these three orientations may contribute to inquiry-oriented learning in contemporary Islamic education. In this process, the study did not attempt to equate classical concepts literally with modern pedagogical terminology; rather, it sought to identify epistemological convergences and pedagogical resonances that allow a meaningful conceptual dialogue between the classical Islamic intellectual tradition and contemporary inquiry-based learning (Lourie & McPhail, 2024; Muhamad Dah et al., 2024).

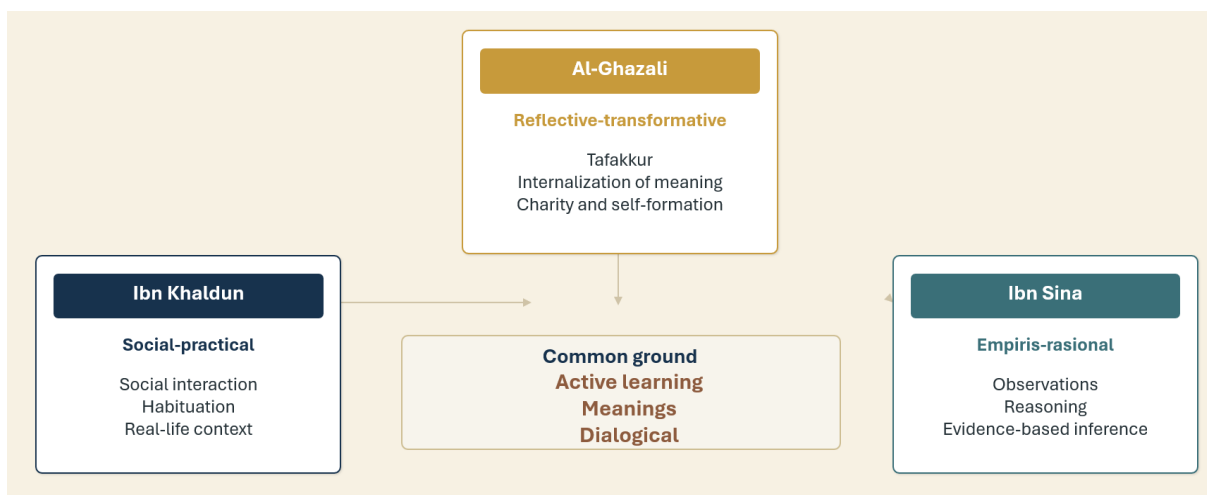
To strengthen the trustworthiness of interpretation, several measures were applied. First, interpretive claims were grounded in repeated reading and constant comparison across primary and secondary sources. Second, the researcher maintained an audit trail through systematic note-taking, categorization, thematic mapping, and documentation of analytical decisions from source identification to conceptual synthesis. Third, reflexivity was applied by recognizing that the interpretation of classical thought is inevitably shaped by contemporary academic perspectives; therefore, all claims were formulated cautiously and supported by relevant textual and scholarly evidence. Through these procedures, the study sought to produce a rigorous, transparent, and academically accountable conceptual analysis of the contribution of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina to the development of inquiry-oriented learning in contemporary educational discourse (Lim, 2024; Lyhne et al., 2025).

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **Results of Conceptual Studies**

The results of the analysis show that classical Islamic educational thought does not interpret learning experience as a single category, but as a distinct epistemological orientation in each thinker. In Ibn Khaldun, learning experience appears primarily as social engagement and contextual action; in Al-Ghazali, it appears as reflection, appreciation, and self-formation; while in Ibn Sina, it takes the form of observation, reasoning, and the processing of empirical experience into structured knowledge. Thus, the results of this study do not indicate that the three thinkers use the term inquiry-oriented learning literally, but rather show that there is a conceptual affinity between their ideas and the principles of active learning in contemporary pedagogy.

