

The Epistemology of Prophetic Thinking: Its Relevance to the Aims of Islamic Education

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Abstract: The contemporary Islamic education system is predominantly implemented through a dogmatic approach, with a primary emphasis on cognitive development and character or moral formation. This study aims to examine the concept of prophetic epistemology and its relevance to the objectives of Islamic education. The main focus of this research is to understand how the prophetic dimension can serve as an epistemological foundation for the construction of Islamic educational knowledge. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach through a literature review. The primary data sources consist of works by contemporary Islamic thinkers such as Kuntowijoyo, Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi, and Musa Asy'arie. Secondary data are drawn from various relevant journals, books, articles, and other scholarly sources. The data analysis method used in this research is content analysis. The findings indicate that prophetic epistemology is capable of reorienting Islamic education from a mere process of knowledge transmission toward the formation of intelligence that is able to interpret ethical and spiritual realities. At least two significant findings emerge from this study: first, prophetic thinking serves as the epistemological foundation of Islamic education; second, prophetic thinking functions as a conceptual framework within Islamic educational practice. These two aspects can be integrated as the basis for educational objectives that not only enhance intellectual capacity but also cultivate character formation and

social responsibility among learners. The implications of this study underscore the necessity of an epistemological reorientation in Islamic education in order to remain relevant to the challenges of modernity without losing its transcendent values. Prophetic epistemology offers a robust philosophical framework for realizing an integrative, humanistic, and revelation-based Islamic education.

Keywords: Prophetic Thinking, Islamic Education, Educational Objectives.

Abstrak: Sistem Pendidikan Islam saat ini, dilakukan dengan pendekatan dogmatis, focus pada pembentukan kognitif dan karakter atau ahklak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep epistemologi berpikir profetik dan relevansinya terhadap tujuan pendidikan Islam. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah memahami bagaimana dimensi profetik dapat dijadikan dasar epistemologis dalam membangun keilmuan pendidikan Islam. Metode yang digunakan penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui studi pustaka. Sumber data penelitian ini ialah data primer yang diambil dari karya-karya pemikir Islam kontemporer seperti Kuntowijoyo, Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi dan Musa Asy'arie. Data sekunder ialah data yang diambil dari berbagai jurnal, buku, artikel, dan sebagainya yang relevan dengan penelitian ini. Analisis data yang digunakan ialah analisis isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa epistemologi berpikir profetik mampu mengembalikan orientasi pendidikan Islam dari sekadar transfer ilmu menuju pembentukan kecerdasan membaca realitas spiritual etis. Penelitian ini setidaknya menemukan dua hal penting yaitu berpikir profetik menjadi landasan epistemologi pendidikan Islam dan kedua berikir profetik menjadi konsep berpikir profetik dalam pendidikan Islam. Keduanya dapat diintegrasikan menjadi dasar bagi tujuan pendidikan yang tidak hanya mencapai daya intelektual, tetapi juga membentuk karakter dan tanggung jawab sosial peserta didik. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menegaskan perlunya reorientasi epistemologis dalam pendidikan Islam agar tetap relevan dengan tantangan modernitas tanpa kehilangan nilai-nilai transendennya. Epistemologi berpikir profetik memberikan kerangka filosofis yang kuat untuk mewujudkan pendidikan Islam yang integratif, humanistik, dan berlandaskan wahyu.

Kata Kunci: Berpikir Profetik, Pendidikan Islam, Tujuan Pendidikan

Introduction

Contemporary Islamic education is often viewed as predominantly dogmatic and overly dependent on behaviorist pedagogical approaches (Asman et al., 2021). This condition arises because Islamic education has not yet adequately engaged the cognitive domain by optimizing human reason as one of the sources of knowledge (Arfizi & Syukri, 2025; Zulkifli et al., 2025). In philosophical discourse, reason plays a crucial role in interpreting the implicit messages of the universe, humanity, and God. The complexity of discussions on the epistemology of Islamic education becomes particularly evident when the integration of revelation and reason in knowledge is examined through a prophetic approach (Indah, 2025). According to Fauzi and Eli Masnawati, epistemology plays a vital role in uncovering the deepest meaning of knowledge (Fauzi & Masnawati, 2025). Epistemology is not only concerned with how human beings acquire knowledge, but also with how that knowledge is directed toward achieving divine objectives (Urhanne et al., 2026).

