Bridging East and West: A Comparative Study of Pragmatism of Ibn Khaldun and John Dewey in the Philosophy of Education

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Abstract. This study is motivated by contemporary challenges in adaptive and context responsive Islamic Education. This research aims to analyze and compare the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun as a basis for developing such a model. Although John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun both emphasize that knowledge must have practical implications and be based on real experiences, research linking their ideas in the context of contemporary Islamic education reform remains limited. Therefore, a comparative analysis is needed to provide a conceptual basis for the renewal of Islamic education in the modern era. This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study of the two figures and relevant academic literature. The results of the analysis show that Dewey and Ibn Khaldun have major conceptual similarities, both criticize purely theoretical education and emphasize experiential and practice-based learning as the foundation of meaningful education. Dewey viewed education as a means of continuous social reconstruction as well as a way to shape democratic citizens. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun sees education as the foundation for moral formation, social welfare, and the advancement of civilization. The fundamental difference between the two lies in their philosophical foundations. Dewey's thinking is built on secular rationalism and democratic values, while Ibn Khaldun's ideas stem from Islamic moral and spiritual values. The integration of their two schools of thought provides a new framework for the development of an Islamic education paradigm that is pragmatic, contextual, and oriented towards social change. This research also enriches the discourse on Islamic education by connecting the ethical-spiritual dimensions and the practical needs of today's society.
Keywords. Educational Pragmatism; Ibn Khaldun; John Dewey; Experiential Learning; Philosophy of Education

Abstrak. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh tantangan kontemporer dalam Pendidikan Islam yang menuntut model pendidikan yang adaptif dan responsive terhadap konteks. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dan membandingkan filososfi Pendidikan John Dewey dan Ibn Khaldun sebagai dasar model tersebut. Meskipun John Dewey dan Ibnu Khaldun sama-sama menekankan bahwa ilmu harus berdampak praktis dan pada pengalaman nyata, kajian tentang gagasan-gagasan mereka umunya diperlakukan secara terpisah dan dalam tradisi intelektual yang berbeda, yang membatasi upaya integratif untuk reformasi Pendidikan Islam kontemporer. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan analisis komparatif untuk memberikan landasan konseptual bagi pembaruan pendidikan Islam di era modern. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi komparatif terhadap kedua tokoh serta literatur akademik yang relevan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Dewey dan Ibn Khaldun memiliki kesamaan konseptual utama, mereka mengkritik pendidikan yang murni teoritis dan menekankan pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman dan praktik sebagai landasan pendidikan yang bermakna. Dewey memandang pendidikan

sebagai sarana rekonstruksi sosial yang berkelanjutan sekaligus jalan untuk membentuk warga negara yang demokratis. Sementara itu, Ibn Khaldun melihat pendidikan sebagai fondasi bagi pembentukan moral, kesejahteraan sosial, dan kemajuan peradaban. Perbedaan mendasar antara keduanya terletak pada landasan filosofisnya. Pemikiran Dewey dibangun di atas rasionalisme sekuler dan nilai-nilai demokratis, sedangkan gagasan Ibn Khaldun bersumber dari nilai-nilai moral dan spiritual Islam. Integrasi pemikiran keduanya memberikan kerangka baru bagi pengembangan paradigma pendidikan Islam modern yang bersifat pragmatis, kontekstual, dan berorientasi pada perubahan sosial. Penelitian ini turut memperkaya diskursus pendidikan Islam dengan menghubungkan dimensi etis-spiritual dan kebutuhan praktis masyarakat masa kini.

