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Education as the Foundation of Human Development: Ibn Sina's Educational Thought and Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education

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Abstract: *This article discusses Ibn Sina's educational thought and its implications for contemporary Islamic education. Ibn Sina, who has long been recognised as a philosopher and an expert in medicine, is also found to have developed significant ideas concerning the concept of Islamic education. His educational thought provides constructive and solution-oriented contributions to current educational challenges. The research method employed in this study is descriptive qualitative, aiming to explain and understand Ibn Sina's educational thought in depth. The findings reveal several important aspects. First, according to Ibn Sina, the objectives of education are directed toward the development of the physical, intellectual, and moral dimensions of the learner. Second, the curriculum, as conceptualised by Ibn Sina, may be classified according to age groups: ages 3–5 years, 6–14 years, and 14 years and above. Third, the teaching methods proposed by Ibn Sina include* talqin *(guided instruction), demonstration, habituation and exemplary modelling, discussion, apprenticeship, assignments, as well as* targhib *(encouragement) and* tarhib *(discouragement). Finally, Ibn Sina emphasised the character of an ideal educator, who should be religious, intelligent, competent in teaching children, capable of cultivating moral education, cheerful in demeanour, calm in appearance, polite, courteous, clean, pure, and free from bullying or frivolous behaviour in front of students.*

Keyword: *Ibn Sina, Islamic Education, Contemporary Education, Revitalisation*

INTRODUCTION

Education constitutes one of the most essential pillars in human life. It serves as a determining factor and guiding force for an individual's future and life direction (Mensah, 2019). One's talents and competencies can be cultivated and refined through educational processes. Education is also commonly regarded as a key indicator of an individual's quality (Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012). Humans inherently require education, as it enables the development of personal potential and the formation of character through structured learning processes or other socially recognised and accepted means (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). At the core of educational activity lies the interaction between educators and learners, aimed at achieving the intended educational objectives. This interaction may take place within the family setting, in formal educational institutions, or within the broader community context (Bronfenbrenner, 2013).

According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, education is the guidance for the growth and development of a child that begins from an early age (Sani et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Muhammad Hatta emphasised that education must be accessible to everyone, both men and women (Hatta, 2019). This means that education is an effort to guide the natural potential within each child so that they can grow and develop both as individuals and as members of society, capable of attaining well-being and happiness in their lives.

In Islam, education is an endeavour aimed at creating and shaping individuals who are virtuous and who live meaningful lives in this world, while also preparing them for the hereafter (Murshidi et al., 2024). The foundation of education lies in the transmission of values, knowledge, and resilience from the older generation to the younger one, enabling them to survive and thrive. To address these challenges, Islamic education bears the responsibility of guiding, training, developing, and directing the skills and potential of children so that they may function in the best possible manner (Uyuni & Adnan, 2020).

Education is a conscious effort undertaken to shape the character of learners so that they possess good personality traits and noble morals (*akhlaq al-karimah*) in accordance with religious values. Education is one of the most essential keys in human life. In the context and scope of a nation's life, education plays a highly important and strategic role in ensuring the sustainability and development of that nation. It is through education that all aspects of human life can be enlightened. Education must be able to prepare citizens to face their future (Idris, 2017). Fundamentally, education is a right for everyone, regardless of social status or background. Education upholds justice for all and

does not display or promote any form of discrimination; on the contrary, it embodies egalitarian values. This principle represents both a goal and a form of appreciation upheld in Islam, as Islamic education is, in essence, aimed at raising awareness about the concept of lifelong learning (Mahmudulhassan et al., 2024).

Discussions on education are always closely linked to educational policies. Today's educational policies cannot be separated from the brilliant ideas of past scholars, thinkers, practitioners, and prominent educational figures. One such figure is Ibn Sina, a renowned philosopher who is also widely recognised for his expertise in the field of medicine. He is particularly well known for his concept of cosmological philosophy, especially his theory of *emanation* (Taufiqurrahman & Hambali, 2021). However, several studies conducted by later generations on his thoughts have revealed his ideas regarding the concept of Islamic education. As a result, Ibn Sina is also recognised as one of the prominent figures in Islamic education, with brilliant educational insights. Islamic education helps learners understand sociological conditions and unity. In this context, Ibn Sina stated that a being can become significant either through itself or through others (Swanstrom, 2017).

