



**INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL GOALS:
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES OF MUHAMMAD ABDUH,
AL-GHAZALI, AND IKHWAN AL-SAFA**

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic education continues to face tensions between intellectual development, spiritual formation, and moral education. Previous studies have largely examined Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa separately, leaving limited comparative and conceptual integration of their educational goals. This study examines their perspectives and reconstructs their convergent and complementary ideas into an integrated framework of Islamic educational goals. Using qualitative library research, the study analyzes primary and secondary texts through conceptual coding, comparison, categorization, and thematic synthesis. The analysis identifies five integrated principles: orientation toward flourishing in this world and the hereafter; integration of intellectual and spiritual development; moral formation; education as a pathway toward divine orientation; and holistic development of human potential. The study also recognizes epistemological differences among the three thinkers and treats integration as a complementary reconstruction rather than conceptual homogenization. The proposed framework contributes to Islamic educational philosophy by connecting rational development, spiritual purification, and philosophical integration within a coherent understanding of holistic education. It also offers conceptual implications for curriculum development, character education, and the reform of contemporary Islamic educational institutions

Keyword: *Islamic Educational Philosophy, Comparative Islamic Education; Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazal, Ikhwan al-Safa, Holistic Education*

A. Introduction

Education occupies a strategic position in shaping human beings as intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social subjects. Within the Islamic intellectual tradition, education is therefore not confined to the transmission of knowledge or the development of cognitive competence (Taufikin, 2021; Taufikin, Hariyadi, et al., 2026). It is also concerned with the cultivation of character, the refinement of the soul, and the orientation of human life toward meaningful flourishing. The ideal of Islamic education consequently extends beyond academic achievement (Taufikin, Nurhayati, et al., 2025). It seeks to develop human beings who are knowledgeable, morally responsible, spiritually conscious, and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in both individual and social life. However, contemporary educational development continues to reveal tensions between these dimensions. Intellectual achievement is often treated separately from moral formation, while scientific development may proceed without sufficient attention to spiritual meaning and ethical responsibility. Such tendencies have renewed the longstanding problem of dichotomy between knowledge and values and have strengthened the need for a more integrated understanding of educational goals.

The problem is particularly significant for contemporary Islamic education. Educational institutions are increasingly required to respond to scientific development, technological transformation, social change, and global competition while preserving their ethical and spiritual foundations (Taufikin, Badawi, et al., 2025). The challenge is therefore not simply how to add religious subjects to modern curricula or how to introduce scientific knowledge into religious institutions. More fundamentally, it concerns how different dimensions of human development can be placed within a coherent educational purpose. An integrated educational framework must address intellectual capacity without reducing human beings to rational actors. It must cultivate spirituality without neglecting critical thinking. It must promote moral formation without separating ethics from knowledge and social responsibility (Taufikin, Syarif, et al., 2026). This problem makes the philosophical foundations of Islamic educational goals particularly relevant to contemporary debates on holistic education and the integration of knowledge.

The Islamic intellectual tradition offers a rich body of thought for addressing this problem. Nevertheless, its educational ideas should not be treated as a single and homogeneous philosophical tradition. Muslim thinkers developed their educational perspectives within different historical, intellectual, and epistemological contexts. Their views therefore contain both convergences and differences. Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa provide an important case for examining this intellectual diversity (Iqbal, 2015; Taufikin, 2025a). Muhammad Abduh developed his educational thought in response to intellectual stagnation and the educational dualism experienced by Muslim societies. His perspective emphasizes the renewal

of thought and the balanced development of the mind and soul. Al-Ghazali, by contrast, places education within a strongly ethical and spiritual framework in which knowledge should contribute to moral refinement, purification of the soul, and proximity to Allah. Meanwhile, Ikhwan al-Safa presents a philosophical and integrative understanding of education that connects knowledge, moral formation, self-development, and the pursuit of higher spiritual understanding.

