

## A Study of the Western Educational Philosophies Concerning Islamic Philosophy

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**This article may be cited as** Akhunzadi, A. S., Jumani, S., Khurshed, F., Shah, T. H., & Mahmood, T. (2025). A Study of the Western Educational Philosophies Concerning Islamic Philosophy. *ProScholar Insights*, 4(1), 136-144.

<https://doi.org/10.62997/psi.2025a-41054>

**Abstract:** Islam is a comprehensive code of life besides providing elucidations to all the problems. However, there are different religions and modestly can be labeled under the umbrella of Islamic and Western verdicts. Furthermore, Islamic and Western considerations have their subcategories in the practice of groups. Conversely, in this paper, we described perennialism and essentialism as educational philosophies and then provided a detailed account of Islamic philosophy. This study provides literature-based evidence about the logical notions of both philosophies. However, more focus was on describing Islamic philosophical notions. We also studied the Quranic verses to provide authentic sources. This was a qualitative literature-based study. Furthermore, discourse analysis was followed to find out the differences. Findings and conclusions were drawn from the literature. Different websites were studied for online data connected to our particular area. We explored the Islamic philosophical system as more valuable, authentic, and relaxed in terms of knowledge, values, and social relationships. We concluded that the Islamic philosophical system is a holistic system. We recommended that we try our best to apply Islamic philosophical designs in our educational setup about students' teachers' bonds and affiliation in society.

**Keywords:** Perennialism, Essentialism, Islamic Philosophy, Quran, Values, Knowledge, Holistic

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### Introduction

Western viewers may be shocked at how little has been published about Islamic educational theory over the decades. Islam, above everything, has had a quality learning history dating back around 1300 years (Halstead, 2004). Islam tends to be part of the tradition of monotheism and has rapidly formed the permanent base of a global society. It is a monotheistic religion of Abraham, and Hazrat Muhammad S.A.W is the last prophet of Allah who founded this religion. Islam has its origins in the Arabic word "Aslama," which means obedience to Allah Almighty. So, a believer surrenders to Allah. The key purpose of Islam is "Towhead," oneness of Allah, believing that Muhammad S.A.W is the messenger of Allah, and believing in all the prophets of Allah (Berkey, 2012). Islamic philosophy is a subdivision of Islamic studies that attempts to construct harmony between philosophy, reason, and the religious teaching of the Islamic faith (Abd Allah, 1982).

The term 'educational theory' may be from a Western viewpoint, but it seems innocent enough that it comes with all kinds of cultural baggage from a Muslim viewpoint, which causes many Muslims to feel uncomfortable. In reality, from a Muslim point of view, both components of the terms 'ideology' and 'learning' are controversial but for various motives (Halstead, [2004](#)).

There are various educational philosophies. However, in this paper, our concern is about exploring perennialism and essentialism with special reference to Islamic philosophy. The purpose is to identify the more holistic and moderate philosophical foundations. Consequentially, the root of Perennialist philosophy is traced back to Plato and Aristotle. Perennialists hold to the belief that at all times, there are certain fundamental truths or concepts and that the degree of life attained by man is determined by his commitment to these divine values or inattention to them (Maftoon & Shakouri, [2013](#)).

Likewise, essentialism is a sort of philosophical and epistemological direction that believes and pursues the expression of the essence in the life of essence. In reality, including those conflicting epistemologies, it is a random collection of numerous modern Western philosophical schools (Shi, [2004](#)).

Therefore, in this study, we described both the educational philosophies but concerning Islamic philosophy. So, objectives of the current micro research were the exploration of the two educational philosophies such as perennialism and essentialism.

This study provides the concept of Islamic philosophy of education, and their aim of education, which proves that Islamic education is aimed overall development of human personality.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- ▶ To identify the Islamic philosophy of Education
- ▶ To categorize Islamic concepts of educational philosophies explicitly perennialism and Essentialism.
- ▶ To explore the nature of Islamic education, we must consider that it is vast from the Western concept.