Kata Kunci. Pendidikan Pragmatis; Ibn Khaldun; John Dewey; Pembelajaran Pengalaman; Filsafat Pendidikan

A. INTRODUCTION

Educational philosophy responds to shifts in society and ideas that influence the way people learn. In recent educational reform, more and more attention is needed about the philosophical response to such problems as narrowing of learning model, separation of theory and practice, practical operability in real social life. Pragmatism in one of its aspects is the approach, which considers education as a practical experience and useful for life with John Dewey being its main representative. (Samho et al. 2025). This tradition criticized the education, which was transferred culture-based and not investigator social progess isn't correspondence to the society over establishment when the habit is in way of each have been made (Hasani et al. 2024). Therefore, pragmatism is not merely a philosophy of education but also a critique of deadening practices in education, and it has current relevance for reading the reforms taking place today within Islamic educational institutions.

Pragmatism in the educational philosophies of Ibn Khaldun and John Dewey reveals several points of convergence, even though the two thinkers come from different cultural backgrounds and historical contexts. Both reject purely theoretical approaches to education and emphasize the importance of experience in the learning process. (Ratnasari 2023).Ibn Khaldun highlights the importance of studying knowledge in its functional and practical dimension. Dewey likewise maintains that education should be grounded in students' concrete experiences and aimed at developing critical thinking. Both, therefore, advocate for an educational approach that is deeply contextual(Kurniandini, Chailani, and Fahrub 2022).

The role of education, according to both Ibn Khaldun and Dewey, is a tool of achieving social change yet rooted in their respective epistemological perspectives. Ibn Khaldun, for instance, makes education an aspect of maintaining civilisation and social unity (Iqbal 2025). Dewey underlines the constant social reconstruction which is built upon democratic participation and learning from experience (Mubarok 2024). This point of intersection gives prominence to education as more than an academic phenomenon, but rather as a tool for developing people who are able to address the challenges of their epoch.

The rejection of a purely abstract knowledge both Ibn Khaldun and Dewey espouse carries some deep theoretical consequences for modern education. Both re-conceptualize education as a workable process that evolves with social changes, by alternating the purpose of knowledge to coping with challenges in real lives(Samho et al. 2025). What a view such supports-in Islamic education-of moving from text centrefullness to context

centrefullness which remains ethical in nature yet wants to contextu-alized the sured developments.

Pragmatic thinking in educational philosophy has not only developed in the modern Western tradition but can also be traced back to classical Islamic thought. Education oriented toward concrete experiences, competency development, and social relevance demonstrates that knowledge acquires meaning when applied to real life. This experience-based and reflective educational framework emphasizes that education is a dynamic process aimed at shaping individuals to adapt, contribute, and develop socially and morally, thus opening up a conceptual space for reconciling John Dewey's pragmatism with Ibn Khaldun's educational thinking within a single, dialogical philosophical horizon(Villard, Flores-moncada, and Lara 2020).

While previous studies have examined John Dewey's pragmatism and Ibn Khaldun's educational thought separately, limited research has explored their comparative relevance within the context of contemporary Islamic education (Suswati, Mahsun, and Fatihin 2024). This study addresses this gap by proposing a pragmatic educational framework grounded in experiential learning and social benefit, offering a new perspective on the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era.

Pragmatism is a philosophical school that views truth as the outcome of practical consequences and empirical experience. In the context of education, John Dewey stands as a central figure who introduced the concepts of "learning by doing" and "education as life itself". According to Dewey, education is not merely a process of transmitting knowledge but an effort to reconstruct experience in ways that enable learners to develop critical thinking skills and actively participate in social and democratic life.

According to Pavlis and Gkiosos, Dewey asserts that education functions as a means of social reconstruction that continually evolves in response to changing times. He rejects educational systems that are purely theoretical and emphasizes the importance of applying knowledge in real-life situations (Pavlis and Gkiosos 2017).

Yiyao Li similarly notes in her article that Dewey's idea of learning by doing serves as the foundation for experiential learning. This approach emphasizes students' active involvement in real activities as a way to gain deeper understanding of knowledge, rather than relying solely on theoretical memorization (Li 2023).

Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the practical (*'amaliyah*) function of knowledge reflects a pragmatic orientation in which education is evaluated based on its social utility and tangible outcomes (Thaheransyah and Ritonga 2024). Concepts such as gradual learning (tadrij) and repetition (takrir) further reinforce an experiential approach to education, where understanding develops through continuous practice rather than abstract theorization. Moreover, asabiyyah positions education as a social process aimed at strengthening collective solidarity, aligning with pragmatic principles that view learning as embedded within social interaction and communal life (Fahmi and Sukandar 2025).

Existing literature suggests several important points of convergence between John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun, particularly in their rejection of purely theoretical education and their emphasis on experience as the foundation of learning(Shareef 2017). Both thinkers also regard education as central to the formation and sustainability of civilization, highlighting its adaptive and contextual nature within social and economic dynamics (Amin, Pratama, and Amin 2023). These shared perspective provide a strong justification for a comparative analysis that explores how pragmatic educational principles can be articulated within an Islamic educational framework.

However, the fundamental difference between the two lies in the philosophical foundations that underpin their thought. Dewey is grounded in a secular and democratic

paradigm that emphasizes freedom of thought and experimentation as pathways to progress. Meanwhile, Ibn Khaldun is rooted in the classical Islamic paradigm, which highlights moral dimensions, social responsibility, and the sustainable development of civilization.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative philosophical-comparative method because the research aims to analyze and compare the underlying educational philosophies of John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun rather than to measure empirical outcomes. A philosophical - comparative approach enables an in-depth examination of concepts, values, and epistemological thoughts, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative or experimental methods (Siskawati, Rusmita, and Ardimen 2024).

The pragmatic approach to educational philosophy emphasizes that the value of knowledge is determined by its function in guiding action and solving real-world problems. Within this framework, experience, reflection, and social context form the primary foundations of the learning process, both in John Dewey's pragmatic tradition and in Ibn Khaldun's educational thought, which values knowledge based on its benefits for moral formation and the sustainability of civilization. This shared orientation toward the practical utility of knowledge demonstrates that both thinkers share a philosophical concern with education as a contextual and meaningful social practice(Pedersen and Hobye 2020).

This study employs reflective, normative, and conceptual within a qualitative philosophical-comparative approach. Reflective analysis is used to interpret the underlying meanings of Dewey's and Ibn Khaldun's educational ideas, while normative analysis examines the ethical values shaping their educational puposes. Conceptual analysis systematizes key concepts to identify points of convergence and divergence between both thinkers through thematic literature mapping and categorization, enabling a coherent philosophical interpretation of their educational thought (Lukman 2022).

Primary sources in this study consist of John Dewey's Democracy and Education and Experience and Education, as well as Ibn Khaldun's The Muqaddimah. These foundational texts are examined to directly analyze each thinker's original educational concepts, epistemological assumptions, and philosophical orientations. Secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, are used to contextualize and critically interpret the arguments found in these primary works(Dewey 1938)(Dewey 1916)(Khaldun 1967).

Data analysis was conducted through three interconnected stages. The first stage involved content analysis to identify key educational principles and philosophical foundations in the works of Dewey and Ibn Khaldun. The second stage employed comparative analysis to systematically examine similarities and differences between their educational perspectives. The third stage consisted of conceptual synthesis, guided by criteria of philosophical coherence, ethical compatibility, and contextual relevance to contemporary education, in order to integrate Dewey's pragmatism with Ibn Khaldun's educational thought in a non-subjective manner. This staged analytical process ensure methodological consistency and conceptual rigor throughout the study (Orong 2023).

Based on the comparative analysis conducted in this study, Dewey's pragmatic education emphasizes experiential learning and social reconstruction. Through this method, the findings are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of an Islamic education paradigm that is adaptive to changing times while remaining grounded in a balance between rationality and spirituality.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. John Dewey's Pragmatic Education
Pragmatic Education According to John Dewey

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution had a significant influence on Dewey's educational pragmatism, particularly the idea that all living beings possess an instinct to survive and develop. Human beings inevitably encounter various problems that may pose threats to their lives. A person is considered successful when they are able to solve these problems and incorporate the steps of problem-solving into their own experience, allowing them to apply this experiential knowledge when facing similar challenges in the future. The key concept in John Dewey's philosophy of education is experience, in which education serves as a means for cultivating skills and methods of problem-solving (Anamofa 1976).