The selection of these three intellectual traditions is therefore based on their complementary, rather than identical, orientations. Muhammad Abduh represents a reformist orientation that gives particular importance to rational development and intellectual renewal. Al-Ghazali represents an ethical-spiritual orientation in which education is directed toward the perfection of character and *taqarrub ilā Allāh*. Ikhwan al-Safa represents a philosophical and encyclopedic tradition that seeks to connect different forms of knowledge with moral and spiritual development. These distinctions make the three perspectives particularly relevant to the contemporary problem of educational dichotomy. Their comparison allows intellectual development, spiritual formation, moral cultivation, and the integration of knowledge to be examined as interconnected, but not conceptually identical, dimensions of Islamic education. For this reason, the present study does not assume that the three thinkers belong to the same philosophical tradition. Instead, their differences constitute an important analytical basis for constructing a more comprehensive understanding of educational goals.

Previous studies have examined the educational thought of each figure separately. Studies of Muhammad Abduh have generally emphasized his contribution to the modernization and reform of Islamic education, particularly his efforts to overcome the separation between religious and general knowledge (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025). Research on Al-Ghazali has primarily focused on moral education, intellectual-spiritual balance, purification of the soul, and the relevance of his educational thought for contemporary Islamic education (Habibi et al., 2025; Sef & Bakar, 2024; Zamhariroh et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies of Ikhwan al-Safa have highlighted the philosophical foundations of education, the integration of knowledge, and the relationship between intellectual development and moral formation (Apriliani & Bakar, 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017). These studies provide an important foundation for understanding the distinctive educational orientations of the three thinkers.

However, the existing literature remains largely fragmented. Most studies focus on one thinker or examine their educational ideas descriptively. Limited attention has been given to systematically comparing their philosophical foundations, identifying both their conceptual convergences and tensions, and reconstructing their complementary ideas into an integrated framework of Islamic educational goals. The absence of such analysis is important because integration should not be understood as merely combining several concepts or emphasizing similarities

among different thinkers. A meaningful conceptual integration requires a systematic process of identifying shared principles, examining philosophical differences, and reconstructing complementary elements without eliminating the epistemological distinctiveness of each perspective. In this study, conceptual integration is therefore understood as a comparative and reconstructive process through which convergent educational principles and complementary conceptual elements are organized into a coherent theoretical framework.

This study addresses this gap by examining the educational goals proposed by Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa through a comparative-integrative perspective. The study asks three questions: (1) How does each thinker conceptualize the goals of Islamic education? (2) What conceptual convergences and differences emerge from their educational philosophies? and (3) How can their complementary perspectives be reconstructed into an integrated framework of Islamic educational goals? The novelty of this study does not lie simply in placing three prominent Muslim thinkers within one discussion. Its contribution lies in developing a comparative-integrative analytical framework that distinguishes their philosophical orientations, identifies conceptual convergences and tensions, and reconstructs complementary principles into a coherent model of holistic Islamic education. The proposed framework is expected to contribute to contemporary discussions of Islamic educational philosophy by connecting rational development, spiritual formation, moral cultivation, and holistic human development within a single conceptual construction.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative library research design using comparative conceptual analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Taufikin, 2025b). The primary sources include selected classical works associated with Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa, while secondary sources consist of scholarly literature relevant to Islamic educational philosophy and the educational thought of the three figures. Documents were selected based on their conceptual relevance to educational goals, knowledge, human development, morality, spirituality, and the relationship between intellectual and religious dimensions.

The analysis was conducted through concept identification, coding, categorization, comparison, and thematic synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2025). First, key concepts related to educational goals were identified in the selected texts. Second, these concepts were coded and categorized according to major analytical dimensions, including knowledge, human nature, rationality, spirituality, morality, and educational outcomes. Third, the perspectives of the three thinkers were systematically compared to identify conceptual convergences and differences. Finally, complementary concepts were reconstructed into an integrated framework consisting of five interconnected principles of Islamic educational goals.