In general, the synthesis of these three thinkers shows that learning experience in the classical Islamic tradition does not stand on a single axis. Instead, it operates through three major orientations: social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational. These three orientations indicate that learning is not only the process of receiving information, but also the process of entering social reality, processing meaning inwardly, and weighing evidence through reason and observation. However, this synthesis should not be understood as a completely harmonious unity. Each orientation rests on a different epistemological emphasis: Ibn Khaldun foregrounds contextual and social participation, Al-Ghazali emphasizes inward reflection and ethical transformation, while Ibn Sina prioritizes observation and rational inference. Their convergence lies in the active character of learning, yet their differences reveal distinct assumptions about how knowledge is formed, validated, and directed. Figure 1 below shows the synthesis of the three orientations of learning experience in the thought of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina.



**Figure 1.** Synthesis of the Three Orientations of Learning Experience

Figure 1 confirms that the three thinkers have different emphases but converge at one important point: learning is active, meaningful, and dialogical. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes social experience and the praxis of life; Al-Ghazali emphasizes reflective experience and self-formation; while Ibn Sina places observation and reasoning at the core of knowledge formation. Thus, this synthesis strengthens the study’s results by showing that learning experiences in classical Islamic education are pluralistic and complementary. At the same time, this complementarity does not eliminate important epistemological differences among them. Ibn Khaldun foregrounds contextual and social participation in the formation of knowledge (Roji & Husarri, 2021; Suwartini, 2022), Al-Ghazali emphasizes inward reflection, ethical cultivation, and the internalization of meaning (Bensaid, 2021; Breidy, 2025; Erdoğan & Eryücel, 2024), while Ibn Sina prioritizes observation, rational inference, and the disciplined processing of empirical evidence (de Alencar et al., 2024; Fancy, 2023; Lorkowski & Pokorski, 2022). Therefore, the findings indicate that the three orientations are not only complementary, but also critically differentiated in the ways they locate, validate, and direct learning experience.

**Ibn Khaldun: social experience, action, and contextual learning**

The initial findings indicate that, in Ibn Khaldun's thought, the learning process is closely tied to the social environment, human interaction, and real-life contexts. Knowledge is not understood as something that grows apart from the social world, but develops through the involvement of learners with teachers, intellectual traditions, and the conditions of society in which it is practiced (Roji & Husarri, 2021; Suwartini, 2022). In this framework, the results of conceptual studies show that social experience is not only an educational background but also an important medium for the formation of intellectual habits, the strengthening of motivation to learn, and the deepening of students' understanding.

The second finding shows that learning in Ibn Khaldun's horizon demands a connection between knowledge and action. Nudin emphasized that the learning method in Ibn Khaldun's thought rested on systematic stages, repetition, and practice, while Amaliyah pointed out that Ibn Khaldun's learning tradition did not stop at verbal mastery alone, but was related to the formation of malakah through proxy, habituation, and deep understanding (Amaliyah et al., 2025; Nudin et al., 2022). Based on these two references, the study's results confirm that knowledge becomes solid when it is reinforced through practice and repetition, thereby forming malakah, or abilities that remain with learners.

The third finding suggests that Ibn Khaldun's learning orientation is contextual. This means that comprehension develops more strongly when learners interact with a real intellectual and social environment, rather than just with text. Narçiçek and Akay point out that Ibn Khaldun's thought places social life, collective solidarity, and the dynamics of civilization as important frameworks in understanding society. At the same time, Solikhah and Purnomo affirm that Ibn Khaldun's educational thought emphasizes the connection between the learning process, real experience, and the development of students' abilities in the context of their lives (Narçiçek & Akay, 2025; Solikhah & Purnomo, 2023). Therefore, in this analysis, Ibn Khaldun can be positioned as a figure who provides a conceptual basis for learning grounded in social experiences, action practices, and life contexts.

However, Ibn Khaldun's contribution also reveals an epistemological distinction from the other two thinkers. Compared with Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun gives greater priority to the formative role of social reality and habituated practice than to inward spiritual reflection (Bensaid, 2021; Suwartini, 2022). Compared with Ibn Sina, he places stronger emphasis on the social embeddedness of knowledge than on rational-empirical verification alone (Amin et al., 2023; de Alencar et al., 2024). This suggests that, in Ibn Khaldun's framework, learning gains its force primarily from participation in lived social contexts and practical engagement rather than from inward contemplation or evidential reasoning alone.