In Democracy and Education, Dewey conceptualizes education as a process of social continuity grounded in experience, where learning emerges through active participation and reflective inquiry rather than passive knowledge transmission. He argues that experience becomes educational when it enables learners to engage with real-life problems and contributes to individual growth and democratic life(Dewey 1916). This view is further reinforced in Experience and Education, where Dewey emphasizes the interaction between experience and reflection as the core of meaningful learning(Dewey 1938).

According to John Dewey, the basic pragmatic principles that underpin his philosophy of education can be formulated as follows: (1) democratic values serve as the ethical foundation of education; (2) scientific knowledge provides the theoretical and methodological tools of education; and (3) society functions as a set of human practices that serves as the benchmark for learning (Nasrudin, Yasha, and Supriadi 2025). For Dewey, the foundation of knowledge and truth lies in experience and practical ideas. He maintains that the core of knowledge originates from real-life experience. His focus is on democratic education, which serves as a means of shaping a democratic society through authentic experiences and the development of critical skills. Active student engagement, understanding of the real world, and the facilitation of intellectual and social growth are the goals of experimental methods and innovation in education (Hasani et al. 2024).

John Dewey states that the criteria for determining whether an experience is educational are, first, that it must be growth-enhancing not only physically, but also morally and intellectually; and second, that the experience must involve an interaction between subjective (internal) reality and objective (external) reality. In his view, practical skills carry significant moral educational value. Neat and systematic work depends on good emotional management, which emerges from a heightened sense of awareness (Hasbullah 1993). According to Dewey, experience necessarily contains both subject and object, the mental and the physical, as well as the rational and the empirical. Moreover, experience serves as the foundation of education, as well as its instrument and its ultimate goal (Istiqomah, Zahru, and Fadhilaturrahmah 2022). Dewey's pragmatic approach to education promotes active learning, open communication, and the cultivation of democratic values, all of which help develop authentic experiences and critical thinking skills. Thus, the pragmatist tradition in education emphasizes the importance of practical experience and concrete action within the learning process (Hasani et al. 2024).

The Aims and Curriculum of Education According to John Dewey

According to John Dewey, the goal of education is to help individuals reflect on the problems that arise in society and bring about real change in their lives. This is because the aims of education are not something external to life, but are embedded within life itself (Wiranata et al. 2020).

John Dewey's concept of curriculum does not impose pressure on students; rather, it is grounded in what is natural and appropriate. His central idea is that school subjects should be connected to problem-solving techniques, enabling students to learn how to address the problems they encounter in real-life situations (Wiranata et al. 2020). A curriculum, according to John Dewey, is considered valid and successful only when it has been tested and its results can be evaluated. Dewey emphasizes problem-solving as the core methodology of education, and learning occurs when an individual is actively engaged in the process of solving problems.

According to John Dewey, curriculum content must be grounded in both theory and practice. His experimentalism views thinking and doing as a unified process, in which experience is continuously integrated. Thinking and acting are inseparable, for thought is incomplete until it is tested through experience. Dewey outlines three stages of curricular organization. The first is making and doing, in which students are engaged in direct, hands-on activities by manipulating and using raw materials. The second is history and geography, which serve as major educational resources that broaden and deepen the significance of children's personal experiences. The third is the organization of knowledge, in which the curriculum becomes structured into subjects and various branches of learning (Ratnasari 2023).

Educators and Students According to John Dewey

Teachers have the role of instilling essential elements of knowledge in their students. Because the world is constantly changing, teachers must guide learners in shaping and enriching their experiences. A teacher should be able to direct all student activities, as they are the ones with broader and deeper experience. In addition, teachers must be creative and not confined to rigid textbooks. They should also create an environment in which learning feels enjoyable for students(Wiranata et al. 2020).

