



Al-Manarah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies

Available online on the website:
<https://journal.pergunulampung.or.id/index.php/almanarah/index>

Al-Manarah; Journal of Education and Islamic Studies
(p-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx | e-ISSN: xxxx-xxxx)
Volume 1, Issue. 01, 2026, pp. 1-8

The Essence of Educators and Learners in Islamic Education: A Philosophical and Pedagogical Perspective

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| Submission January 2, 2026 | Revised January 28, 2026 | Accepted March 27, 2026 | Published April 15, 2026 |

ABSTRACT *The research aims to examine the essence of educators and learners in Islamic education. Islamic education is primarily oriented toward developing knowledgeable and virtuous individuals through a learning process imbued with spiritual, moral, and humanistic values. This study seeks to reveal the existential nature of educators and students in Islamic education and how their relationship shapes a meaningful educational process. Educators and learners can be regarded as two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated from one another. In carrying out their duties and functions, educators bear a very heavy responsibility, as they are accountable not only to parents or guardians but also to Allah SWT. This research employs a qualitative approach, specifically library research, which uses books and other literature as the main sources of data. In addition, a descriptive method is used to analyze the data. This descriptive analysis provides a clear, objective, and systematic explanation. Islamic education views learners as both objects and subjects in the educational process. Therefore, it is expected that learners themselves understand their roles and responsibilities in order to achieve the intended educational goals. Consequently, both educators and learners, as key actors in education, need to re-examine the essence of their roles within Islamic education.*

Keywords : Educator, Learner, Islamic Education, Philosophical, and Pedagogical.

 <https://dx.doi.org/xx.xxxxx/al-manarah.vxx0x.xxxx>

How to Cite Fauzi, A.I., Rosyid, A.S., Abror, M,A,M,A., Syah, I., Najah, A,N., Janah, S.R., (2026). *The Essence of Educators and Learners in Islamic Education: A Philosophical and Pedagogical Perspective*, Al-Manarah: Journal of Education and Islamic Studies, Volume 1 (01), 1-8.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of humanizing human beings that cannot be separated from the role of an educator (Kuswanto & Kurniawan, 2025). Educators and learners can be regarded as two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated from one another (Raman et al., 2025). In carrying out their duties and functions, educators bear a very heavy responsibility, as they are accountable not only to parents or guardians but also to Allah SWT (Mukholifah & Surur, 2026). The educational process will never be separated from the presence of educators and learners. In the perspective of Islamic education, there are several requirements that must be possessed by an educator, namely the ability to master knowledge and to teach learners in a professional, effective,

and patient manner in order to achieve goodness both in this world and in the hereafter (Veliz et al., 2025).

According to Abdul Fattah Jalal, the purpose of Islamic education is to make humans aware of their role as servants of God (Wasehudin, W., Anshori, I., Rahman, M. T., Syafe'i, I., & Kesuma, 2021). Therefore, education encompasses both educators and students as subjects who actively participate in the educational process (Rinaldi et al., 2026). Educators are those who are responsible for developing, teaching, and guiding knowledge (Li et al., 2024) to students so that they attain maturity and are able to fulfill their human responsibilities

Meanwhile, students are those who are in the process of learning to acquire knowledge (Teplá & Distler, 2025). Every human being is obliged to pursue knowledge through education earnestly in order to attain the pleasure of Allah in the pursuit of knowledge. Students are members of society who are in the process of developing their potential through learning activities conducted in formal or non-formal education at certain levels (Anshori, 2026). In essence, all human beings are learners; every person is a being who is continuously in the process of development toward perfection.

Islamic education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and of noble character (Ismail, 2016). In this context, the relationship between educators and students constitutes the core of the educational process, encompassing not only the transfer of knowledge but also the transformation of values and the formation of character. In Islamic education, educators are not merely instructors; they also serve as *murabbi* (nurturers), *mu'allim* (teachers), and *muryid* (guides) (Wasehudin et al., 2023), whose responsibility is to guide students toward moral and spiritual excellence. Meanwhile, students are positioned not only as recipients of knowledge (Wang & Kumar, 2026) but as active subjects with innate potential to develop through a continuous educational process (*tarbiyah*).

Learners are members of society who are in the process of developing their potential through learning activities conducted in both formal and non-formal education at certain levels. In essence, all human beings are learners; every individual is continuously engaged in a process of development toward perfection (Bland & Hoard, 2026). This research is important to re-examine the nature of educators and students in Islamic education through a qualitative approach. This approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the values, perceptions, and real-life experiences that shape the relationship between teachers and students within the context of Islamic education (Savenije et al., 2022). The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of a more humanistic and spiritual concept of Islamic education, as well as practical implications for improving the quality of educational interactions in Islamic educational settings.

Various studies on Islamic education have attempted to explain the roles of educators and students in the learning process. For example, research conducted by (Anshori et al., 2024) emphasizes that teachers in Islamic education function as moral and spiritual guides, not merely as transmitters of instructional content. Meanwhile, (Anshori et al., 2023) demonstrate that, from an Islamic perspective, students are individuals with inherent potential that must be nurtured through the process of *tarbiyah* in order to develop into complete human beings. Both studies highlight the importance of spiritual and moral dimensions in the teacher–student relationship.

