

IMPLEMENTATION OF AS-SHAFa IKHWAN EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN ISLAMIC TARIKH CURRICULUM DESIGN IN MODERN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the educational thought of the Ikhwan As-Shafa group and its implementation in the design of the Islamic History curriculum in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools. Ikhwan As-Shafa is known for its "Rational-Religious" approach that integrates philosophy and sharia. Using a library research method, this study finds that: (1) The design of the objectives of the Islamic History curriculum in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools is in line with the concept of tahdzib al-nafs (purification of the soul) of Ikhwan As-Shafa; (2) The curriculum material includes a balance between historical facts and philosophical values; (3) The learning experience emphasizes the active involvement of the five senses through varied methods. In conclusion, the thought of Ikhwan As-Shafa provides a strong theoretical foundation for developing a holistic Islamic history curriculum in the modern era.

Keywords: *Ikhwan As-Shafa, Curriculum Design, Islamic History, Modern Islamic Boarding School.*

A. Introduction

Modern Islamic boarding school education is a comprehensive educational system that focuses not only on cognition but also on instilling profound life values (Nurkhin, Rohman, & Prabowo, 2024; Ulufah, Safi'i, Soki, & Islam, 2024). All activities are designed to foster character development and shape students with strong morals and noble character (Falah & Yuliana, 2022). Therefore, modern Islamic boarding schools serve as a forum for integrating knowledge and spiritual values within a single learning environment (Mutammam et al., 2024).

The subject of Islamic history is an important part of the Islamic boarding school curriculum because it encompasses various life values and events that shape students' personalities (Darmawan, Ikhrom, Negoro, & Al Faruq, 2025; Islam, Baqi, et al., 2025). Through Islamic history education, students are taught to learn from the struggles of the Prophet Muhammad and other great Islamic figures (Aluf, Safina, & Mahbubi, 2025; Islam, Amelia, et al., 2025; Islam, Habibah, Novitasari, & Maftukhin, 2025). The goal, of course, is to internaliseinternalise these exemplary values and shape their personalities (Azzahra, Mutawali, & Syukri, 2025; Islam, Baqi, et al., 2025).

However, in reality, many students struggle to grasp the depth of Islamic history (Alief, Prayogi, Pujiono, & Nasrullo, 2025). This is because the material employs a rigid style of language that can be difficult to understand, especially when it occurs in a past context that differs from the present (Mushaffa, Azmi, Islam, Khilwa, & Azizah, 2026). This obstacle often leads to historical material being viewed as mere memorisation of numbers and events, devoid of profound meaning (Azmi, Oktaviani, Islam, & Mushaffa, 2025; Paramita, Mukhlisah, & Sholihah, 2025). The failure to internaliseinternalise values remains a challenge for educators and requires resolution. This is because the noble values of history are difficult to internaliseinternalise, despite the many lessons they offer to be learned and emulated (Azmi, Mushaffa, Islam, Fasya, & Hidayati, 2024; Madyarini & Wijayanti, 2025).

Therefore, an appropriate educational approach is needed in curriculum design to make learning about Islamic History easier to understand and internalise. An innovative approach must bridge the complex narratives of the past with the challenges of modern life. An appropriate learning design will provide students with a new perspective on historical material. A good perspective will foster good character. Therefore, a strategic step to align historical material for students' easier understanding is to utilise the ideas of classical educational scholars, such as the Ikhwan As-Shafa, as a model for ideal Islamic History education. The thoughts of the Ikhwan As-Shafa, which prioritise rationality and spirituality, are highly relevant for enriching curriculum design in Islamic educational institutions. This integration of thought is expected to provide a new, more holistic perspective in the delivery of historical material to students.

Several studies have explored the educational thought concept of the As-Syafa Brotherhood, including the education of the As-Shafa Brotherhood which is considered to be similar to John Locke's educational thought regarding the tabularasa concept which is empiricist in nature (Umiarso & Karim, 2020), research which reveals that the Brotherhood's thinking in education, especially the objectives and curriculum, are in line with educational developments in Indonesia (Efendi & Rahmawati, 2025), the content of the Brotherhood's education curriculum is religious knowledge and general knowledge (Apriliani & Abu Bakar, 2024; Sholehah & Maragustam, 2024; Sumantri, 2020). *From the studies above, there has been no research specifically that explores the concept of Tarikh learning in the Brotherhood of Syafa literature. Thus, this research fills this gap. There are already several studies on approaches to learning Islamic Dates. Among them are Islamic Date learning using the SQ3R method (Anwar, Azizah, Ritonga, & Hasanah, 2025), the Student Has Questions method (Asnidar, 2022), and a cooperative learning model (Anwar, Siyami, Asyarah, Khotimah, & Ifada, 2022).* The research on the Islamic Tarikh educational approach above aims to internalise character; however, it is limited to concrete applications within modern learning models. So, research on the conceptual approach to studying Islamic Dates from the perspective of Islamic scholars has not been formulated.