The thought of Ibn Sina on Islamic education has indeed been widely studied by previous researchers, as written by (Jayadi, 2024; Karim et al., 2024; Sabarudin et al., 2024;Putri & Nurhuda, 2023; Roji & El Husarri, 2021) on the formulation and concept of Islamic education proposed by Ibn Sina. However, these studies have not yet discussed in detail the ideas from concept to implementation. Therefore, this article will examine Ibn Sina's educational thought, including objectives, curriculum, teaching methods, students, teachers, and its implications for contemporary Islamic education. Hence, this study can serve as a reference in shaping Islamic education that is relevant and adaptable to the developments of the times.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at exploring and analysing Ibn Sina's educational thought and its implications for contemporary Islamic education. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen because it allows for in-depth observation and description of Ibn Sina's thoughts in the realm of education (Moleong, 2012). The data for this study were collected through a literature review of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Ibn Sina's original writings, such as Kitab

al-Shifa' and Kitab al-Najat, in which his philosophical and educational concepts are elaborated. Secondary sources consist of scholarly works, journals, books, and articles that discuss and critically analyse Ibn Sina's contributions in the fields of philosophy, education, psychology, and Islamic studies. The data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques. This process involved identifying, categorising, and interpreting key concepts related to education in Ibn Sina's works, followed by a comparative examination with contemporary issues in Islamic education. The aim of this analysis was to highlight the relevance, continuity, and potential application of Ibn Sina's educational thought in addressing current challenges in the field of education, particularly within the Islamic context.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Ibn Sina

Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE), known in the West as Avicenna, was a renowned Muslim physician, philosopher, and polymath often referred to as *al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs* (the highest master) (Fattahi, 2011). Born in Afshana near Bukhara, he mastered the Qur'an, Arabic grammar, logic, mathematics, and jurisprudence from an early age. His intellectual brilliance enabled him to excel in diverse fields such as philosophy, psychology, astronomy, and medicine. At the age of seventeen, he gained recognition as a medical consultant after successfully treating Prince Nuh Ibn Mansur. Ibn Sina later served as a minister under Sultan Shams al-Dawlah in Hamadan, though political unrest often disrupted his career (Nata, 2019).

Throughout his life, Ibn Sina produced significant contributions to both Islamic and scientific thought, integrating rational philosophy with spiritual knowledge. His later years were spent in Isfahan, where he taught philosophy and practised medicine until his death in 1037 CE. Remembered for his tireless dedication to knowledge, Ibn Sina left a legacy that profoundly influenced both Islamic scholarship and Western intellectual traditions (Zar, 2007).

Ibn Sina's Concept of Educational Objectives

Ibn Sina explained that the objectives of education serve a normative function, namely as a determinant of the direction of the educational process, as a stimulus that drives the process, and as values that provide the foundation for initiating the educational

process (Iqbal, 2015). According to him, educational goals should be directed toward the development of the physical, intellectual, and moral dimensions so that learners can grow in a holistic manner. Ibn Sina also emphasised that educational objectives must be aligned with students' talents, inclinations, and potentials so that they are able to live productively in society through the expertise they acquire. In general, the ultimate goal of education, according to Ibn Sina, is the realisation of the *insān kāmil* (the perfect human being). Furthermore, education is aimed at preparing individuals to fulfil their role as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) in society responsibly (Zainuri & Aslamiyah, 2024).

Specifically, Ibn Sina classified educational objectives into three dimensions: physical, moral, and vocational. The moral aspect aims to cultivate learners with a virtuous character that can be applied in daily life, while also nurturing their emotional sensitivity through arts education. The physical aspect focuses on achieving students' well-being through physical activities and health maintenance, such as exercise, proper nutrition, sufficient rest, and hygiene, all of which support optimal physical growth and intellectual development. The vocational aspect seeks to prepare learners to become skilled and proficient in particular fields of expertise, thereby enabling them to work professionally; these fields may include crafts such as printing and carpentry, among others (Mahrus, 2011).

For Ibn Sina, the primary objective of education lies in moral and character formation. Beyond shaping personality, education should be directed toward instilling noble character as the core of human development (Norman et al., 2024). Hence, it is often said that the true aim of education is the attainment of higher values. From this classification, it can be understood that Ibn Sina gave balanced attention to the development of learners' potential, encompassing not only knowledge and technical skills but also moral and physical aspects. Importantly, he placed the cultivation of character and ethics as the foundation upon which knowledge and skills should be built.

The Concept of Educational Curriculum According to Ibn Sina

Although Ibn Sina did not formally use the term *curriculum*, his ideas allow us to outline the curriculum and the body of knowledge that should be taught. According to him, learning materials represent disciplines that help students fill the voids within themselves while also nurturing their potential.