The crisis brought about by modern civilization has led to numerous transformations. Islamic education has likewise experienced the impact of modernism, which is constructed upon Western epistemology and has given rise to an increasingly evident crisis of values. On the other hand, internal challenges have placed Islamic education in a disadvantaged position (Syukron Jamal, 2025). In addition to internal systemic issues, the educational output of Islamic education has yet to demonstrate adequate social and practical relevance. Therefore, Islam positions epistemology as the subject, employs Islam as the primary framework of thought, and treats epistemology as the object of inquiry (Yasin, 2025).

Modernization has led to a humanitarian and moral crisis in human life. This condition represents one of the most serious challenges faced by Islamic education in maintaining its relevance amid the rapid development of science and ongoing modernization. Prof. Musa Asy'arie views this phenomenon as a humanitarian crisis arising from shifts in human ways of life, which are often fragmented by routine daily activities. Islamic education is not merely oriented toward religious-based instruction; rather, it encompasses ethical and spiritual values that constitute its essential foundation and distinguish it from other educational systems (Muzaini et al., 2024).

The current orientation of Islamic education, which tends to be pragmatic and materialistic, significantly neglects the spiritual and ethical dimensions that form the core of Islamic teachings. This is where the urgency of the epistemology of prophetic thinking proposed by Musa Asy'arie becomes evident. This epistemology emerges as an alternative paradigm that seeks to integrate revelation (*yuzakkikum*), reason (*yu'allimukum*), and empirical experience (*ṣāliḥ li-rahmatan lil-'ālamīn*) into a unified and holistic framework of thought. The epistemology of prophetic thinking is grounded in the paradigm that knowledge is not merely a means of understanding reality, but also a vehicle for actualizing prophetic values such as justice, compassion, and the liberation of humanity from oppression (Nope, 2024).

This study has a highly urgent objective to promptly address fundamental issues in Islamic education. It pursues three principal aims. First, the study seeks to analyze the epistemological foundations of prophetic thinking as a paradigm of Islamic scholarship. Second, it examines the relevance of the epistemology of prophetic thinking to the objectives of Islamic education. Third, it aims to identify the conceptual application of the epistemology of prophetic thinking within Islamic

education. These research objectives are interrelated in constructing both theoretical and practical foundations for the reconstruction of the Islamic educational paradigm. Through an epistemological inquiry into prophetic thinking, this study is expected to contribute to the restoration of Islamic education's function as a means of forming knowledgeable individuals with strong moral character and transformative capacity for human civilization (Maudsley, 2026).

Several studies have emphasized the urgency of reorienting epistemology in the development of Islamic education in order to avoid the dichotomy between education and knowledge. Prophetic education can enrich character education theory by integrating Islamic values, such as *tawhīd* and *akhlāq*, into the moral formation of learners (Runtić & Brčić, 2026). Furthermore, prophetic education offers an alternative to Western character education theories, which tend to focus predominantly on cognitive aspects (Rudiyanto & Anif, 2024). The idea of renewing the paradigm of Islamic education based on Islamic epistemology necessitates the construction of a new paradigm that integrates Islamic principles into contemporary educational thought (Asman, 2021; Habibi, 2024). The relevance of prophetic justice values can strengthen the position of general and character education, as they are both transcendent and immanent, fostering consistency and harmony within individuals while enabling them to live within the universal, global, and holistic dimensions of humanity characterized by tolerance and peace (Mustamin et al., 2025).

Existing studies conducted by several scholars have largely failed to position prophetic epistemology as a foundational basis in Islamic education. Conceptually, prior research has not integrated the prophetic dimension into the epistemological system of Islamic education. Instead, existing studies tend to combine prophetic practices with scientific knowledge and examine their outcomes at a conceptual level. Among the three studies reviewed, none has addressed the aspect of prophetic thinking. Prophetic thinking as a foundational framework for achieving the objectives of Islamic education has received little scholarly attention. The existing literature predominantly focuses on emulating the prophetic (noble) attributes in terms of actions, while the Prophet's way of thinking has rarely been articulated or systematically examined (Castagno et al., 2026).

Previous studies have not specifically discussed the epistemology of prophetic thinking. Although earlier research has been valuable in providing theoretical and conceptual insights, the present study differs significantly from those prior works. In comparison with previous studies, despite addressing a similar thematic domain, this research is theoretically distinct. Existing studies primarily employ character theory and Islamic epistemology, whereas the present study is grounded in the theory of prophetic-thinking epistemology.