The teacher's role as an advisor is to help learners find their own paths. Teachers also encourage students to develop skills in problem-solving. They are responsible for guiding students to engage actively in confronting and understanding the urgent problems of life. When presenting problems to learners, these must be real and not merely imaginary, and students should be directly involved in solving them. In addition, teachers need to encourage students to develop their talents and interests (Nasrudin et al. 2025). According to John Dewey, when teachers nurture students' curiosity, learners acquire knowledge more quickly, rather than becoming passive or being controlled through traditional punitive discipline. Therefore, the tools used in learning should include games and other varied forms of activity. In Dewey's view, children learn many things in essentially the same way adults do; what differentiates them is the type of information they need in order to solve problems (Anamofa 1976).

A learner is a subject who possesses experiences that enable them to optimize their intellect in addressing problems as well as in interacting and adapting to their surroundings. Students are beings endowed with advantages over other creatures because they possess reason and intelligence, which serve as essential provisions for confronting various challenges (Wiranata et al. 2020).

Students need to possess useful skills. Learning through collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving can be used to sharpen these skills. In addition, they can further develop their abilities by adapting to and addressing the problems that arise in their environment. School or the classroom is not the only place where learning takes place. According to John Dewey, when individuals are able to learn from their own experiences, those experiences become the best teacher, because learning

requires not only theory but also the practical application of that theory. This awareness and motivation become the driving force that encourages students to fully engage in the learning process (Nasrudin et al. 2025).

Learning Methods According to John Dewey

The learning by doing method pioneered by John Dewey, learning through action, became the foundation of all his educational thought. This concept was first applied in the form of a "work school" and was tested in 1859 in the United States. It reflects a pragmatic view of education grounded in two key considerations: first, that human nature is shaped by divine design; and second, that children are active beings who must be prepared for their future lives through purposeful work (Surahman and Fauziati 2021).

Active learning encompasses various strategies that help students develop their ability to learn actively while also allowing both students and teachers to grow together. The role of the teacher is crucial in this process, as the teacher acts as a facilitator who supports students' learning, a resource person who stimulates their thinking, and a learning manager who designs meaningful learning activities (Surahman and Fauziati 2021). Learners are guided to become aware of the evolving needs of society and of the realities within the community. In addition, students are directed throughout their lives to respond actively to these developments (Mulyadi and Aqil 2023).

In the context of learning by doing, there are several forms of instruction, namely (Surahman and Fauziati 2021): Effective learning involves several key strategies. First, teachers should foster students' motivation by encouraging curiosity, inviting them to explore and think critically, and providing praise or rewards to strengthen their enthusiasm. Second, practical activities and hands-on projects are essential for enabling students to gain direct experience rather than relying solely on theoretical learning. Third, teachers need to pay attention to individual differences, as each student possesses varying abilities influenced by factors such as health, learning opportunities, home environment, and available learning facilities. Fourth, instruction should incorporate meaningful feedback to help students identify their mistakes, make improvements, and remain motivated; such feedback may take the form of both constructive correction and praise. Fifth, teaching should emphasize reasoning, ensuring that learning goes beyond memorization and remains connected to real-life situations. Finally, learning should be organized proportionally, with teachers selecting instructional methods that align with the subject matter and the specific needs of their students.

Knowledge can be acquired through practical activities and meaningful tasks, not merely from books that offer only theoretical explanations, because true learning requires active engagement and concrete action (Wiranata et al. 2020). In this method, ideas are treated as tools for solving various practical problems. John Dewey emphasizes practice, in which learners actively participate in the learning process by carrying out the tasks themselves (Topan 2021). According to John Dewey, learning by doing does not imply being anti-intellectual; rather, it means that individuals must be active, engaged, and willing to explore (Hasbullah 1993).

The project method is another approach used to foster students' skills. This method is considered suitable and effective because learners are guided in solving various real-world problems. In addition, there is the reflective discussion method, in which discussions about moral dilemmas in society help students develop the habit of thinking critically in order to resolve problems (Nasrudin et al. 2025).