Therefore, this research aims to analyse in depth the implementation of Ikhwan As-Shafa's educational thinking in the design of the Islamic Tarikh curriculum in modern Islamic boarding schools. Through this analysis, it is hoped that a more effective and characteristic design formulation of objectives, materials and learning experiences will be found. The main focus of this research is to determine to what extent this thinking can address the challenges of internalising historical values in the modern Islamic boarding school system.

B. Methods

This study employed a combination of qualitative and library research methods (Qomar, 2022). The primary data source was the Islamic History textbook for the KMI (Kulliyatul Muallimin Al-Islamiyyah) level at the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School. The second primary data source was the collection of Rasa'il Ikhwan As-Shafa and the Islamic History curriculum documents at modern Islamic boarding schools. Secondary sources included several articles that explained the Rasa'il Ikhwanul Shafa. Data collection was conducted by accessing digital libraries containing traditional books and by searching for articles on Google Scholar.

Data analysis in this study was conducted interactively and continuously until completion using the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman, A. Michael Saldaña, 2018). In the reduction stage, the researcher selected and simplified the literature on the Ikhwan As-Shafa's thoughts and the Islamic History curriculum documents to focus on the research substance. Next, the data are presented systematically in a descriptive matrix or logical narrative to facilitate mapping of curriculum implementation. The data is then concluded with conclusions validated through source triangulation techniques and cross-checking of the primary text of Rasa'il Ikhwan As-Shafa to ensure the credibility of the research findings.



Figure 1. Research data analysis diagram

C. Result and Discussion

Designing the Objectives of Islamic Education from the Perspective of the Ikhwān As-Shafa

The Ikhwān As-Shafa believe that humans possess intellectual and spiritual potential that must be developed in a balanced manner (Rum, 2021). Intellectual potential refers to students' intellect/intelligence and the development of critical and creative personalities (Zuhri & Arif, 2023). Spiritual potential is related to the objectives of spiritual education (Habib Mohamed, 2024). The objectives of spiritual education are driven by affective values within the individual, which, along with intellectual potential, foster positive attitudes, behaviours, and character traits in students. Its implementation in modern Islamic boarding schools is evident in the position of Islamic Education, which is not merely a complement but also a tool for shaping students' identity through the exemplary role of historical figures.

Intellectual goals are directed so that students not only memorise the chronology of events, but can also analyse patterns of change in the history of the Islamic world with sharp critical power (Firmansyah, 2022; Yudhi, 2023). The purpose of analysing historical events is to help students learn from them and apply their learning in the everyday world. Especially in taking *ibrah* so that they are not haphazard in the decision-making process in their lives. A critical spirit and sharp reasoning power are useful in life, especially in analytical sensitivity to problems and decision-making to solve them (Almulla & Al-Rahmi, 2023). This is in harmony with the spirit of rationality of the Ikhwān As-Shafa, who view reason as the main instrument for understanding the *sunnatullah* behind every major event (Abdullah, 1305; Steigerwald, 2020), so that students are trained to identify the causes and effects and the relevance of history to the context of today's civilisation.

The combination of rational analysis and the instillation of these values ultimately leads to the goal of character formation (Faiz, Marizqa Rosyanda, & Ferdi Nur Saputro, 2021). In the view of Ikhwān As-Shafa, the ultimate goal of education is to achieve resemblance to the attributes of God (*at-tasyabbuh bi al-ilah*) to the best of human capabilities, which, in the context of Islamic boarding schools, is translated as the formation of noble morals (Abdullah, 1305). By appreciating the exemplary behaviour of great Islamic figures, students are encouraged to internalise the values of integrity, courage, and piety, so that historical material is no longer dogmatic and rigid but instead directs and guides students' daily behaviour.

To build holistic history learning, the curriculum must be able to address all dimensions of students, from the physical (*hissiyah*), intellectual (*'aqliyyah*), to spiritual (*ruhiyyah*). The goal of *hissiyah* education is to produce physically healthy students. There is a correlation between the

aspects of *hissiyah* and *aqliyyah* as stated in the phrase *Al-aqlu saalim fil jismi saliim* (a healthy mind resides in a healthy body). This means that physical health is very important in Islamic education. As in the Islamic calendar, no Islamic scholar or cleric can produce hundreds, or even thousands, of manuscripts/works except in very prime condition. Another important aspect of the goal is the spiritual goal, which culminates in moral or character education. There is a relationship between the goals of *aqliyyah* education and the goals of spiritual education. Namely, intellectual intelligence and spiritual maturity will produce righteous deeds. There is a saying in the Ikhwanul Shafa Treatise that “knowledge without deeds is useless, and deeds without knowledge are lost” (Ikhwān, 1305). As illustrated by the following visualisation:

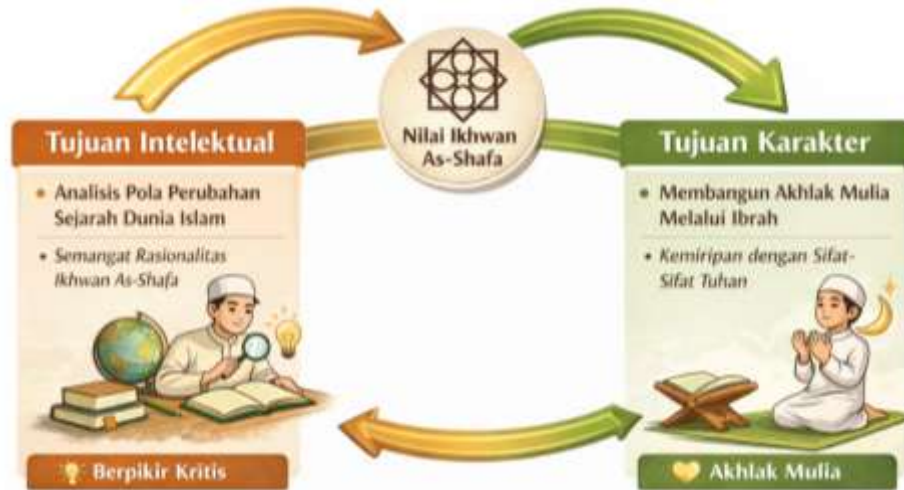


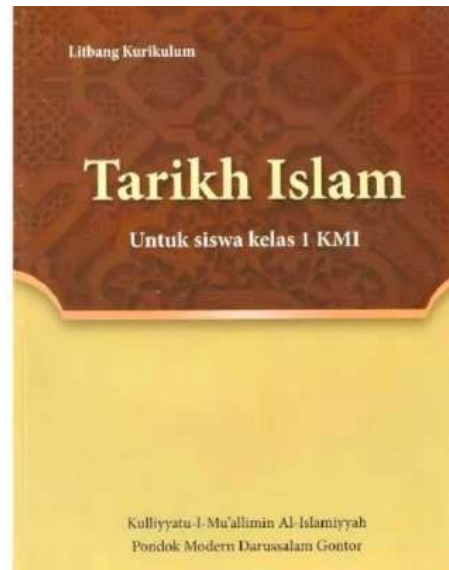
Figure 2. The relationship between *aqliyyah* (intellectual) goals and spiritual (character) goals.

Education in modern Islamic boarding schools has a broad curriculum framework that outlines how holistic education is implemented throughout students' 24 hours. Given the variety of subjects in schools, it is necessary to have holistic educational goals (Islam, Qodari, & Marjany, 2024). This is reflected in the learning objectives for Islamic Tarikh. Next, the objective aspect needs to be reduced to comprehensive Tarikh learning materials for students to study.

Material Design: Integration of *Aqli* and *Naqli* Sciences

Islamic Date material at the Modern Islamic Boarding School is designed not only to present historical narratives of war but also to cover a broad scope, including the history of civilization, science, and art, in line with the spirit of mastery of various scientific disciplines emphasized by the As-Shafa Ikhwan. The material on the history of civilization ideally provides a nuance of passion and enthusiasm to become the best generation of Muslims, as in the history of the Abbasids. Historical scientific material should ideally foster a spirit of continuous study, as previous scholars demonstrated a strong commitment to learning with the aim of taqarrub and the upholding of Islamic principles. Material on the history of civilization related to the arts in Islam ideally cultivates a refined soul in students, providing a framework for understanding how beauty originates from the noble civilization built by Muslims since the time of the Prophet.

In the history of Islamic civilization, the focus of learning is on the dynamics of social and political systems and on infrastructure development by major Islamic dynasties, which possess a descriptive-analytical character. Through this material, students are invited to examine how state governance and religious moderation united various nations, allowing the values of leadership and social justice to be internalized as an understanding that the glory of Islam was achieved through sound societal management.



Furthermore, the continuity of this curriculum is evident in the integration of the history of Islamic scholarship, which emphasizes the role of Muslim scientists in laying the foundations of modern science, as reflected in the Ikhwan As-Safa classification of sciences. This material has an integrative character, connecting revelation with rational observation, enabling students to recognize that past scientific and philosophical achievements are inseparable from Islamic identity. The values of intellectualism and a scientific work ethic instilled in this material aim to help students understand that seeking general knowledge is a form of devotion to Allah SWT and a way for Islam to support the advancement of world civilization.