### **Al-Ghazali: reflective experience, internalization of meaning, and self-formation**

Subsequent findings suggest that in Al-Ghazali, learning experiences are primarily reflective and internal. Chanifah places spirituality as an important element in the framework of Islamic education, while Jenuri points out that Al-Ghazali's thought can be the basis for a learning model that responds to the spiritual emptiness of learners through the integration of intellectual, moral, and inner dimensions (Chanifah et al., 2021; Jenuri et al., 2025). Based on that, the results of this analysis confirm that learning within the Al-Ghazali horizon does not stop at the acquisition of information but must continue through appreciation, contemplation, and the formation of the learner's inner quality.

The second finding in Al-Ghazali shows that knowledge is formative, not merely informative. Breidy asserts that knowledge in Al-Ghazali's thought is related to *yaqīn*, ethical awareness, and its reflectivity in action, while Lahmar points out that in the Islamic educational tradition that refers to Al-Ghazali, true knowledge must be connected to charity, self-development, and the growth of the whole human being (Breidy, 2025; Lahmar, 2020). Thus, the results of this study show that according to Al-Ghazali, knowledge must be internalized and manifested in character formation, so that the learning experience becomes an experience that changes oneself, not just adding to the content of the mind.

The third finding confirms that the core of the learning experience in Al-Ghazali lies in the internalization of meaning. Bensaid places spiritual reflection as an important element in the formation of the Muslim self, while Erdoğan and Eryücel show that in Al-Ghazali's epistemology, knowledge is not only concerned with formal reason, but also with the dimensions of acceptance, awareness, and human inner orientation (Bensaid, 2021; Erdoğan & Eryücel, 2024). From this, the analysis shows that, according to Al-Ghazali, meaningful learning is learning that brings knowledge into the learner's consciousness, intention, and life orientation. Therefore, Al-Ghazali's contribution to this study is best read as the basis for a reflective, ethical, and transformative learning experience.

At the same time, this contribution introduces a significant conceptual tension. Compared with Ibn Sina's stronger emphasis on rational-empirical processing and Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on social praxis, Al-Ghazali gives primacy to moral-spiritual verification. In his framework, knowledge

is not complete merely because it is rationally coherent or socially practiced; it must also be inwardly appropriated and ethically transformative (Bensaid, 2021; Breidy, 2025; Erdoğan & Eryücel, 2024; Lahmar, 2020). As a result, meaningful learning in Al-Ghazali is measured not only by understanding or evidence, but by the moral and spiritual change it produces in the learner.

### **Ibn Sina: observations, reasoning, and empirical experience**

The first finding confirms that the core of Ibn Sina's learning experience lies in observation, reasoning, and processing of empirical experiences. Shoja et al. link Avicenna to the early roots of evidence-based approaches in the medical tradition, while de Alencar et al. show that Ibn Sina's intellectual legacy lies in the trajectory of philosophy and medical science that links observation to reason-based decisions (de Alencar et al., 2024; Shoja et al., 2011). From this, the analysis shows that, according to Ibn Sina, knowledge cannot be separated from careful observation and the use of reason to process evidence. Therefore, Ibn Sina's contribution to this study is best read as the basis for an observational, rational, and empirical learning experience.