2. Ibn Khaldun Pragmatic Education
Pragmatic Education According to Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun's pragmatic-instrumental view of education understands the learning process as a comprehensive effort to develop both the physical-biological and spiritual-psychological dimensions of the human being. In its physical–biological aspect, education supports human growth and development throughout life. In its spiritual-psychological aspect, education helps refine one's character and shape individuals toward achieving the highest goal, becoming the *insan kamil*, a complete and virtuous human being. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of character formation and ethical values in accordance with Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Although Ibn Khaldun did not formulate his educational ideas in a fully systematic manner, his views stand out because they are oriented toward concrete and practical application in everyday life (Jaya 2023).

Ibn Khaldun's educational thought can be understood as a pragmatic foundation rooted in life experience and the formation of civilization (*'umran*), where education cannot be separated from the social, moral, and historical realities of society. Education in the classical Islamic tradition, as demonstrated in contemporary Islamic and educational studies, is understood as a holistic and transformative process, integrating rational, ethical, and spiritual dimensions through the concept of tarbiyah as the development of the whole person. This framework demonstrates that Islamic educational practices are not dogmatic or ahistorical, but rather contextual and responsive to social needs, a characteristic that philosophically opens up space for dialogue with John Dewey's modern pragmatism, which emphasizes experience, reflection, and the active involvement of students in social life. Thus, Ibn Khaldun's thought provides an epistemological foundation for Islam that allows education to be understood as a dynamic and meaningful social practice, not simply the transmission of abstract knowledge(Sahin 2018).

In The Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that knowledge acquires value when it contributes to moral formation and social cohesion. He highlights gradual learning (tadrij), repetition (takrir), and lived experience (rihlah) as essential educational principles that align instruction with learners' developmental stages. For Ibn Khaldun, education is not merely intellectual training but a holistic process that integrates rational understanding with ethical and spiritual cultivation(Khaldun 1967).

Ibn Khaldun views education through a pragmatic lens by emphasizing an orientation toward *al-naf'iyy* (utility and benefit). He regards education as a means to develop practical skills, professional competencies, and a positive and constructive mindset. One of the fundamental stages in this process is *tamyiz*, the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, which represents the most basic level of reasoning for understanding empirical reality. Its ultimate goal is to produce something beneficial, both for the individual and for society. This activity of reasoning is essential for broadening human insight, which in turn has a positive impact on collective life. The next stage is *tajribiyy* (experience-based reasoning), which involves understanding derived from direct and empirical experience through human interaction. Through observation and firsthand experience, a person can arrive at *tashdiq* (validated truth) distilled from those experiences. For Ibn Khaldun, education is not merely a learning activity confined by space and time; rather, it is a conscious process rooted in observation and experience, because human reason is inseparable from its experimental dimension (Adam and Nadlif 2025).

Ibn Khaldun's ideas cannot be separated from the foundations of Islamic thought. The essence contained in the *Muqaddimah* reflects his intellectual outlook, which was shaped and inspired by the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith(Kurniandini et al. 2022).

According to Ibn Khaldun, education must cultivate skills through real and concrete experience, skills that can be applied in daily life, contribute to socio-economic development, and prepare individuals to face the realities of life itself. Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of education contains four main principles: integrating theory with practice, balancing religious knowledge with general sciences, linking education with the pursuit of livelihood, and viewing education as a social and cultural phenomenon. This perspective emphasizes that education must be contextual, functional, and aligned with the needs of society (Hamzah and Aprison 2025). It is essential to integrate theory and practice so that knowledge does not remain merely theoretical, but is accompanied by real skills gained through experience, allowing individuals to succeed not only in this world but also in the hereafter (Putri and Sujarwo 2025).