B. Educational Goals in the Perspectives of Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa

The analysis indicates that Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa developed distinctive conceptions of Islamic educational goals. Their differences reflect particular intellectual orientations and historical concerns. Nevertheless, all three regard education as a process that extends beyond the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. Education is ultimately concerned with the formation and transformation of the human person. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes the balanced development of the intellect and the soul. Al-Ghazali places moral and spiritual perfection at the center of education. Ikhwan al-Safa understands education as an integrated process of intellectual, moral, and spiritual refinement. These different emphases demonstrate the multidimensional character of educational goals within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Muhammad Abduh conceptualizes education within the broader project of Islamic intellectual renewal. His educational thought emerged partly as a response to the dualistic condition of education in which modern institutions emphasized intellectual and technical knowledge while traditional institutions concentrated primarily on religious learning. This separation, in Abduh's perspective, produced an imbalance in human development. Modern education risked weakening religious and moral consciousness, whereas traditional education could contribute to intellectual stagnation when it discouraged critical inquiry and openness to changing knowledge. Education, therefore, needed to overcome the separation between intellectual and spiritual development (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025; Iqbal, 2015; Taufikin, 2025a).

The central purpose of education according to Abduh is to educate the mind and the soul and develop both to the fullest extent of human capacity so that individuals may attain happiness in this world and the hereafter. This formulation demonstrates that intellectual development and spiritual formation are not competing educational purposes. They are complementary dimensions of human development. The cultivation of reason enables learners to think critically, examine problems, and move beyond intellectual rigidity and *taqlīd*. At the same time, education should cultivate the soul so that intellectual development remains connected with moral responsibility and religious consciousness (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025).

Abduh's emphasis on rational development should therefore not be interpreted as an endorsement of secular rationalism. Reason functions within a broader educational orientation that includes moral and spiritual development. His educational reform sought to reconnect intellectual inquiry with Islamic values and to challenge the assumption that scientific and religious knowledge necessarily belong to separate educational domains. Contemporary interpretations of Abduh's thought similarly identify intellectual renewal, the harmonization of religious and

general knowledge, and the balanced development of human capacities as central features of his educational philosophy (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Asifa, 2018).

The educational outcome envisioned by Abduh is consequently a human being who possesses intellectual independence and spiritual integrity. Intellectual independence is necessary for responding critically to social and historical change, while spiritual integrity provides an ethical orientation for the use of knowledge. Education should therefore produce individuals who are able to think, judge, and act responsibly rather than merely reproduce inherited knowledge. In this sense, Abduh's educational philosophy combines reformist rationality with moral and spiritual responsibility. His conception of educational goals can be understood as an effort to establish a dynamic balance between intellectual progress and the cultivation of the soul.

Al-Ghazali conceptualizes the purpose of education through a stronger ethical and spiritual orientation. In his educational philosophy, knowledge possesses intrinsic importance, but its educational value cannot be separated from its consequences for human conduct and spiritual development. Education should not merely increase intellectual competence. It should contribute to the purification of the soul, the formation of noble character, and the proper orientation of human life toward Allah. Accordingly, educational success cannot be measured exclusively through the amount of knowledge acquired by learners (Griffel, 2009; Habibi et al., 2025; Sef & Bakar, 2024).

The purpose of education in Al-Ghazali's thought is closely associated with the formation of the complete or perfected human being, commonly expressed through the ideal of *insān kāmil*. This perfection involves intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. However, intellectual development does not constitute an autonomous or final objective. Knowledge must be translated into ethical conduct and contribute to the refinement of the human self. Recent interpretations of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy similarly emphasize the integration of intellect, heart, and behavior, demonstrating that knowledge should lead to moral transformation rather than remain at the level of abstract understanding (Habibi et al., 2025; Taufikin, 2025a).

A central orientation of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy is *taqarrub ilā Allāh*, or the movement toward closeness to Allah. This transcendent orientation gives his conception of education a distinctive normative foundation. Knowledge is valuable when it supports human beings in recognizing their moral and spiritual responsibilities and contributes to the purification of the soul. Al-Ghazali therefore places moral formation at the center of the educational process. Education should cultivate humility, self-discipline, ethical awareness, and noble character because knowledge that does not influence human conduct remains incomplete in relation to its ultimate purpose (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Wahyuddin, 2018).

Al-Ghazali also relates educational goals to happiness in both worldly and eternal life. Nevertheless, the relationship between these two dimensions is not symmetrical in the same manner as material and spiritual objectives in modern educational thought. Worldly life remains important, but it is situated within a broader understanding of human existence that ultimately directs individuals toward enduring happiness in the hereafter. Education should therefore prepare human beings to live responsibly in the world while ensuring that worldly knowledge and achievement do not become detached from their ethical and spiritual purpose (Habibi et al., 2025; Taufikin, 2025a; Wahyuddin, 2018).