### **Literature Review**

We studied and sorted out a historical overview of Western philosophy specifically perennialism, essentialisms, and then Islamic philosophy. So, literature review was mainly comprised of three parts i.e. perennialism, essentialisms with their roots, basic concepts of knowledge, and values. Further, there were subcategories of both educational philosophies. Then both were ordered in the light of Islam.

### **Historical overview of Islamic and Western traditions, specifically their divine and rational philosophical status**

The aims and values of education, along with comprehensive interpretation, were the ideals of all educational philosophers, including Plato. So, in this connection, Livingstone ([1943](#)) stated in the book "Education for a World Adrift" regarding criteria for the philosophy of life, principles for judgment and ruling life, methods for integration of civilization and culture, and knowledge related to the science of good and evil. Similarly, Dewey described philosophy as a theory of education, but he specifies that this is a general theory concerning education. So, according to him, we can say that it means that philosophy is related to educating humanity. According to Russell, philosophy is an attempt to critically answer questions and reduce all the confusion (Sultana, [2012](#)).

### **Education**

We found a sound definition of education in which education was described for transmitting values as well as collecting knowledge of a society.

### **Aims of Education**

Prominent educational philosophers in their philosophies have comprehensively described the aims of education. Here we are citing some aims of education in the light of western philosophers and philosophies.



1. According to primitive concepts, the main aim of education is the conservation of sponsored resources and all social practices.
2. Furthermore, idealistic and realistic philosophers as Plato and Aristotle stated that education mainly focused on creating citizens with a balanced formation of all humans 's abilities.
3. Conversely Catholicism has a different concept, and they stated that education must enable individuals to be efficient through rejecting all the worldly desires.
4. Pansophism-Bacon, Comenius described education as mainly aimed at enabling individuals to acquire knowledge.
5. Likewise, John Locke stated that education is about disciplining the mind.
6. Conversely, Rousseau was a naturalist philosopher, so he described the aims of education as developing free, spontaneous expression.
7. According to Froebel, education must strive to develop a child's unique potential.
8. Thorndike indicated that education is in order to aid in the transmission of individual ambitions.
9. John Dewey described the aims of education in a different way, such as "To have more education."
10. Adler stated that education is the practice of moral and intellectual virtues (Sultana, [2012](#)).  
Furthermore, based on different views of the educational philosophers, this study will cover two educational philosophies such as perennialism and essentialism with special reference to Islamic philosophy.

### **Perennialism**

Thomas Aquinas is the chief exponent of perennialism (Oldmeadow, [2007](#)). Roots of perennials are in the philosophy of Neo-Scholasticism, which believes in the cause-and-effect relationship as well as it believes that a person must obtain knowledge largely with Human reason and then rely on faith in that realm. This philosophy focused on the importance of using the mind and reasoning. Besides, they focused on studying the immense works of the past. Likewise, they believe that reason is the means to build a sense of observed phenomena. They also held on to the notion that through the application of the scientific method, one may know the reality of a thing. Their concept about the universe is that the "universe has order and design (Karhoff, [2003](#)).

Perennialists described knowledge as truth, and according to their concept, truth is the same everywhere. They believed in the existence of priori truth, and students should be taught to match to it. Perennialist philosophy has its roots in the Neo-Scholastic tradition, but its concept of axiology is closer to that of the pragmatists. They believed in the notion that the leading values that are important in building up the West to be studied. Perennialist gives importance to the study of classic literature, as they believe that this literature is influential (Slater, [2015](#)).

### **Essentialism**

This philosophy is rooted in Idealism and, to some extent, realism. This philosophy is less aristocratic and less intellectual. They describe the concept that schools should convey tested facts and truth rather than executing innovative programs. Likewise, they believe in the concept of compulsory subjects. The chief Exponent of this philosophy is William Bagley. This educational philosophy believes in the existence of an external reality. This reality can take hold of the mind. They believe that truth can be known and taught as truth exists. Knowledge is gained through the interaction of experiences and rational thought. They identify that good value is determined and shaped by God and values are determined by Natural Law. Things are beautiful when they exactly reveal how things in nature are or how they can be (Slater, [2015](#)).