Educational Goals and Curriculum According to Ibn Khaldun

For Ibn Khaldun, the ultimate goal of Islamic education is oriented toward the hereafter, guided by principles derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an contains all the teachings needed in worldly life and can serve as the foundation for an Islamic educational curriculum. In addition, Ibn Khaldun views education as a means of preparing society to be ready and capable of responding to the social changes that occur (Jaya 2023).

According to Ibn Khaldun in the Muqaddimah, the aims of education are divided into two aspects, namely (Handayani, Zainur, and Masyudi 2025): The first is an afterlife-oriented goal, in which education seeks to strengthen faith through experience and understanding grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith. Religious learning serves as the primary foundation for cultivating noble character and steadfast belief. The second is a worldly goal, whereby education equips individuals with practical skills in various fields, such as medicine, administration, and agriculture, enabling them to contribute effectively to society and meet the demands of daily life.

Ibn Khaldun envisioned education as a process that enables individuals to apply the theories they have learned to everyday life while also shaping them into morally upright and God-conscious human beings. According to Ibn Khaldun, the aims of education include several key objectives. First, it seeks to enhance the intellect, thought, and human reasoning capacities. Knowledge and learning are inseparable, and thus the pursuit of knowledge becomes an obligation. Second, education serves as a mediator that improves the quality of life in positive ways, consisting of two dimensions: the rational or intellectual aspect and the spiritual aspect. These two dimensions are realized through a process of actualization and are subsequently transmitted to future generations, meaning that what one has acquired can be passed on to others. Third, education enables individuals to earn a livelihood. Human beings naturally require food and drink to sustain themselves from youth to old age, and this necessity is what Ibn Khaldun refers to as the pursuit of sustenance, which involves the effort to fulfill these essential needs (Damayanti and Sari 2024).

In the Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun emphasizes the Qur'an as the foundation of education and as the basis for all skills that will be learned in the future. One of the defining features or symbols of Islamic education is introducing children to the understanding of the Qur'an, with the aim of strengthening their faith and reinforcing their conviction in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Safirah, Saleh, and Sari 2024). Learners must be taught knowledge derived from the Qur'an in a gradual manner, after which they may be introduced to other branches of knowledge (Manaf 2020). According to Ibn Khaldun, an Islamic educational curriculum must include subjects that reflect the full range of human knowledge, both

religious and worldly sciences. He firmly believed in the integration of these two domains of knowledge (Indrawati, Sujalmo, and Fadila 2025).

Ibn Khaldun's pragmatism view of curriculum emphasizes concrete application and real action. He classifies knowledge into two types: intrinsic knowledge, or the sciences of the Sharia, and extrinsic knowledge, which serves as a tool for understanding the Sharia disciplines (Jaya 2023). The curriculum should not be merely theoretical or static; rather, it must remain aligned with real-life conditions, as well as the economic and cultural contexts of the surrounding community. In addition, the curriculum serves as a means of equipping learners with the practical skills they need so that they can actively participate in productive activities within their environment (Putri and Sujarwo 2025).

According to Ibn Khaldun, there are three types of curriculum that need to be taught to students, namely (Rosalina and Sari n.d.): The first is the curriculum as tools for comprehension, which includes linguistics, rhetoric, grammar, and poetry. The second is the secondary curriculum, consisting of supplementary disciplines that support the understanding of Islam, such as the philosophical sciences, logic, physics, mathematics, and metaphysics. The third is the primary curriculum, which comprises the core subjects of Islamic studies, covering all fields of *al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah*, including hadith studies, Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence, the principles of jurisprudence, Sufism, and theology.

Ibn Khaldun also divides the educational curriculum into two levels, namely (Wiranata et al. 2020): Ibn Khaldun also divides the educational curriculum into two levels. The first is the basic level, which consists of an in-depth study of the Qur'an as the foundation of religion and the primary source of knowledge. Qur'anic instruction provides learners with a strong theological grounding and moral character. The second is the advanced level, which includes two components: first, the sciences related to their own essence, namely the religious or Sharia sciences; and second, the general sciences, which are not directly related to the essence of God.