In addition to the intellectual aspect, the history of Islamic art complements it by exploring the aesthetics of calligraphy, architecture, and literature as means of peaceful da'wah. The nature of this material is appreciative and creative, emphasizing that beauty is a manifestation of God's majesty that must be appreciated and developed. By studying art, students acquire aesthetic values and a gentleness of spirit that refine their character, in line with the educational goal of the Ikhwan As-Shafa (Islamic Brotherhood) to purify the soul (tahdzib al-nafs). This material ultimately provides students with a holistic understanding that Islam is a complete religion for building civilization, science, and culture.

The Ikhwan As-Shafa places great emphasis on mastering various (encyclopedic) disciplines. In Islamic boarding schools, this is evident in materials that connect Islamic history with the science and philosophy of the past, so students understand that Islam supports the advancement of civilization.

Learning Experience Design: A Multisensory Approach

The Ikhwan As-Shafa make significant epistemological contributions by understanding that human knowledge begins with sensory perception, which is then processed by the mind and soul. In their view, the five senses are the primary gateways through which information enters, which is then transformed into knowledge that enlivens the soul. In Modern Islamic Boarding Schools, this principle is implemented through the design of active learning experiences that maximize students' sensory potential, so that learning history is no longer abstract but becomes a real, memorable experience.



The first implementation is the use of audio-visual media through the screening of historical documentaries, which can stimulate the senses of sight and hearing simultaneously (Istiqomah, Lisdawati, & Adiyono, 2023). Through visual reconstructions of past events, students can capture the atmosphere, emotions, and historical details that are difficult to obtain solely through textual narratives in textbooks. The use of this technology aligns with the Ikhwan As-Shafa concept that visual images captured by the eye are more quickly embedded in memory (*al-quwwah al-hafizhah*) than oral information (Anwar et al., 2022).

The teacher's strategy in implementing this audio-visual approach begins with selecting documentary material relevant to the topic. The teacher then serves as a guide, offering reflective points throughout the screening (Afwan, Suryani, & Ardianto, 2020). The teacher does not simply allow students to watch passively; they provide an analysis worksheet to record important lessons and facts that emerge from the screening. After the screening, the teacher facilitates a question-and-answer session to confirm students' visual understanding and develop a structured, in-depth conceptual understanding.

Next, the kinesthetic aspect is realized through drama or simulations of major events, such as the Battle of Badr or the Conquest of Mecca, to engage the students physically. By portraying historical figures, students not only use their muscles and body movements but also engage their feelings and empathy to understand the context of the struggles of Islamic heroes. This simulation provides a direct experience, which is highly emphasized in holistic education, strengthening the connection between physical actions and inner meaning (Rani, 2021).

In the kinesthetic strategy, the teacher acts as both director and facilitator, directing the scenario to maintain historical accuracy while remaining creative. The teacher divides students into

groups and challenges them to demonstrate the strategies or diplomacy involved in the events. At the end of the simulation, the teacher conducts a debriefing to explore students' feelings while portraying specific characters, so that each individual can truly feel the values of courage and sacrifice.

The third implementation involves dialectical discussions that stimulate students' logical thinking through in-depth question-and-answer sessions. This method mimics the writing style of Rasa'il Ikhwan As-Shafa, which is rich in philosophical dialogue designed to stimulate human reasoning toward the truth. This discussion forces students not to accept historical information at face value but to process it through logical arguments about the causes and effects, and the Influence of historical events, on the current world order.

The teacher's strategy for fostering dialectic is to use provocative questioning (the Socratic method) to spark healthy debate in the classroom. The teacher creates a safe space for students to express their opinions, refute them, and argue based on previously studied historical data. The teacher's role here shifts from merely providing information to that of an intellectual moderator, tasked with aligning students' logical thinking within the boundaries of Islamic law and sound rationality (Islam & Nasution, 2024).

In conclusion, these three active learning strategies—audio-visual, kinesthetic, and dialectical form a systemic whole that touches all dimensions of the students' humanity, from body to soul. By combining sensory stimulation and logical refinement, Modern Islamic Boarding Schools have successfully transformed the classical thought of the Ikhwan As-Shafa into relevant instructional practices today. Learning Islamic History has ultimately achieved its highest goal: to develop intellectually intelligent individuals with a depth of character rooted in historical appreciation.

D. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the Islamic History curriculum design in Modern Islamic Boarding Schools represents a practical manifestation of the holistic educational theory of the Ikhwan As-Shafa. The integration of reason and faith in historical material helps students develop broad insights while maintaining strong spiritual roots. This study recommends that curriculum developers continue to strengthen the critical analysis aspect of historical material to maintain the relevance of Ikhwan As-Shafa's thought amidst the challenges of the times.

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