From this perspective, Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy is transformative rather than merely informative. Education should transform knowledge into character and character into spiritually meaningful action. Its goal is not simply the production of knowledgeable individuals, but the formation of persons whose intellectual capacities are integrated with noble character and spiritual consciousness. The educational process thus involves three interconnected dimensions: the acquisition of knowledge, the refinement of moral character, and the orientation of human life toward *taqarrub ilā Allāh*. Through these dimensions, education becomes a process of human perfection rather than a mechanism for intellectual accumulation alone.

Ikhwan al-Safa presents a broader philosophical conception of educational goals through the integration of different forms and levels of knowledge. Their educational thought is closely associated with the encyclopedic intellectual project represented in the *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Safā'*. Within this tradition, education is not confined to mastery of isolated disciplines. Knowledge, moral development, philosophical reflection, and spiritual refinement are interconnected elements in the gradual formation of the human person. Education consequently serves as a process through which human potential is cultivated and the soul is prepared for higher levels of understanding (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Rajab, 2017).

The educational goals of Ikhwan al-Safa include intellectual development, moral formation, and the refinement of the soul. Knowledge is expected to assist human beings in understanding themselves, the world, and their relationship with the divine. This orientation reflects the religious-rational character of their educational philosophy. Rational inquiry is not separated from spiritual concerns, while religious orientation does not require the rejection of philosophical knowledge. Instead, different branches of knowledge may contribute to the gradual perfection of the human person when they are directed toward a meaningful moral and spiritual purpose (Apriliani & Bakar, 2024; Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Rajab, 2017).

A distinctive feature of Ikhwan al-Safa's educational philosophy is its integrative epistemological orientation. Education should enable learners to recognize the interconnectedness of knowledge rather than treating rational,

ethical, and spiritual domains as isolated categories. Intellectual development is therefore inseparable from moral cultivation. Knowledge should not only increase understanding but also contribute to the improvement of human character and conduct. This perspective places education within a comprehensive process of self-development in which intellectual competence is expected to generate moral responsibility and deeper awareness of the meaning of human existence (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Taufikin, 2025a).

The purpose of education also possesses a strong spiritual orientation. The development of knowledge and character ultimately supports the pursuit of *maʿrifat Allāh*, understood as deeper knowledge and recognition of Allah. Education begins with the cultivation of human capacities but does not end with intellectual achievement. Rational understanding, moral development, and spiritual consciousness constitute interconnected stages in the refinement of the human person. In this respect, the ideal educational outcome is a knowledgeable and morally developed individual whose intellectual growth supports spiritual awareness and constructive participation in social life (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017).

The educational philosophy of Ikhwan al-Safa therefore differs from a purely cognitive understanding of learning. The acquisition of knowledge must be connected with the formation of character and the refinement of the soul. Their perspective also demonstrates that spirituality does not necessarily require the marginalization of rational inquiry. Instead, rational and philosophical knowledge may become part of the human journey toward deeper self-understanding and divine recognition. The goal of education is consequently holistic, encompassing the development of intellect, morality, spirituality, and the broader potential of the human person.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the three thinkers conceptualize Islamic educational goals through different primary orientations. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes intellectual renewal and the balanced cultivation of mind and soul. Al-Ghazali places moral perfection, purification of the soul, and *taqarrub ilā Allāh* at the center of education. Ikhwan al-Safa emphasizes the philosophical integration of knowledge, moral formation, and spiritual refinement leading toward *maʿrifat Allāh*. Despite these differences, all three perspectives reject the reduction of education to intellectual achievement alone. Education is consistently understood as a process of developing and transforming the human person.

At this stage, however, the three perspectives should not be treated as a single and unified educational theory. Their different understandings of rationality, spirituality, knowledge, and human perfection require further comparative examination. The next section therefore analyzes their conceptual convergences and differences in order to identify both the common foundations and the

philosophical tensions that must be considered before constructing an integrated framework of Islamic educational goals.