In this regard, Ibn Sina classified the levels of knowledge to be taught to students based on their developmental stages and age. The classification is as follows (Putra, 2015):

Ages 3-5

Ibn Sina emphasised that at this stage, children should be introduced to physical education, moral training, hygiene, vocal arts, and fine arts. Physical exercise, as part of physical education, was deeply influenced by his psychological perspective. He argued that exercise should be tailored to the child's developmental stage and natural abilities. Ibn Sina also categorised sports according to their physical demands and skill requirements, distinguishing between heavy and light activities, fast and slow movements, and those requiring special equipment. For him, each type of exercise should correspond to the needs of the child's life.

Physical education thus served as a means to ensure children's healthy growth and to train bodily balance. Sports and arts education were intended to stimulate creativity from an early age. Strict supervision during physical activities was seen as a preventive effort to minimise accidents among children.

Ages 6-14

For children aged 6–14, Ibn Sina prescribed lessons in reading and memorising the Qur'an, religious studies, poetry, and physical education. At this age, he believed that memorisation could be introduced. This idea was not without basis: historical accounts note that Ibn Sina himself could read the Qur'an by the age of 10. Thus, memorisation of the Qur'an during this period was considered essential for developing cognitive and memory skills. It also provided students with a foundation in Qur'anic language, which in turn facilitated advanced studies such as *fiqh*, Qur'anic exegesis, and Qur'anic sciences. Physical education remained important in this age group, but with a shift toward sports requiring more skill and complexity, in line with the child's growth. These activities differed significantly in type and level of difficulty compared to those.

Ages 14 and Above

At this stage, the curriculum became broader and was tailored to the interests and talents of the student. Ibn Sina advised educators to guide students toward fields aligned

with their aptitudes so they could specialise in certain sciences. He divided the sciences into theoretical and practical categories: First, the Theoretical sciences: (a) Natural sciences (*'ilm tabi'i*), including medicine, astrology, physiognomy, talismanic knowledge, dream interpretation, *niranjiyat*, and chemistry. (b) Mathematical sciences. (c) Metaphysical sciences, regarded as the highest, encompass knowledge of revelation, the nature of the prophetic soul, miracles, unseen matters, inspiration, the immortality of the soul, and related topics. Second, Practical sciences: These included ethics, which dealt with personal conduct; household management, which covered spousal and family relations as well as financial organisation; and politics, which examined the relationship between citizens and rulers, between cities, and between nations.

A closer look reveals that Ibn Sina's curriculum bears resemblance to modern secondary education, where students are streamed into science, social studies, or language tracks based on their talents and potential. Furthermore, Ibn Sina's curriculum model emphasised age-appropriate stages of development, gradual delivery of subject matter, and an integrated approach aligned with students' abilities and characteristics. From the above explanation, Ibn Sina's curriculum concept can be summarised by the following characteristics:

1. It pays close attention to students' psychology, being structured according to developmental stages.
2. It aims to balance physical, moral, and intellectual development according to age.
3. It is pragmatic and functional, oriented toward developing students' potential so they may contribute to society in their fields of expertise.
4. It is grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, integrating faith, knowledge, and action.
5. It places strong emphasis on moral education.

The Concept of Educational Curriculum According to Ibn Sina

Although Ibn Sina did not formally use the term *curriculum*, his ideas outline the structure of education and the body of knowledge that should be taught. Learning materials, in his view, represent disciplines that help students fill the voids within themselves while simultaneously fostering their potential. In this regard, Ibn Sina classified levels of knowledge according to students' developmental stages and ages. The classification is as follows:

Ages 3-5

According to Ibn Sina, children at this age should be taught physical education, moral training, hygiene, vocal arts, and fine arts. His perspective on physical education was strongly influenced by psychology. He argued that physical exercises must be adjusted to the developmental stage and natural talents of each child. He further categorised sports into those requiring strong physical endurance and skill, and those considered light, fast, slow, or requiring equipment. All forms of exercise, he believed, should be adapted to the needs of the child's life. Physical education served as a means to stimulate healthy growth and to train bodily balance. Sports and arts education were intended to foster creativity from an early age. Strict supervision of physical activities was regarded as a preventive effort to avoid accidents.