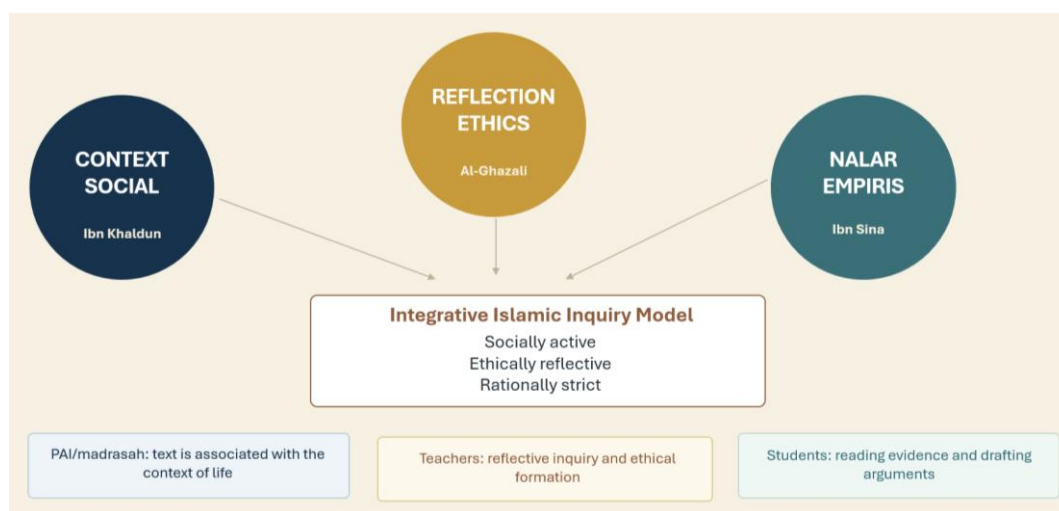
The second finding confirms that empirical experience in Ibn Sina's horizon does not stand alone, but must be processed through reason. Erdoğan and Eryücel show that in Ibn Sina's epistemology, knowledge is concerned with processes of reception, reasoning, and intellectual structure that go beyond mere sensory experience, while Fancy shows that the medieval Arab medical tradition shows the importance of directed observation of bodily phenomena as the foundation of systematically constructed knowledge (Erdoğan & Eryücel, 2024; Fancy, 2023). The analysis shows that sensory experience becomes knowledge only when it is interpreted, organized, and tested through intellectual processes. Therefore, Ibn Sina's contribution to this study is best understood as the basis for a learning experience that uses ratio as a guide to empirical experience.

The third finding confirms that Ibn Sina's contribution to the learning experience lies in his ability to make experience the basis of disciplined inferences. Lorkowski et al. show that the development of the medical tradition relied on the recording, observation, and systematization of experience as the basis for the formation of knowledge, while BaHammam et al. show that the legacy of the Arab-Islamic scientists of the golden age, including the Avicenna-influenced tradition, displayed the power of observation and rational analysis in explaining physiological phenomena in a structured manner (BaHammam, 2025; Lorkowski & Pokorski, 2022). From this, the analysis shows that, according to Ibn Sina, meaningful learning is learning that does not stop at the experience itself but processes it into knowledge that is organized, explainable, and accountable. Therefore, Ibn Sina's contribution to this study is best understood as the basis for an empirical-intellectual learning experience.

Nevertheless, this orientation also creates a clear tension with Al-Ghazali's framework. If Al-Ghazali places emphasis on inward and ethical transformation, Ibn Sina gives stronger weight to rational organization and evidential accountability (Bensaid, 2021; Breidy, 2025; de Alencar et al., 2024; Erdoğan & Eryücel, 2024). Likewise, compared with Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Sina places less emphasis on the social embeddedness of knowledge and more on the intellectual discipline by which experience is validated (Nudin et al., 2022; Roji & Husarri, 2021; Suwartini, 2022). This indicates that, in Ibn Sina's thought, inquiry is more closely linked to observation, explanation, and rational testing than to social habituation or inner moral cultivation.

Beyond their complementarity, the findings also reveal important epistemological tensions across the three orientations. Ibn Khaldun locates learning primarily in social involvement, habituation, and contextual practice (Amaliyah et al., 2025; Narçiçek & Akay, 2025), Al-Ghazali places it in inward reflection, internalization of meaning, and ethical self-formation (Bensaid, 2021;

Chanifah et al., 2021; Jenuri et al., 2025), while Ibn Sina grounds it in observation, reasoning, and the disciplined processing of empirical evidence (de Alencar et al., 2024; Fancy, 2023). These differences show that the three thinkers do not share a single educational center, a single criterion of knowledge validation, or a single learning purpose. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes competence through social experience and malakah (Amaliyah et al., 2025; Nudin et al., 2022), Al-Ghazali emphasizes moral-spiritual transformation (Breidy, 2025; Lahmar, 2020), and Ibn Sina emphasizes rationally ordered and accountable knowledge (BaHamman, 2025; Lorkowski & Pokorski, 2022). Therefore, their contribution lies not only in complementarity, but also in the productive tension they generate for contemporary inquiry-oriented learning.