This paper is based on the argument that prophetic thinking constitutes a new methodology for understanding Islamic education. This method was first introduced by Musa Asy'arie, a modern Islamic intellectual, who sought to position the Prophet's mode of thinking as a methodological foundation in the development of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, the epistemology of prophetic thinking is of significant importance to be examined, and this study aims to contribute new intellectual insights to the field of knowledge. Accordingly, the research seeks to explore the epistemology of prophetic thinking and to examine its relevance to the objectives of Islamic education.

Methodology

This study on the epistemology of prophetic thinking and its relevance to the objectives of Islamic education employs a library research method with a qualitative analytical approach. This method focuses on literature-based documents as its primary sources of reference (Zed, 2018). The data sources consist of both primary and secondary data. Data collection techniques involve gathering various literature sources, categorizing them according to relevant data clusters, and subsequently mapping them based on the research themes. The data are obtained from books, academic journal articles, magazines, and websites that are relevant to the subject of this study. The data analysis technique employed is content analysis.



Figure 1. Qualitative Analytical Approach

Result and Discussion

Prophetic Epistemology of Thought

Epistemology has always been a compelling subject of study within the field of philosophy, as it provides the foundational basis upon which human knowledge is established and developed. In philosophical discourse, epistemology constitutes a branch of philosophy that examines the nature of reality, the origins of knowledge, and the limits of human understanding (Aris, 2023). Knowledge that is often regarded as final or definitive can, in fact, be traced back to the structural roots that shape and construct it. Therefore, epistemology is not merely a method or a tool for discovering knowledge; rather, it plays a crucial role in constructing a robust and coherent structure of knowledge (Luo, 2026).

Etymologically, the term epistemology is derived from two Greek words: *epistēmē*, meaning knowledge, and *logos*, which commonly denotes systematic reasoning or discourse. According to Musa Asy'arie (1992), as cited by Koko (2014), epistemology is a branch of philosophy that discusses the essence of knowledge, where knowledge, as a process, represents a systematic and methodological effort to discover the principles of truth inherent in a particular object of scientific inquiry (Robby et al., 2024). Furthermore, Harun Nasution, as cited in Umami Kalsum, defines epistemology as the discipline that addresses the questions of what knowledge is and how knowledge is acquired. Fundamentally, knowledge is a mental state (Kulsum, 2020).

Thus, epistemology may be understood as the way of acquiring knowledge through an understanding of the structures that constitute knowledge itself. For instance, to comprehend knowledge about the universe, one requires a profound understanding that does not merely examine the universe as an object of study, but rather delves into the very essence of the process of the universe's existence. Consequently, epistemology is often regarded as a method for uncovering the underlying essence behind scientific phenomena. No branch of knowledge, therefore, stands independently; each is shaped by various determining factors, and it is within this domain that epistemology conducts its inquiry (Shahin et al., 2026).

Meanwhile, prophetic thinking refers to a mode of thought that follows the way of thinking exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). According to Musa Asy'arie, prophetic thinking is thinking that implements the principles of *yuzakkikum* (purification), *yu'allimukum* (instruction), and *kesalihan rahmatan lil 'alamin* (piety that brings mercy to all creation). Prophetic thinking constitutes one of the methodologies within the sciences that encourages the use of intellect or reason as the foundation of knowledge in understanding the sources of Islamic teachings. Therefore, prophetic thinking represents an epistemological paradigm rooted in prophetic values (*nubuwwah*), which existed long before the Prophet was formally appointed as a messenger. Musa Asy'arie asserts that all Muslims agree that exemplary conduct is embodied in the person of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), including in matters of thinking, as the Qur'an has explicitly affirmed this.

Thus, prophetic epistemology refers to the exploration of the Prophet's methodological way of thinking by implementing a prophetic mode of reasoning that embodies *yuzakkikum* (moral purification), *yu'allimukum* (intellectual instruction), and piety as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation). This perspective clarifies that the Prophet is not merely a role model in matters of *'aqidah* (creed), worship, or social relations (*mu'amalah*), but should also be comprehensively understood through his way of thinking. To date, discussions on the philosophy of Islamic education have consistently been associated with figures such as Plato, Aristotle, and others. However, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself possessed a distinctive mode of thought that undoubtedly warrants rigorous and profound scholarly examination (Michalčerný, 2026).