C. Conceptual Convergences and Differences in the Educational Philosophies of Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa

The comparative analysis reveals substantial conceptual convergences among Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa. At the same time, their educational philosophies differ significantly in epistemological priorities, the position of rationality, the relationship between knowledge and spirituality, and the pathways through which human perfection is achieved. These findings confirm that the three thinkers should not be treated as representatives of a single and homogeneous philosophical tradition. Rather, they represent different intellectual orientations that converge around several fundamental concerns of Islamic education while maintaining distinct conceptual foundations.

The first major convergence concerns their rejection of a narrow understanding of education as the acquisition and transmission of knowledge alone. All three perspectives understand education as a broader process of human formation. Muhammad Abduh connects education with the balanced development of the intellect and the soul, while Al-Ghazali emphasizes the transformation of knowledge into moral character and spiritual refinement. Ikhwan al-Safa similarly understands education as a comprehensive process involving intellectual development, moral cultivation, and the refinement of the soul (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Bolandhematan, 2019; Rajab, 2017). Education, therefore, is not merely concerned with what learners know but also with the kind of persons they become. This shared orientation supports a multidimensional conception of Islamic education in which cognitive, moral, and spiritual development are interconnected.

A second convergence lies in the relationship between knowledge and ethical responsibility. Muhammad Abduh does not treat intellectual development as an autonomous objective detached from moral and religious values. The cultivation of reason should enable human beings to exercise responsible judgment and respond constructively to social change (Asifa, 2018; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025). Al-Ghazali develops a stronger ethical formulation by emphasizing that knowledge should influence conduct and contribute to the purification and discipline of the self. Knowledge that does not produce moral transformation remains incomplete in relation to its educational purpose (Habibi et al., 2025; Wahyuddin, 2018). Ikhwan al-Safa likewise associates knowledge with the cultivation of virtue and the refinement of human character, reflecting their broader religious-rational educational orientation (Apriliani & Bakar, 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017). Thus, despite different epistemological assumptions, the three perspectives reject the separation between knowing and becoming. Knowledge should contribute to the moral transformation of the learner.

The third convergence concerns the recognition of spirituality as an essential dimension of human development. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes the development of the soul alongside the cultivation of reason, particularly as a response to educational dualism and intellectual stagnation (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Taufikin, 2025a). Al-Ghazali gives spirituality a more central position by directing education toward the purification of the soul and *taqarrub ilā Allāh* (Bolandhematan, 2019; Griffel, 2009; Habibi et al., 2025). Ikhwan al-Safa connects intellectual development with the refinement of the soul and the pursuit of *maʿrifat Allāh*, thereby integrating rational inquiry with spiritual understanding (Rajab, 2017). Their convergence, therefore, does not lie in an identical understanding of spirituality. Rather, all three reject the assumption that education can be considered complete when it remains disconnected from a transcendent orientation.

The three thinkers also converge in their multidimensional understanding of human potential. Their educational philosophies reject the reduction of human beings to purely rational or material beings. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes the cultivation of both intellectual and spiritual capacities. Al-Ghazali directs education toward human perfection through the integration of knowledge, morality, and spiritual discipline. Ikhwan al-Safa views human development as a gradual process involving the actualization of intellectual, moral, and spiritual potential (Hasibuan et al., 2025). This convergence reflects a shared anthropological assumption that human beings possess multiple interconnected capacities requiring systematic cultivation through education.

Another important convergence concerns their rejection of purely materialistic educational goals. Muhammad Abduh explicitly relates education to happiness in both worldly and eternal life. Al-Ghazali recognizes the importance of worldly existence but places it within a broader orientation toward enduring happiness in the hereafter. Similarly, Ikhwan al-Safa associates knowledge and education with moral development, spiritual refinement, and higher human fulfillment (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Asifa, 2018; Taufikin, 2025a). Educational success, from these perspectives, cannot therefore be reduced to occupational advancement, economic achievement, or intellectual performance. Education should enable human beings to live responsibly in the world while remaining conscious of a higher moral and spiritual purpose.