**Figure 2.** Contributions to Contemporary Inquiry Learning

As seen in Figure 2, inquiry learning from an Islamic perspective can be formulated integratively: socially active, ethically reflective, and strictly rational. This formulation shows that the rereading of classical figures is not only historically important but also pedagogically valuable for the development of Islamic education today. In this context, learning is not enough if it is directed solely at mastery of the material; it needs to be linked to students' lives, the development of ethical awareness, and the ability to read evidence and formulate arguments rationally.

The overall findings confirm that the learning experience in classical Islamic educational thought manifests in three main orientations: social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational. However, these orientations should not be understood as a completely uniform synthesis. Rather, they represent different epistemological pathways that converge in rejecting passive learning while differing in the way educational experience is grounded, validated, and directed. Therefore, the overall contribution of these figures in this study is best understood not merely as a conceptual basis for active, meaningful, and dialogical learning, but also as a field of productive epistemological tension that enriches the theoretical foundation of inquiry-oriented learning in contemporary Islamic education.

**Table 2.** Conceptual Findings of Learning Experience in the Thought of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina

<b>Tokoh</b>	<b>Forms of Learning Experience</b>	<b>Main Process</b>	<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<b>Relevance to Inquiry</b>
Ibn Khaldun	Social-practical and contextual	Social interactions, habituation, actions, engagement in real-life contexts	Forming a growing understanding of social experiences and life practices	Supporting inquiry through active engagement of learners in real-world contexts, social experiences, and situation-based learning
Al-Ghazali	Reflective, internal, and transformative	Tafakkur, appreciation, internalization of meaning, linking knowledge with charity	Forming an ethical-spiritual quality of life, character, and orientation	Supporting inquiry through deep reflection, meaning searching, self-awareness, and internal evaluation of knowledge
Ibn Sina	Empirical-rational and observational	Observation, reasoning, processing of sensory experiences, and intellectual inference	Producing knowledge that is organized, rational, explainable, and accountable	Supporting inquiry through observation, reasoning, evidence analysis, and drawing conclusions based on empirical experience

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this conceptual study are consistent with several previous studies showing that Islamic educational thinking views learning as a process of self-formation that unites the intellectual, ethical, and practical dimensions. In the contemporary context, several studies affirm that such heritage remains relevant to underpin a pedagogy that places learners as active, reflective, and meaningfully engaged subjects in the learning process (Agbaria, 2024; Annur et al., 2026; Memon et al., 2024). In this context, this study expands on previous research because it not only confirms the general relevance of classical thought to modern Islamic education, but also shows that the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina can be read as one of the conceptual foundations for inquiry-oriented learning, especially in the aspects of dialogue, reflection, reasoning, and self-formation of students (Radino & Mubarak, 2025; Roji & Husarri, 2021). Thus, this discussion places the tradition of Islamic education not as a static legacy, but as an epistemological source that can be recontextualized to support a more dialogical and participatory pedagogy. However, these classical perspectives should not be accepted uncritically, since they emerged from historical settings different from modern educational realities. Therefore, their relevance lies not in offering ready-made models, but in providing insights that need critical adaptation.

In reading Ibn Khaldun, this study's findings align with several previous studies that affirm the close relationship among education, the social environment, and human capacity building. In this framework, the learning process cannot be separated from the needs of students, the usefulness of knowledge, and the formation of good human beings, so that education is always related to the reality of life and human development (Roji & Husarri, 2021; Suwartini, 2022). In addition, the learning

method according to Ibn Khaldun rests on gradual stages, repetition, the critique of forced memorization, and the rejection of coercive educational practices. This emphasis shows that *malakah* is not formed through verbal memorization alone, but rather through continuous practice, directed repetition, and gradual internalization of knowledge (Amaliyah et al., 2025; Nudin et al., 2022). Based on these findings, Ibn Khaldun's contribution to inquiry-oriented learning lies in social experience and praxis as the basis of learning. This orientation aligns with inquiry through active and contextual learning. However, it does not directly address digital learning, learner diversity, or personalized instruction. Therefore, his thought is better understood as a general orientation than as a complete model for contemporary inquiry learning.