However, most of these studies remain conceptual and normative, focusing on the ideal roles of teachers and students without examining how these values are implemented in contemporary Islamic educational contexts. In practice, the relationship between educators and students is often influenced by modern formal education systems (Aldi & Khairanis, 2025), which tend to emphasize

cognitive learning outcomes rather than character and spiritual transformation . As a result, the meaning of educational relationships grounded in Islamic values becomes blurred and loses its philosophical substance.

This study seeks to fill that gap through a qualitative approach that focuses on exploring the meanings, experiences, and real perceptions of educators and students in Islamic educational institutions. This approach allows researchers to delve more deeply into lived experiences that reflect the essence of educational relationships within the framework of Islamic values. The findings are expected to contribute conceptually to the development of Islamic education theory that is more humanistic, spiritual, and contextual, in accordance with the needs of the times.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design, which aims to examine in depth the concept of the essence of educators and learners from the perspective of Islamic education. This approach is chosen because the object of study is conceptual and normative in nature, derived from Islamic texts and relevant scholarly literature. Therefore, this research does not focus on field data collection but rather on the critical analysis of written sources.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data include the Qur'an and the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad, particularly authentic hadiths related to educational concepts, the roles of educators, and the characteristics of learners. In addition, classical and contemporary scholarly works in the field of Islamic education are used as main references. Secondary data are obtained from books, academic journal articles, and previous studies relevant to the research topic.

The data collection technique is conducted through documentation study, namely by tracing, reading, and examining various literature related to the research theme. The researcher selects credible sources with academic relevance and then categorizes the data based on specific themes, such as the concept of educators in Islam, the characteristics of learners, and the relationship between the two within the educational process.

The data analysis technique in this study uses content analysis with a descriptive-analytical approach. The collected data are analyzed by identifying key concepts and then systematically interpreting them to uncover their underlying meanings. In addition, this study employs a normative-theological approach to understand the Qur'an and hadith within the context of Islamic education, as well as a philosophical approach to explore the fundamental values embedded in the concepts of educators and learners.

To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation by comparing various references that share the same theme. Through this method, the researcher obtains a more comprehensive understanding and minimizes interpretive bias. Furthermore, a critical review of each source is conducted to ensure its validity and relevance to the research focus. Through this method, the study is expected to produce a deep and systematic understanding of the essence of educators and learners in Islamic education, as well as to provide theoretical contributions to the development of contemporary Islamic education studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study yields several key findings related to the essence of educators and learners from the perspective of Islamic education. Based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, it is

found that the concepts of educators and learners in Islam are not merely functional, but also ontological and spiritual, rooted in the values of divine revelation and the prophetic tradition.

First, the findings indicate that the essence of educators in Islamic education is not limited to the role of transmitting knowledge (*transfer of knowledge*), but also encompasses functions as spiritual guides (*murabbi*), instructors (*mu'allim*), and moral cultivators (*mu'addib*). These three functions are complementary and collectively shape the ideal character of an educator in Islam. The analyzed data show that an educator is required to possess moral integrity, exemplary conduct (*uswab hasanah*), and sufficient intellectual competence. Thus, the authority of an educator in Islam is derived not only from knowledge but also from personal character and closeness to divine values.

Second, this study finds that learners in Islamic education are viewed as active subjects endowed with innate potential (*fitrah*) that must be developed holistically. Learners are not merely seen as passive recipients of knowledge, but as individuals who possess physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. The findings reveal that the concept of *fitrah* serves as the primary foundation in understanding the nature of learners, whereby each individual has an inherent inclination toward goodness that must be nurtured through an appropriate educational process.

Third, the analysis reveals the existence of a dialogical and ethical relationship between educators and learners. This relationship is not authoritarian but is grounded in values of compassion, respect, and moral responsibility. In various Islamic educational literatures, this relationship is described as mutually complementary, where educators act as facilitators of development, while learners function as active and responsible seekers of knowledge. These findings indicate that the success of education is largely determined by the quality of interaction between the two parties.

Fourth, this study identifies that the ultimate goal of the interaction between educators and learners is the formation of *insan kamil*, a complete human being who achieves balance among intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions. This concept serves as a key indicator of the success of Islamic education, which is measured not only by academic achievement but also by character formation and spiritual maturity.

Furthermore, the findings show that in the contemporary context, there are challenges in implementing these ideal concepts. Several studies and empirical literature indicate a tendency to reduce the role of educators to mere instructors, while learners are still often treated as passive objects in the learning process. This reflects a gap between the normative concepts of Islamic education and their practical implementation in real educational settings.

Overall, the results of this study affirm that the essence of educators and learners in Islamic education is integrative and multidimensional. Educators serve as role models who not only transmit knowledge but also shape character and spirituality, while learners are active individuals with innate potential that must be optimally developed. The relationship between the two becomes the key to realizing the holistic goals of Islamic education.