The Concept of Islamic Education and the Epistemology of Prophetic Reasoning

The epistemology of prophetic thinking is derived from reason, in addition to revelation, which also serves as a foundational reference in the formation of epistemology. Prophetic thinking is rooted in the modes of thought employed by prophets even prior to the advent of revelation. At that time, prophets were capable of interpreting various forms of fundamental realities, which enabled them to provide solutions to the diverse problems faced by humanity. Prophetic thinking and Islamic education hold great potential to realize the objectives of Islamic education, namely, to cultivate modes of thinking among learners that are not merely doctrinal but are characterized by an intellectual capacity to comprehend fundamental realities. Furthermore, the epistemology of prophetic thinking, which is fundamentally oriented, shares common roots grounded in revelation (Herawati et al., 2024). Islamic education, whose foundational basis is derived from revelation, is oriented toward the formation of *insān kāmil* (the complete human being), who can serve as a medium for the implementation of prophetic modes of thought (Asman et al., 2021).

The mechanism of prophetic epistemological thinking is grounded in the concepts of *yuzakkikum* and *yuallimukum*, which subsequently give rise to *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* piety. Islamic education has the capacity to cultivate modes of thinking based on *yuzakkikum* (reflecting upon the power and sovereignty of God) and *yuallimukum* (engaging with the realities of the revealed scripture and the wisdom inherent in the universe). Islamic education, as manifested through *ta‘lim* (instruction), requires a prophetic epistemology of thinking in order to integrate dogmatic teaching with the intellectual capacity to critically read and interpret reality. In this sense, Islamic education can serve as a concrete arena for the practical implementation of prophetic epistemological thinking in everyday life.

Prophetic epistemology, when integrated into Islamic education, is oriented toward the transformation of learners (*insan kamil*) toward divine values and their social implementation. Islamic education is not merely an educational system focused on instruction; rather, it functions as an instrument of social transformation that shapes learners to be knowledgeable, morally upright, and responsible individuals (Faishol, 2020). Accordingly, the objectives of Islamic education are aligned with prophetic epistemology, namely, the production of knowledge that does not remain confined to intellectual contemplation, but instead leads to ethical action and civilized social transformation.

The Conceptual Epistemology of Prophetic Thinking in Islamic Education

The epistemology of prophetic thinking integrates rational, empirical, and spiritual dimensions, thereby producing a synthesis of reason, experience, and faith. Islamic education grounded in prophetic epistemology positions human beings as *khalifah* (vicegerents) entrusted with the responsibility of managing knowledge for the common good, rather than merely pursuing worldly knowledge. Accordingly, intellectual activity within Islamic education is not confined to a purely cognitive process; it is simultaneously moral and transcendental. Thinking thus becomes a pathway for drawing closer to God while at the same time serving humanity.

The interconnection between prophetic epistemology and Islamic education is evident in efforts to cultivate prophetic modes of thinking and to synthesize religious realities encompassing humanization, liberation, and transcendence within the educational process. Humanization encourages learners to respect human dignity; liberation guides them out of ignorance and oppression; and transcendence directs all educational activities toward a divine orientation. Through this approach, prophetic thinking extends beyond the cognitive domain and manifests as a way of life that nurtures ethical and spiritual consciousness. Consequently, Islamic education founded upon prophetic epistemology does not merely produce individuals who are intellectually capable, but also those who are wise, morally grounded, and oriented toward the welfare of the wider community.

The epistemological implications of prophetic thinking in Islamic education encompass three principal aspects: the objectives of Islamic education, the curriculum, and the orientation of the learning process.

1. Educational Objectives

The epistemology of prophetic thinking positions the periods before and after the advent of revelation as the highest sources of knowledge bestowed upon the Prophet. These sources serve as the fundamental guidance for the entire process of Islamic education. The implications of this

study confirm the findings of Mustamin et al. (2025), which assert that prophetic values can strengthen the position of general education and enhance the character development of learners.

The objectives of Islamic education are certainly not limited to the fulfillment of cognitive knowledge or pragmatic interests alone. Islamic education grounded in prophetic thinking aspires to cultivate learners who embody *ulil albab* and *insan kamil* (Nasrullah et al., 2025). Islamic education functions to guide learners toward recognizing and knowing their Lord. This perspective aligns with the study by Herawati et al. (2024), which emphasizes that *tawhid* constitutes the foundational education for humanity; therefore, Islamic education must be directed toward fostering awareness and recognition of Allah SWT.

The epistemology of prophetic thinking has significant implications for the objectives of Islamic education, particularly in achieving a balance between rational and transcendental dimensions. To prevent Islamic educational goals from becoming dogmatic, this epistemological framework of prophetic thinking contributes to the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable, morally upright, and responsible.