Despite these conceptual convergences, substantial differences emerge regarding the status of rationality. Muhammad Abduh gives rational development a particularly prominent position because his educational philosophy is closely connected with intellectual renewal and the critique of stagnation and *taqlīd*. Reason functions as an important instrument for examining reality, renewing thought, and enabling Muslims to respond to changing social conditions (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025; Iqbal, 2015). Al-Ghazali does not reject rationality, but he places intellectual inquiry within a stronger ethical and spiritual

hierarchy. Knowledge and reason should serve the moral and spiritual transformation of human beings rather than becoming autonomous measures of educational success (Habibi et al., 2025; Iqbal, 2015; Taufikin, 2025a). Ikhwan al-Safa adopts a more explicitly integrative epistemological orientation in which reason forms an important component of knowledge alongside sensory experience, philosophical reflection, revelation, and spiritual understanding (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017). Thus, the difference lies not in whether reason is valuable, but in how reason is positioned within the hierarchy and purpose of education.

A second difference concerns the primary orientation from which each thinker approaches educational goals. Muhammad Abduh begins from the problem of intellectual and educational reform. His concern is strongly connected with overcoming intellectual stagnation and the dualism between religious and modern knowledge. Educational development is therefore closely associated with renewal, critical reasoning, and the reconstruction of Muslim intellectual life (Asifa, 2018). Al-Ghazali begins from the ethical and spiritual transformation of the individual. His educational philosophy places the purification of the soul and the cultivation of noble character at the center of human development (Bolandhematan, 2019; Sef & Bakar, 2024). Ikhwan al-Safa begins from a philosophical concern with the organization and integration of knowledge. Their educational thought seeks to connect diverse forms of knowledge within a broader process of moral and spiritual refinement (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017). Consequently, Abduh's orientation is predominantly reformist-rational, Al-Ghazali's is ethical-spiritual, and Ikhwan al-Safa's is philosophical-integrative.

Their conceptions of the relationship between knowledge and spirituality also differ. Muhammad Abduh primarily seeks to prevent the separation of rational development from religious and moral values. His position can therefore be understood as an effort to maintain balance between intellectual progress and spiritual consciousness (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019). Al-Ghazali assigns spirituality a more foundational normative role. Knowledge is ultimately evaluated according to its capacity to improve human conduct and direct the individual toward *taqarrub ilā Allāh* (Griffel, 2009; Habibi et al., 2025).

Ikhwan al-Safa, in contrast, presents knowledge itself as a potential pathway toward deeper self-understanding and divine recognition. Their synthesis of reason, revelation, and spirituality reflects a philosophical effort to demonstrate the interconnectedness of different modes of knowing (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021). The three thinkers therefore support intellectual-spiritual integration, but they construct that integration through different conceptual pathways.

Differences also emerge in their understanding of the pathway toward human perfection. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes intellectual awakening and the balanced development of the mind and soul. Al-Ghazali emphasizes moral discipline, purification of the self, and spiritual proximity to Allah. Ikhwan al-Safa emphasizes

the gradual refinement of human potential through the integration of knowledge, philosophical reflection, moral development, and spiritual awareness (Hasibuan et al., 2025). These approaches are complementary in certain respects, but they cannot be completely collapsed into a single conceptual position. Each thinker retains a distinctive understanding of what should be given priority in the educational process.

Overall, the comparative findings demonstrate that the principal convergences among the three thinkers concern the multidimensional development of human beings, the ethical responsibility of knowledge, the centrality of moral formation, the importance of spiritual orientation, and the rejection of purely materialistic educational goals. Their principal differences concern epistemological priorities, the status of rationality, the normative role of spirituality, and the pathway toward human perfection. These differences should not be treated as obstacles to integration. Instead, they constitute the critical foundation for a more rigorous conceptual synthesis. The next section therefore examines how convergent principles and complementary differences can be reconstructed into an integrated framework of Islamic educational goals without eliminating the distinctive philosophical identity of Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa.

D. Reconstructing an Integrated Framework of Islamic Educational Goals

The preceding analysis demonstrates that Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa cannot be reduced to a single philosophical position. Their educational philosophies emerge from different epistemological priorities and intellectual concerns. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes intellectual renewal and the balanced development of reason and the soul. Al-Ghazali places moral purification and spiritual proximity to Allah at the center of education. Ikhwan al-Safa emphasizes the integration of diverse forms of knowledge as part of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual refinement of human beings (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Asifa, 2018; Rajab, 2017). Nevertheless, the comparative findings also reveal several complementary principles that make conceptual reconstruction possible.