### **Islamic Philosophy**

Islamic philosophy of education has its roots in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, which are the primary sources of guidance for human beings. Allah has revealed the holy Quran to the last Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. Islamic philosophy has also been rooted in secondary sources (Ijma, Qiyas, and ijthad). Islamic philosophy of education examines, assesses, deconstruct and disintegrate the present educational infrastructure and attempt to construct new concepts. This philosophy believes in the concept of construction and renovation of human life. A balanced relationship between



individuals, society, and the world is characteristic of the Islamic philosophy of education. The ethical authority for a balanced relationship among various parties is the religion of the Holy Quran. Universal values are derived from the holy Quran. The mission of education in Islam is to link every human action or behavior with ideal moral values derived from the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Islamic education strives to balance the physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual activities of human beings and to integrate political, social, economic, and individual life with Islam. In Islam, rational reasoning is centered on balance and unification. There is no distinction amongst religion, politics, and science, as well as among intellect and sensation, soul and body. Topics are different, comprised of special units but the units are integrated. Islam identifies the key role of the mind that it is as an important mechanism for research and inquiry. In addition, it is not the supreme and distinctive tool for revealing the complete truth Allah (S.W.T) is the creator of everything. All the messengers are the chief exponents of real guidance. Famous Muslim philosophers are Al Kind, Al Razi, Al Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn I Rushd, Imam Ghazali, and Ibn Khaldun. The word reality consists of everything that is, whether or not it is visible or comprehensive, and Allah S.W.T is the ultimate and supreme reality (Rayan, 2012).

“He is the light of the heavens and the earth, the parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it, a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass, the glass as if it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, through the fire, scarce touched it light upon light”( Quran: 24:35 ).

### **Allah and the world in the light of translation of the Holy Quran**

- ▶ “Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation) we clove them as under” (Quran:21: 30).
- ▶ “To him belong the east and the west, wherever you turn, there is his presence”.
- ▶ For the understanding of human beings, attributes of Allah have been described by Allah through the revelation that is mentioned in the Holy Quran. Such as life, eternity, unity, power, truth, beauty, justice, and love.
- ▶ Creation of man in the light of the Quranic verses. “Does not man remember that We created him before while he was nothing” (Qiran: 19:67). “Man is created for an appointed term” (Quran: 6: 21). “A leech-like clot of congealed blood that takes the form of water or watery clay sculpted into shape in proper proportions as a life germ.” ( Quran:2:02) . “Human beings have been blessed with Wisdom and love, listening and eyesight (Quran:27 78).
- ▶ Vicegerent of Allah: “Destined to become Allah’s caliph on earth, ordained to die one day, after that, surely you will die” (Quran:23, 15). “Allah fashioned mankind in the most attractive moulds, thus he is the best of all that has been fashioned (Al Quran:95:4). “We have honored the offspring of Adam, carrying them on land and in the ocean, and providing them with good substance,” (Al Quran:17, 70). “Do you not see that Allah made available for you what is in the skies and on the earth and flooded you with many blessings known and unknown” (Quran:31). “His plan contemplates man’s free use of spiritual traits such as power and choice” (Quran: 18:29, 76 29).
- ▶ “There is no compulsion in faith; Allah’s guidance is open to all who have the willed to profit by it” (Al Quran: 81: 28).
- ▶ Man’s ability to study and gather expertise is limitless. “Read and your lord is the most generous, the one who taught with the pen, he taught man what did not know” (Quran:96).
- ▶ Life after death. “And will be resurrected on Doom’s Day” (Al Quran: 56: 61), Baianie 1997).
- ▶ The Concept of Islamic Epistemology is vast as compared to Western Epistemology. The word used for knowledge in Arabic is “Ilm” which covers three concepts as theory, action, and education. Importance of knowledge in Islam. Total number of verses regarding the word “Ilm” is 704 while the word “Qalam” has been mentioned in two places and “Al Kitab” in 230 places. First word of Quranic revelation is “Iqra”. First-teaching class started after the creation of Hazrat Adam A.S, and Allah is the first teacher and the supreme guide of humanity. Importance of knowledge in the light of the Quranic verses. “Allah has made man as his vicegerent due to knowledge when angles argued about the vicegerency of man then Allah Almighty taught Adam A.S the names of something and then Adam A.S told them and hence proved his ability of vicegerency on earth” (Quran,2). “Do those who do not know, equal those who know? (Quran,39). Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad



S.A.W can be described as “Whoever follows a path in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make a path to paradise easy for him”. “Acquire knowledge even if it is in China.” The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr.”

### Objectives of Knowledge in Islam

“And I have not created the jinn and the man except that they should serve me” Tarbyah (to grow and to increase) “And lower unto them, the wing of submission through mercy and say my lord have mercy on them both as they did nurture me when I was little. (Quran,17:124). Talim to know. “He who taught you the use of pen taught men that which he knows not” (Al Alaq), Tadib (adab) teaching of good manners, ethics, and politeness. Talib means the discipline of mind, body, and soul. Knowledge in Islam is worship. Knowledge in Islam has three degrees.

### Revealed Knowledge (Haq al Yaqin)

Allah says in the Holy Quran “And it is not possible for a man that Allah shall speak to him except through inspiration or from behind a veil or that he sends a messenger who reveals by his permission that which he wills” (Quran,26:51).

### Rationality or Reasoning (Ilm al Yaqin).

Ilm al yaqin in the light of the quranic verse can be translated as “And he has subjected to you the night and the day, the sun and the moon and the stars are subjected by his commands, surely, in this are proofs for people who understand” (Quran,16:12).

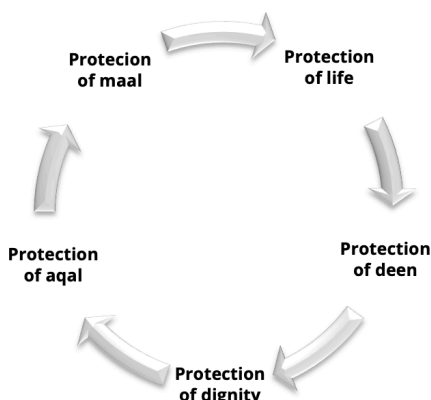
### Empirical (Ain al Yaqin)

Allah says in the Holy Quran, “It is He Allah who has created for you the faculties of hearing, sight, feelings, and understanding” (Quran:23).

Ethics could be described as the ideals which people hold sacred. Life issues have been described in the Holy Quran as values and Muslims are responsible to put into practice such values. Execution of such values is not the same and stable for every place and time. Progress and creativity of values depend upon the ability of Muslims. Quran describing the type of government, in general, which can be summarized as Shoora in which affairs deal mutually (Quran,42:38). Another verse of the Holy Quran described the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) as a gentle leader of the Shoora instead of a harsh-hearted, if you were not a gentle heart so people would leave you. Furthermore, Allah almighty asked him to forgive their mistakes and ask Allah to forgive their mistakes. Also, trust on Allah almighty in taking decisions” (Quran,3:15). Core Values in Islam are universal and permanent. Important values are spiritual values rather than material values. In the Islamic system of education, some core values without which human beings cannot live. Attributes of Allah almighty that have been mentioned in the Holy Quran are some basic values.

Figure 1

Basic Values in the Quran



- ▶ Life (Protection of life): “And there is life for you in al qisas” (Quran,2:179).
- ▶ Religion: Protection of Al din. Observance of ibadah. Islam protects religion.
- ▶ Protection of dignity (al izzat) (Quran:24). “Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing, are cursed in this life and the hereafter, for them is severe azab”.
- ▶ Protection of al aqal (intellect)
- ▶ Protection of al-mal (property).
- ▶ Eternity: Time without end) this attribute is of ALLAH’S attribute. Man is created for an appointed term. Eternal life for Muslims is in Jannah.