2. Islamic Education Curriculum

The curriculum plays a pivotal role within the educational system. Islamic education is not merely concerned with instilling moral values as a means of safeguarding individuals from negative influences. Rather, Islamic education, with the curriculum as its guiding framework, must formulate and respond to various transformations. The epistemology of prophetic thinking constitutes one significant contribution toward the integration of a prophetic-based curriculum.

The Islamic education curriculum grounded in the epistemology of prophetic thinking should be structured and organized in accordance with the fundamental objectives of Islamic education. This finding reinforces the research of Mohammad Ulyan, who asserts that prophetic Islamic education encompasses both the aims and the curriculum of Islamic education (Ulyan, 2020). Based on the research findings, prophetic thinking offers an intellectual contribution that serves to enrich curriculum-based learning through instructional content.

Its implications for the Islamic education curriculum are evident in reform efforts that seek to balance cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. The curriculum is not solely oriented toward the transmission of knowledge, but also toward the cultivation of prophetic character traits such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *faṭānah* (intellectual competence), and *tablīgh* (communicative responsibility), as implemented in prophetic character education within integrated Islamic schools (Tomi et al., 2024). Other studies further emphasize that a prophetic approach to education encourages the development of a learning system capable of integrally synthesizing religious and general sciences, thereby addressing the challenges of modernization and the digital era (Rokhmawanto et al., 2020).

3. Learning Orientation

A learning orientation grounded in the epistemology of prophetic thinking emphasizes the intellectual capacity to read fundamental realities and is inherently ethically oriented. Learners are encouraged not only to think critically but also to cultivate empathy and social responsibility. This approach stands in contrast to positivistic epistemology, which often prioritizes objectivity while neglecting value dimensions. The application of prophetic thinking reshapes classroom interactions: teachers assume the role of facilitators who integrate intellectual, spiritual, and

moral dimensions. The learning process thus becomes reflective and transformative moving beyond the mere transmission of knowledge toward the transformation of the self.

The primary implication is that learning does not remain confined to the cognitive domain but also encompasses affective and ethical dimensions. The epistemology of prophetic thinking fosters learners who are not only knowledgeable but also morally cultivated; this is what is referred to as *ta'dib* within the Islamic educational tradition. Both scholars agree that learning grounded in prophetic epistemology can serve as an alternative response to the moral crisis and dehumanization prevalent in modern educational systems. This paradigm affirms that knowledge must always be directed toward the common good (*maslahah*), rather than being oriented solely toward technological advancement.

The three aforementioned aspects demonstrate that prophetic thinking is not merely concerned with producing progressive educational practices; rather, it contributes to the development of an epistemological framework for Islamic education. This is consistent with the findings of Asmara et al., who argue that Islamic education must undertake an epistemological reconstruction so that it is not solely oriented toward cognitive competencies (Asmara et al., 2025). In essence, Islamic education constitutes a long-term process encompassing the transmission of values, the cultivation of *adab* (ethical conduct), and the development of human intellect. Its primary sources—the Qur'an and Hadith—serve not only as guides for ritual worship but also as foundations that embody comprehensive educational principles.

Accordingly, Islamic education is fundamentally a means of shaping individuals who are faithful, capable of critical thinking, and able to respond to the challenges of their time. Contemporary challenges, including the dominance of artificial intelligence, should be approached with optimism and creativity rather than fear or rejection, as Islam possesses a robust epistemological foundation rooted in prophetic and spiritual modes of thought that enables it to engage constructively with the transformations of the modern era.

Conclusion

To date, perspectives on the Prophet's Sunnah have largely been confined to the Prophet's conduct after receiving prophethood, encompassing his acts of worship, social transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), moral character, leadership, commercial activities, and similar practices. Little attention has been paid to examining the Prophet's modes of thinking underlying these activities. Consequently, this study seeks to address a significant gap in existing scholarship. This research finds that a prophetic epistemology of thinking, when integrated with Islamic education, contributes to the formation of the *insān kāmil* (the complete or perfected human being). Furthermore, prophetic epistemology and Islamic education are manifested in efforts to instill prophetic modes of thought and to synthesize religious realities encompassing humanization, liberation, and transcendence within the educational process.

The prophetic way of thinking is subsequently conceptualized as a knowledge methodology applicable to various aspects of social life, one of which is education. In order to achieve the objectives of Islamic education, it is not sufficient merely to reconstruct educational systems; it is also necessary to understand and employ appropriate modes of thinking that enable the relevance

and integration of all educational aspects. This study concludes that prophetic epistemology of thinking plays a crucial role in advancing and strengthening Islamic education.

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