In this study, integration does not mean eliminating philosophical differences or combining the three perspectives into an artificial uniformity. Rather, integration refers to a process of complementary reconstruction. Shared educational concerns are identified, conceptual differences are retained, and complementary elements are organized into a broader framework. This approach is important because Muhammad Abduh's emphasis on rational renewal, Al-Ghazali's emphasis on ethical-spiritual transformation, and Ikhwan al-Safa's emphasis on epistemological integration contribute different dimensions to the understanding of human development. Their differences therefore function not only as conceptual boundaries but also as resources for constructing a more comprehensive

framework of Islamic educational goals (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Hasibuan et al., 2025).

The first reconstructed principle is flourishing in this world and the hereafter. The three perspectives reject an understanding of education that limits human success to material achievement or intellectual performance. Muhammad Abduh explicitly associates education with the development of human capacities for happiness in both worldly and eternal life. His concern with intellectual renewal is therefore connected with the practical responsibilities of human beings in changing social conditions while remaining grounded in religious and moral values (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025). Al-Ghazali similarly recognizes the importance of worldly life but places it within a broader orientation toward enduring happiness and spiritual fulfillment in the hereafter (Sef & Bakar, 2024; Zamhariroh et al., 2024). Ikhwan al-Safa connects intellectual development with moral refinement and higher spiritual understanding, thereby extending educational purposes beyond immediate worldly utility (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021; Rajab, 2017). Together, these perspectives support an understanding of education that prepares human beings for responsible worldly life while orienting their development toward transcendent fulfillment.

The second principle is the integration of intellectual and spiritual development. This principle emerges from the shared rejection of the separation between knowledge and the deeper formation of the human person. Muhammad Abduh provides an important foundation through his effort to overcome educational dualism and reconnect rational inquiry with spiritual and moral development ((Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Asifa, 2018). Al-Ghazali contributes a normative dimension by emphasizing that knowledge should remain connected with the purification of the soul and the proper orientation of human life (Habibi et al., 2025). Ikhwan al-Safa broadens this relationship through an integrative understanding of knowledge in which rational inquiry, philosophical reflection, and spiritual awareness are interconnected rather than mutually exclusive (Apriliani & Bakar, 2024; Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021). The integrated principle therefore does not position spirituality as an alternative to intellectual development. Instead, intellectual growth and spiritual awareness are understood as mutually reinforcing dimensions of human formation.

The third principle is moral formation as the transformative function of education. The comparative analysis shows that knowledge is consistently connected with responsibility for all three thinkers, although this relationship receives different levels of emphasis. Al-Ghazali provides the strongest ethical formulation by insisting that knowledge should contribute to noble character, self-discipline, and the purification of the soul (Sef & Bakar, 2024; Zamhariroh et al., 2024). Muhammad Abduh complements this perspective by associating intellectual development with responsible judgment and constructive engagement with social

life (Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025; Gojali et al., 2024; Naaman, 2017). Ikhwan al-Safa similarly links intellectual development with virtue and the refinement of human character (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Rajab, 2017). The resulting synthesis therefore positions morality not as a supplementary educational subject but as a transformative criterion of knowledge. Education is incomplete when intellectual competence does not influence the quality of human conduct.

The fourth principle is divine orientation as the ultimate horizon of education. Although the three thinkers differ in the degree to which spirituality functions as an immediate educational priority, their philosophies reject a purely immanent understanding of human development. In Al-Ghazali's perspective, *taqarrub ilā Allāh* provides the most explicit ultimate orientation of education (Habibi et al., 2025; Mardonov et al., 2025). Ikhwan al-Safa similarly directs the refinement of knowledge and the soul toward *maʿrifat Allāh* (Arrovia & Yuliati, 2021). Muhammad Abduh's emphasis on the development of the soul and the integration of rationality with religious values also indicates that intellectual development should remain connected with a higher spiritual purpose (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Firdaus & Hamzah, 2025). This principle does not diminish the importance of worldly knowledge or social responsibility. Instead, divine orientation provides an ethical and existential horizon within which intellectual, moral, and social development acquire deeper meaning.