**Unity:** Oneness of ALLAH and oneness of humankind: the holy Quran has emphasized this attribute.

- ▶ Translation of a Quranic verse “It is you we worship, and you we ask for help (Quran: 1:5).
- ▶ This value brings harmony and peace among members of the family as well as among nations and ideological groups.
- ▶ Quranic verse regarding equality of mankind “O; Mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another, indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you (Quran:49).
- ▶ Knowledge: Allah is the observer of all things. He knows the seen and the unseen; nothing is hidden from him in the heavens and the earth.

**Fairness of Allah Almighty:** Allah is indeed the perfect evaluator he is not unfair in any way. He doesn't treat individuals unfairly; the meaning of a Hadith is regarding justice. “If Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad S.A.W were to steal, Muhammad would certainly cut off her hand”.

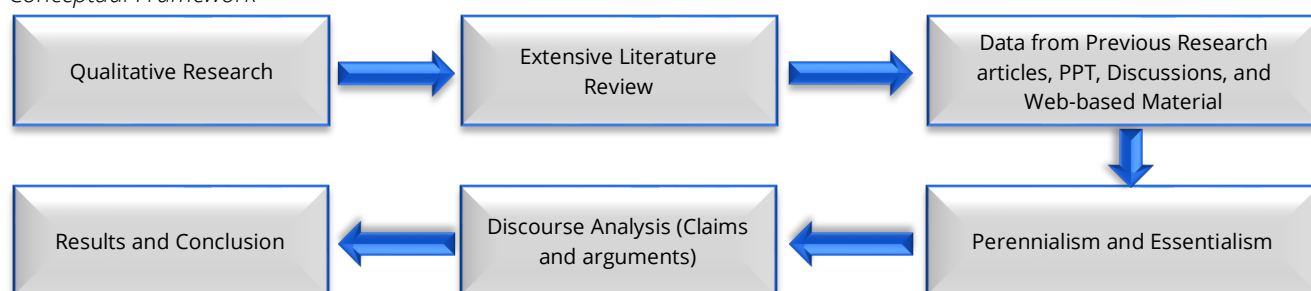
**Religious Tolerance:** Islam gives importance to universal values such as love. Allah loves and He shows His love by producing, maintaining, nurturing, safeguarding, assisting, and guiding. Allah's name is Quddus. Besides goodness being an attribute of Allah, it remains everyone's responsibility to do well with all. All prophets were doing well even with their enemies. Beauty: inner beauty has more influence than visible beauty. Allah has the most beautiful names and utmost superiority and creates everything in the best of molds. ALLAH created the universe with beauty (Akgunduz, 2015).

### Muslim Philosophers and Islamic Philosophy of Education

In the elevated age of Islamic society, there was a considerable amount of writing that usually addressed educational problems. Both Akhlag-i-Nasiri by Nasir al-Din Tusi and Taharat al-A'arag by Ibn Maskuya contain extensive moral education discussions and other educational issues. Maybe the nearest to an early introduction to educational philosophy is Al-Fatihah al ulum of Ghazali. The famous scholar and social scientist Ibn Khaldun explains the objectives of education, the curriculum, and the teaching skills in al-Muqaddimah and gives a detailed understanding of the current situation of Islamic knowledge. Themes such as schooling, teaching, learning, youth, love, and devotion are discussed in other documents, including Siyasat Namah by Nizam-al-Mulk and Ghulistan and Bustan by Sa'di. The Ikhwan al-Safa Treatises (Rasa'il) contain explanations of psychological and metaphysical problems of special interest to educators (Halstead 2004).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework



## Methodology of the Study

This was qualitative research using an extensive literature review. Therefore, we searched out all the available data from previous research articles, power points, discussions, columns, and web-based materials for achieving our objectives. Furthermore, the literature strengthens the stances regarding perennialism and essentialism. Nevertheless, more focus was to discover their claims and arguments. So, discourse analysis was followed for finding out the differences between Islamic and western philosophy specifically perennialism and essentialism. We sought out this study because as a muslim we need to know the strengths and positions of Islamic philosophy specifically essentialism and perennialism in comparison to Islam.