Ages 6-14

For children between the ages of 6 and 14, Ibn Sina prescribed lessons in reading and memorising the Qur'an, religious studies, poetry, and physical education. At this stage, he believed that memorisation could be introduced. This was not without basis: historical records show that Ibn Sina himself was able to read the Qur'an at the age of ten. Thus, Qur'anic memorisation during this period served to strengthen memory and cognitive abilities, while also providing linguistic foundations for advanced studies such as *fiqh*, exegesis (*tafsir*), and Qur'anic sciences. Physical education remained important at this stage, but the type of sports was expected to involve more skills and complexity, aligned with the child's growth. This differed significantly in type and difficulty from exercises given at earlier ages.

Ages 14 and Above

At this stage, the curriculum became broader and needed to be selected based on the interests and talents of the students. Ibn Sina advised educators to guide students toward fields aligned with their natural aptitudes so they could master specific disciplines. He divided knowledge into theoretical and practical sciences: First, the Theoretical sciences, (a) Natural sciences (*'ilm tabi'i*), including medicine, astrology, physiognomy, talismanic studies, dream interpretation, *niranjiyat*, and chemistry. (b) Mathematical sciences. (c) Metaphysical sciences, considered the highest, cover topics such as the descent of revelation, the nature of the prophetic soul, miracles, unseen

realities, inspiration, and the immortality of the soul. Second, Practical sciences**.** These included ethics (study of human conduct), household management (study of spousal relations, childrearing, and financial organisation), and politics (study of the relationship between citizens and rulers, between cities, and between nations).

A closer look reveals that Ibn Sina's framework has parallels in today's secondary education, particularly in specialisation tracks such as sciences, social studies, and languages, which are based on students' talents, interests, and potential.

Moreover, Ibn Sina's educational philosophy emphasised curricula that were age-appropriate, developed gradually, and integrated according to students' abilities and characteristics. From the above explanation, the main characteristics of Ibn Sina's curriculum concept are as follows (Iqbal, 2015):

1. It pays close attention to students' psychology, being structured according to developmental stages.
2. It seeks balanced development of students' physical, moral, and intellectual aspects according to their age.
3. It is pragmatic and functional, aimed at developing students' potential so that graduates can meet the needs of society and the labour market.
4. It is rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah, integrating faith, knowledge, and action.
5. It is morality-based, with strong emphasis on ethical education.

Teaching Methods According to Ibn Sina

Teaching methods are a set of strategies or techniques formulated by educators to achieve learning objectives. Thus, the choice of teaching methods plays a crucial role in the educational process. According to Ibn Sina's concept, the use of teaching methods must align with the characteristics of the subject matter being taught to students. This ensures that methods and materials remain relevant. Moreover, a lesson should not be confined to a single method, but can be delivered through multiple approaches in accordance with the students' psychological development. Ibn Sina proposed seven teaching methods, which are explained as follows (Alwizar, 2015):

Talqin Method

From Ibn Sina's perspective, the *talqin* method is used in teaching Qur'anic recitation. This method involves reciting passages of the Qur'an to students in small

portions, which the students then repeat slowly and repeatedly until they memorise them. Ibn Sina also suggested peer tutoring, where a skilled student could guide peers who were less proficient.

Demonstration Method

This method is related to practice, particularly effective for teaching skills such as writing. Ibn Sina emphasised that the teacher should first demonstrate how to write, such as forming Arabic letters, while simultaneously pronouncing them according to their correct articulation (*makharij al-huruf*). Only then should students be asked to replicate the demonstration.

Habituation and Exemplary Method

This method is considered the most effective for moral education, especially in early childhood, when children are highly imitative. Habituation and good example play a central role in shaping character and moral behaviour. Such practices must be consistently modelled and adapted to the psychological development of students.

Discussion Method

During Ibn Sina's time, the discussion method became highly developed. In this approach, students are presented with a problem to solve collectively. Ibn Sina applied this method for teaching rational and theoretical knowledge, as it sharpened students' reasoning and broadened their knowledge, preventing them from falling behind in scientific development.

Apprenticeship Method

This method integrates theory with practice. Students are required to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. Ibn Sina's students in medicine, for example, were encouraged to undergo apprenticeships, allowing them to develop expertise and mastery in their field.

Assignment Method

Ibn Sina also employed assignments by preparing study modules to be distributed to students for independent learning. This practice was later continued by

his students, such as Abi Husain Ahmad al-Suhaili and Abu al-Raihan al-Biruni. Essentially, this method is based on self-study through guided materials.