On Al-Ghazali's side, the findings of this study align with previous studies affirming the importance of spirituality, reflection, and self-formation in Islamic education. In this perspective, education is not understood simply as a process of imparting knowledge, but as a way of forming a whole human being through the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Chanifah et al., 2021; Jenuri et al., 2025). In addition, spiritual reflection occupies an important position because the learning process in the Al-Ghazali horizon does not stop at the mastery of information, but is directed at the appreciation of meaning, self-evaluation, the formation of life orientation, the achievement of beliefs, and the reflection of knowledge in charity, so that knowledge acquires an ethical and transformative function for the learner (Bensaid, 2021; Breidy, 2025). Based on the overall findings, this study shows that Al-Ghazali's contribution to inquiry-oriented learning lies in its reflective and transformative dimensions. Thus, Al-Ghazali is relevant not only as a reference for educational spirituality but also as a conceptual basis for the learner's ethical, reflective, and personal inquiry. Nevertheless, Al-Ghazali's framework also has limitations in contemporary education. Its emphasis on inward moral and spiritual formation offers ethical depth, but it is less easily translated into measurable learning outcomes, inclusive classroom practice, and standardized assessment. Therefore, its relevance depends on critical reinterpretation rather than direct application.

As for Ibn Sina's context, this discussion is also consistent with previous research that positions him as an important figure in the tradition of observation, reasoning, and the systematic preparation of knowledge. Ibn Sina's intellectual legacy shows that knowledge is not born solely from abstract speculation, but from the interconnectedness between observation, empirical experience, and methodically arranged rational explanations (de Alencar et al., 2024; Fancy, 2023). This is strengthened by studies that affirm that the development of scientific traditions, especially in the medical field, relies on the recording, processing, and systematization of experiences, as well as on the power of observation and reasoning in explaining phenomena in a structured manner (BaHamam, 2025; Lorkowski & Pokorski, 2022). Based on these studies, this study places Ibn Sina as one of the important foundations for inquiry that relies on observation, evidence processing, and intellectual inference. Compared with previous research that tends to situate Ibn Sina primarily within the history of science and philosophy, this discussion emphasizes that Ibn Sina's observational-rational epistemology is also highly relevant as a pedagogical foundation. Thus, inquiry in Islamic education can be enriched by Ibn Sina's idea that sensory experience becomes knowledge only when it is processed through systematic, tested, and accountable reasoning. *ven so*, Ibn Sina's framework also has limits in relation to modern pedagogy. His strong focus on rationality and evidence supports disciplined inquiry, but it may underemphasize the affective, relational, and collaborative dimensions of learning. Therefore, his thought is valuable, but it needs to be complemented by broader pedagogical perspectives.

More broadly, the findings of this study show that previous research generally discussed the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina separately, or highlighted specific aspects of each figure, such as the purpose of education, spirituality, or the rationality of knowledge. This study is different because it brings the three together in a single analytical framework centered on the learning

experience. In this case, the resulting synthesis shows that learning in the classical Islamic educational tradition has three major orientations that complement one another: social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational. Such a synthesis aligns with the recent trend in Islamic education that seeks to integrate the intellectual, moral, and practical dimensions into a single, coherent pedagogical framework. Therefore, the main contribution of this study to previous research lies in demonstrating that the epistemological legacy of classical Islam is not only normatively relevant but also serves as a conceptual basis for a more distinctive inquiry-learning design in Islamic education. However, this synthesis should be treated critically. Although these three orientations appear complementary, their integration in contemporary practice is not always simple. Therefore, this study offers a conceptual framework rather than a final pedagogical formula.

The implications of this study show that inquiry in Islamic education should not be understood narrowly as a technique for questioning, observation, or problem-solving, but as a learning process that combines social engagement, ethical-spiritual reflection, and rational reasoning. In this framework, Ibn Khaldun provides the basis for social contextuality, Al-Ghazali for reflection and the internalization of meaning, and Ibn Sina for systematic observation and reasoning. Therefore, the main contribution of this study lies in the reformulation of inquiry as an integrative, authentic, and Islamic learning model rooted in the intellectual treasures of Islam itself. In practice, this implication requires a change in the design of learning so that students are not only technically active but also able to relate the text to reality, internalize meaning in depth, and reason critically about the experience. At the same time, teacher education and curriculum development need to shift the role of classical figures from mere historical material to a source of operational pedagogical frameworks, so that the intellectual heritage of Islam truly lives on in contemporary learning practices.