## Findings

### Perennialism and Islamic philosophy

1. Perennialism is an educational philosophy that we believe is closely related to Islamic philosophy because Islam also provides a structure for practicality and this philosophy also identified experimentation.
2. This philosophy believes in cause-and-effect relationships and Islamic philosophy also has the notion of this concept.
3. According to this philosophy, reason is the first thing that further leads toward faith in the realm.
4. Likewise, this philosophy believes in the importance of mind, reasoning, and past work. Where all the dimensions. Islamic philosophy integrates the application of scientific methods for understanding other phenomena. Knowledge is truth and same everywhere. Its axiology is closer to pragmatism. Whereas Islamic axiology is a universal code of conduct and focused on the integration of words with actions.

### Essentialism and Islamic Philosophy

5. Essentialism is less intellectual and believes in the tested facts and truth.
6. In the light of the literature essentialism is closely related to realism as well as idealism,
7. There is no importance for innovation and believes in the compulsory subjects. Where Islamic philosophy has its primary sources (Quran and Sunnah) as well as secondary sources are ijma, qiyas, and ijthad, Deconstruction of the present educational infrastructure for constructing new concepts are the characteristics of Islamic philosophy.

### Islamic Philosophy is inclusive and massive

8. This philosophy believes in the reconstruction of human life, balance of relationships among individuals and with the world.
9. Quran and Sunnah are the sources of ethical codes and believe in universal values.
10. Aims of education are to link knowledge with practice.
11. Believe in the balance of mental, spiritual, psychological activities, and integration of political, social, economic, and individual life with Islam.
12. Harmony of logical thinking, importance of the mind as an instrument for research and inquiry are some other characteristics of Islamic philosophy.
13. Here is no separation but an integration of all the units.

## Conclusions

Based on findings it may be concluded that western and Islamic philosophy provide discussion that philosophy is the root of all knowledge. However western philosophy was mainly rooted and developed under the views of philosophers whereas Islamic philosophy has its roots in the Quran and Sunnah. So Islamic philosophy was found more authentic and holistic for developing a positive and holistic individual.

This study achieved its objectives from the literature and concluded that Islamic education is more comprehensive than the concepts of perennialism and essentialism. In the light of the evidence, we strongly believe that the basis of Islamic knowledge is more holistic than perennialism and essentialism. Quran, Sunnah were the basic



sources whereas ijma and qiyas were the secondary sources. Besides Islamic philosophy a tool of the society where the idea is to create ethical, moral, and spiritual human beings who have a positive, healthy, and multi-dimensional direction. Islamic philosophy of education desired to shape human beings based on harmonizing the three dimensions, which are as follow.

- ▶ Sense
- ▶ Mind
- ▶ Religious faith

Harmony between the described dimensions achieves the human values in reality. Islamic education believes that every Muslim should perform the duty to progress in human life. Progress attainment is done by the activism of the three dimensions, specifically epistemology believing in revelation, reasoning, and empiricism, whereas the ethical aspect comprises an indication and authority to every human activity. Finally, the study reveals that in the Islamic concept of education, knowledge, and science are interrelated and there is no separation of science politics and religion. Literature provides evidence that Islamic Education also gives importance to the development of thinking and personal autonomy for achieving a standard value system.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusion, it may be recommended that.

1. The Islamic concept of education is based on broader lines so we may need to modify our educational setup in the light of Islamic philosophical notions.
2. We may need to modify our present while looking into the golden rules of Islam that provide a coherent and flexible environment for transporting all the activities.
3. Islamic philosophical notions were more related to fulfill the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of filling the gap of individuality and supportive system.
4. We may update our educational setup in light of the Islamic philosophical notions.
5. This study was literature-based, so this literature may be followed for other field studies.





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