Targhib and *Tarhib* Method

Known today as the reward-and-punishment approach, this method motivates students through incentives and, when necessary, warnings or mild sanctions. Ibn Sina, however, emphasised encouragement, motivation, and praise over punishment, as positive reinforcement was believed to be more effective in fostering student development. Importantly, Ibn Sina did not regard these methods as mutually exclusive. Rather, they could be combined. For instance, a lecture could be integrated with discussion and exemplary practice. From the above explanation, Ibn Sina's teaching methods can be summarised by the following principles:

1. Methods should be selected according to the characteristics of students.
2. Methods must consider students' psychological conditions.
3. Teaching methods should be flexible and adaptable to students' needs.
4. The proper selection and application of methods play a decisive role in achieving learning objectives

Ibn Sina's Philosophical Thought and Its Implications for Contemporary Islamic Education

The philosophical contributions of Ibn Sina regarding Islamic education, covering objectives, curriculum, educators, learners, and teaching methods, can be summarised in several key points. The foundation of Islamic education, according to Ibn Sina, lies in the Qur'an and tawhid. Ibn Sina viewed the Qur'an as the divine word of Allah, absolute and beyond doubt. The Qur'an serves as the source of values, norms, and knowledge. As a Muslim philosopher, Ibn Sina always grounded his thought in the truth of the Qur'an, which reflects his religious-rational approach to education (Knowledge, 2024).

According to Ibn Sina, Islamic education must begin at an early age. Such education should be provided both directly and indirectly. His concept emphasised that in early childhood, children must be taught with learning materials appropriate to their developmental stage. In the context of contemporary Indonesia, this idea is reflected in the existence of early childhood education institutions such as kindergartens.

Another significant contribution is Ibn Sina's idea of interconnected-integrative education. He believed that there should be no dichotomy between religious sciences and secular sciences; instead, they should coexist in peace and harmony. This integrative curriculum model has been adopted in many Indonesian institutions, particularly Islamic higher education, as well as in schools and madrasahs. The integrative curriculum aims to develop not only intellectual intelligence (head) but also emotional intelligence (heart), practical and creative skills (hand), and spiritual integrity (honesty). When implemented effectively, this model produces graduates equipped with comprehensive intelligence and skills (Nasir, 2015).

Ibn Sina also emphasised the importance of character and moral education. This is highly relevant to Indonesia's current curriculum, which incorporates national character education. Fundamentally, human beings are God's creation and must devote themselves to Him, obeying His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. Therefore, moral and character education becomes essential. This aligns with Article 3 of the Indonesian National Education System Law, which states that education aims to "develop learners' potential to become human beings who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens" (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional 2003, n.d.)

Furthermore, Ibn Sina advocated for a tiered system of education, which resonates with Indonesia's national education system that is structured across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Education in Indonesia is also organised into general, vocational, and religious tracks. This reflects Ibn Sina's notion of education being conducted progressively, tailored to learners' expertise, and aligned with their characteristics, potential, talents, and interests. Such a system is consistent with competency-based curricula. In the 21st century, education that emphasises competence is highly recommended, with the ultimate aim of realising the nation's aspirations: a prosperous and content society, dignified and equal among other nations in the global arena (Uyuni & Adnan, 2020). Prosperity in this context encompasses both spiritual well-being, happiness in life, and material well-being, understood as a sufficient standard of living. With this educational ideal, Indonesia seeks to foster creative, independent, and critical

learners. Notably, tiered and skill-based education continues to be implemented within madrasahs to this day.

CONCLUSION

According to Ibn Sina, the objectives of education are directed toward the development of the physical, intellectual, and moral dimensions of learners so that they may grow and develop optimally. These objectives must also be aligned with the talents, inclinations, and potential of each learner, enabling them to live within society equipped with the expertise they possess. Ibn Sina's concept of curriculum can be classified based on the learners' age groups: 3–5 years, 6–14 years, and 14 years and above. The teaching methods proposed by Ibn Sina include *talqin* (guided instruction), demonstration, habituation and exemplary modelling, discussion, apprenticeship, assignments, as well as *targhib* (encouragement) and *tarhib* (discouragement). Concerning the educator, Ibn Sina explained that the qualities of a good teacher include being religious, intelligent, skilled in teaching children, knowledgeable about moral education, cheerful in demeanour, calm in appearance, polite, courteous, clean, pure, and free from mockery or frivolous behaviour in front of students.

Although Ibn Sina's ideas on education were not developed in the modern era, they remain highly relevant to contemporary life. Several of his concepts have already been considered in the implementation of education in Indonesia, as they are in harmony with Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. By contextualising Ibn Sina's thought in the present era, it is hoped that education in Indonesia will continue to develop and achieve the national educational objectives as outlined in the National Education System Act.

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