The fifth principle is holistic human development. This principle represents the broadest synthesis of the three perspectives. Human beings possess intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social capacities that cannot be adequately developed through fragmented educational processes. Muhammad Abduh contributes the importance of intellectual independence and the balanced cultivation of mind and soul. Al-Ghazali contributes the ethical and spiritual transformation of the individual. Ikhwan al-Safa contributes an integrative conception of knowledge and the gradual actualization of diverse human potentials (Arwen & Kurniyati, 2019; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Jenuri et al., 2025; Taufikin, 2025a). The resulting framework therefore conceptualizes education as the coordinated development of multiple dimensions of human existence rather than the isolated cultivation of academic competence.

These five principles are analytically interconnected. Flourishing in this world and the hereafter provides the broad outcome of education. Intellectual-spiritual integration describes the relationship between two central dimensions of human development. Moral formation ensures that knowledge produces responsible action. Divine orientation provides the ultimate ethical and transcendent horizon. Holistic human development represents the comprehensive process through which these dimensions are cultivated. The framework should therefore not be interpreted as a list of independent educational objectives. It represents a relational structure in which each principle supports and gives meaning to the others.

The proposed framework also has implications for contemporary Islamic education. Educational institutions frequently confront the challenge of balancing academic achievement, scientific development, character education, religious formation, and social responsibility. The present synthesis suggests that these dimensions should not be organized as competing educational priorities. Rational and scientific development can be connected with ethical responsibility. Moral education can be integrated into the broader learning process rather than confined to particular subjects. Spiritual formation can provide orientation without restricting critical inquiry. This understanding is particularly relevant to contemporary discussions concerning curriculum integration and holistic educational development (Apriliani & Bakar, 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025).

The theoretical contribution of this reconstruction lies in moving beyond the simple juxtaposition of three Muslim thinkers. The framework distinguishes their philosophical differences while identifying their complementary contributions. Muhammad Abduh contributes a reformist-rational dimension, Al-Ghazali contributes an ethical-spiritual dimension, and Ikhwan al-Safa contributes a philosophical-integrative dimension. The integration of these contributions produces a multidimensional conception of Islamic educational goals that connects rational development, moral formation, spiritual orientation, and comprehensive human flourishing. However, this framework remains conceptual and is derived from textual and philosophical analysis. Its application within curricula, institutions, and educational practices requires further empirical investigation. Future research may therefore examine how these five principles can be operationalized and evaluated within contemporary Islamic educational settings.

E. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Muhammad Abduh, Al-Ghazali, and Ikhwan al-Safa conceptualize the goals of Islamic education through distinct but complementary philosophical orientations. Muhammad Abduh emphasizes intellectual renewal and the balanced development of the mind and soul. Al-Ghazali places moral formation, purification of the soul, and *taqarrub ilā Allāh* at the center of education. Ikhwan al-Safa emphasizes the integration of knowledge, moral cultivation, and spiritual refinement as pathways toward the development of human potential and *maʿrifat Allāh*. Despite these differences, the three perspectives converge in rejecting a purely cognitive and materialistic understanding of education. They consistently position knowledge within a broader process of moral, spiritual, and human development. The comparative analysis further reveals that their principal differences concern epistemological priorities, the position of rationality, the normative role of spirituality, and the pathways toward human perfection. These differences should not be eliminated through conceptual homogenization. Instead, they provide complementary resources for reconstructing

a broader understanding of Islamic educational goals. Based on this reconstruction, the study proposes five interconnected principles: flourishing in this world and the hereafter, the integration of intellectual and spiritual development, moral formation, divine orientation, and holistic human development.

The theoretical contribution of this study therefore lies in moving beyond the separate examination of individual Muslim thinkers toward a comparative-integrative framework that preserves their philosophical distinctiveness while identifying complementary dimensions of Islamic education. The proposed framework has important implications for contemporary Islamic education, particularly for curriculum development, character education, and efforts to overcome the fragmentation between intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions of learning. Education should not treat scientific and rational development, ethical responsibility, and spiritual formation as competing objectives. Rather, these dimensions should be understood as interconnected elements in the development of the whole person. Nevertheless, this study is conceptual and based on textual and comparative analysis. Future research should therefore examine how the proposed five principles can be operationalized within curricula and educational institutions and empirically investigate their relevance across different contemporary Islamic educational contexts.

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