However, this study has several limitations. First, this research is conceptual, so all arguments are developed through the synthesis and interpretation of the literature rather than through direct field testing. As a result, this study offers a strong theoretical framework but has not empirically demonstrated how such social-practical, reflective-ethical, and empirical-rational integration works in the Classroom. These limitations are in line with the record in Islamic teacher education studies, which show that this subfield is still developing and requires more operational empirical evidence to connect conceptual foundations with real educational practice. Second, the analysis focuses on only three major figures, so although it provides depth of interpretation, the results are not representative of the entire spectrum of Islamic educational thought. Third, most of the latest literature on classical figures remains largely conceptual relevance studies, so the number of truly tested implementative models remains relatively limited. Therefore, the limitations of this study do not diminish its theoretical value; rather, they indicate that the space for future research remains wide open.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations can be proposed. First, the next research needs to move from the conceptual level to the empirical level by designing an inquiry learning model based on the thoughts of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina, then testing it on the subjects of Islamic Religious Education, philosophy of Islamic education, or Islamic studies in madrassas and universities. Second, subsequent studies need to develop evaluation instruments that not only measure cognitive achievement, but also students' reflective, argumentative, and ethical abilities. This recommendation is important because recent research shows that strengthening reflection and HOTS in Islamic education still faces implementation barriers at the praxis level. Third, future research needs to broaden the range of figures so that the construction of inquiry in Islamic education does not rely solely on three figures but also involves other relevant thinkers. Fourth, Islamic teacher education institutions can use the findings of this study as a starting basis for developing teacher training that integrates contextual learning, ethical reflection, and evidence-based reasoning into a single comprehensive pedagogical framework. With this step, the legacy of classical Islamic educational thought does not remain a historical discourse but truly lives on in contemporary learning practices.

Overall, the findings of the conceptual study are strongly consistent with previous research and also make a new contribution by synthesizing three orientations of learning experiences within the classical Islamic educational tradition. The synthesis shows that inquiry learning in Islamic education can be built on social-practical, reflective-transformative, and empirical-rational foundations simultaneously. Therefore, the main value of this study is not in the effort to attach the term inquiry literally to classical thinkers, but in its success in showing that the Islamic educational tradition has adequate epistemological sources to support active, meaningful, and reasoning learning. In the context of contemporary Islamic education, such readings are important as a bridge between the classical intellectual heritage and today's pedagogical innovations. Even so, the relevance of classical thought should remain critical rather than celebratory. Its value lies not in fully answering modern educational problems, but in offering insights that can be reinterpreted for contemporary pedagogy.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that learning experience in classical Islamic educational thought is represented through three distinct epistemological orientations in the thought of Ibn Khaldun, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Sina. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes social-practical and contextual learning, Al-Ghazali highlights reflective-transformative learning, and Ibn Sina foregrounds empirical-rational learning. These findings show that, although the three thinkers do not literally formulate inquiry-oriented learning, their ideas have a strong conceptual affinity with active, meaningful, and dialogical learning in contemporary Islamic education. At the same time, their relationship should not be understood as a fully uniform synthesis, since each thinker offers a different basis for how knowledge is formed, validated, and directed.

Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic educational discourse by redefining inquiry-oriented learning not merely as a technical method of questioning or problem-solving, but as an integrative epistemological framework that combines social engagement, ethical reflection, and rational inquiry. Practically, these findings imply that the development of Islamic Religious Education curricula should move beyond content transmission by integrating contextual experience, reflective meaning-making, and evidence-based reasoning into learning objectives, materials, and assessment. Likewise, inquiry-based learning design in Islamic education should be structured to encourage students not only to ask questions and investigate problems, but also to connect knowledge with social reality, moral reflection, and disciplined reasoning. Future research is needed to transform this conceptual framework into tested instructional models, curriculum prototypes, and assessment instruments, especially in madrasa, Islamic school, and higher education contexts.

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