Table 1. Educators and Learners in Islamic Education

| Aspect | Educator | Learner | Relationship & Goal |
|------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Essence | <i>Murabbi</i> , <i>Mu'allim</i> , <i>Mu'addib</i> (spiritual, intellectual, moral roles) | Active subject with innate (<i>fitrah</i>) potential | Dialogical and ethical relationship |
| Role | Guiding, teaching, and nurturing character | Seeking knowledge and self-development | Complementary roles |
| Key Traits | Integrity, exemplary conduct (<i>uswah</i>), competence | Physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential | Compassion and responsibility |

| | | | |
|---------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Orientation | Divine values and character formation | Holistic personal development | Meaningful interaction |
| Ultimate Goal | Forming knowledgeable and virtuous individuals | Becoming <i>insan kamil</i> (complete human) | Holistic education |
| Challenges | Role reduction to mere instructor | Tendency to be passive | Gap between ideals and practice |

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that the essence of educators and learners in Islamic education constitutes a holistic and integrative conceptual framework. The role of the educator, which is not limited to the transmission of knowledge but also includes functions as *murabbi*, *mu'allim*, and *mu'addib*, demonstrates that Islamic education is oriented toward the comprehensive formation of the human being (Titania Rahima et al., 2024). This is in line with the normative framework of the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1–5, which emphasize the importance of learning as an activity connected to the divine dimension (Lee, 2026). These verses indicate that educational activities in Islam are not secular in nature but are grounded in strong spiritual foundations.

Furthermore, the finding that learners are active subjects with innate potential (*fitrah*) has important implications for pedagogical approaches in Islamic education. The concept of *fitrah* positions human beings as creatures with an inherent inclination toward truth (Zulkifly et al., 2026), as affirmed in Surah Ar-Rum verse 30. Therefore, the educational process should function as a means to develop and actualize this potential, rather than merely transferring knowledge. In this context, participatory and dialogical learning approaches become highly relevant.

The results of this study also reveal that the relationship between educators and learners is ethical and dialogical in nature. This finding has a strong correlation with an authentic (*sahih*) hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari, in which the Prophet Muhammad SAW stated that he was sent to perfect human character. This hadith underscores that the moral dimension is central to the educational process in Islam. Therefore, the relationship between educators and learners must be grounded in ethical values such as compassion, honesty, and responsibility (Lam, 2026).

Moreover, the concept of *insan kamil* as the ultimate goal of Islamic education reflects an orientation that is not only cognitive but also affective and spiritual (Junaidin, 2024). This differs from modern educational paradigms, which tend to emphasize cognitive aspects and technical skills. Thus, Islamic education offers a more comprehensive approach to shaping balanced human beings (Zul et al., 2026). However, the findings of this study also identify a gap between this ideal concept and educational practices in the contemporary era.

In practice, many educational institutions still position educators as the dominant authority (Czerniawski, 2023), while learners tend to be passive. This condition indicates that dialogical principles in Islamic education have not been fully implemented. In addition, the pressure to achieve academic outcomes and the dominance of quantitative evaluation standards often neglect the aspects of character formation and spirituality. This phenomenon reflects the influence of modern educational paradigms that have not yet been fully integrated with the values of Islamic education.

These findings have important implications for the development of both theory and practice in Islamic education. First, there is a need to reconstruct the educational paradigm by integrating spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions in a balanced manner. Second, educators need to develop pedagogical competencies that are not only oriented toward content delivery but also

toward character formation. Third, educational institutions must create learning environments that support humanistic and dialogical interactions.

Overall, this discussion affirms that the essence of educators and learners in Islamic education cannot be separated from the theological and philosophical values that underpin it. The integration of normative concepts with empirical practice is key to realizing an Islamic education system that is both relevant and contextual in the modern era. Therefore, efforts to transform Islamic education should be directed toward strengthening these fundamental values in order to address contemporary challenges without losing its identity.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education is an effort to guide, direct, and nurture learners in a conscious and well-planned manner in order to develop a personality that aligns with the values of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. In the educational process, the roles of educators and learners are inseparable, as educators are responsible for guiding and enlightening the lives of learners. In Islam, the essence of educators can be classified into four: Allah SWT, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), parents, and teachers/instructors. Meanwhile, the essence of learners encompasses all human beings and members of society who strive to develop themselves through the educational process into individuals who possess knowledge, faith and piety (*iman* and *taqwa*), and noble character, enabling them to fulfill their roles as servants of Allah and as *khalifah* (vicegerents on earth). Therefore, for an educator to be successful in the educational process, they must understand learners with all their characteristics. Likewise, learners, in their pursuit of knowledge, must uphold proper ethics and good character, while seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT. Furthermore, the relationship between educators and learners is a fundamental interaction that cannot be separated within the educational process. An effective and harmonious relationship is essential to create a conducive learning environment, to develop learners' potential, and to achieve educational goals.

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