Educators and Students According to Ibn Khaldun

According to Ibn Khaldun, the role of the educator is crucial in shaping students' character, because a teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but also a guide in moral development and a model for ethical conduct. The educator serves as the link between character formation and knowledge, and between theoretical understanding and practical application in real life (Hamzah and Aprison 2025). An educator must be able to serve as a role model and guide, directing and leading learners toward what is better and more appropriate (Jauhari 2020).

As an educator, one must possess certain characteristics that support professional competence, namely (Damayanti and Sari 2024): First, an educator should prioritize gentleness, avoid harsh behavior, and refrain from using punishments that may harm students physically or mentally. Second, an educator must serve as a good example or role model for learners. Third, an educator should adapt teaching methods and materials to the conditions and needs of the students. Fourth, an educator must possess broad insight and professional understanding of learners, particularly in relation to their psychological development, growth, and readiness to receive instruction.

A person who learns or requires guidance is referred to as a learner, who holds the position of a seeker of knowledge. According to Ibn Khaldun, learners are obligated to develop the potential that God has given them through the process of education (Damayanti and Sari 2024). According to Ibn Khaldun, there is a distinction between *muta'allim* and *wildān*. *Wildān* refers to learners who are still in need of close guidance or who are at the basic stage of learning. Meanwhile, *muta'allim* refers to learners who have

reached a more advanced level of development, whose creativity continues to be nurtured so that their potential can grow further (Rosalina and Sari n.d.).

Learning Methods According to Ibnu Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun states in the Muqaddimah that when knowledge is delivered by the teacher to the learner gradually, step by step and little by little, beginning with the fundamental issues of each discipline, it becomes highly beneficial. Through this method, learners are introduced to the essential points of each topic, guided in their understanding, and provided with comprehensive explanations (Kurniandini et al. 2022). According to Ibn Khaldun, the principles of learning include gradual progression and repetition, avoiding excessive cognitive burden on learners, and ensuring that material is not advanced before students have understood it. In addition, teachers should not be harsh toward learners, and forgetting is regarded as a natural part of the learning process (Rosalina and Sari n.d.).

According to Ibn Khaldun, there are several methods of education and instruction. First is the *tadrij wa takrār* method, which emphasizes repeated learning; it is considered effective when learners review the material at least three times. Second is the *ḥiwār wa munāqashah* method, a communication-centered approach in which interaction and active dialogue are key to understanding the material. Through questioning and discussion, learners arrive at clear and indisputable scientific truths. Third is the riḥlah method, which involves guiding learners into real-life contexts so that they acquire knowledge directly from teachers through travel and firsthand experience (Damayanti and Sari 2024).

In addition, there is the *tajribi* method, in which learners are first presented with a problem in broad terms and then guided to discuss or analyze it in greater depth and detail. The *al-qurb al-muʿāyanah* method is a gentle and compassionate approach to instruction, best suited for the *wildān* category, as younger learners still require substantial guidance from their teachers. This method is widely applied in early childhood and basic education settings, such as kindergarten, elementary school, and lower secondary levels. Meanwhile, the concentric method, used for the *mutaʿallim* category, involves offering an initial general overview before providing more detailed explanations, all while taking into account the students' abilities (Rosalina and Sari n.d.).

Ibn Khaldun maintains that learning should concentrate on the essential core of knowledge, rather than on lengthy or unnecessary details that offer no meaningful benefit.(Safirah et al. 2024). Learning strategies should reflect educational values while also aligning with the needs and developmental stages of learners. Teachers may employ various approaches, such as fostering compassion, providing repetition, modeling good behavior, and taking into account age-related developmental stages. Other strategies may include supporting physical and psychological growth, cultivating regular Qur'an reading, deepening expertise in specific fields, engaging in practical activities, organizing educational visits, and reducing dependence on mere textbook examination. All of these methods aim to develop learners' potential in a holistic and balanced manner (Putri and Sujarwo 2025).

3. Comparison of The Pragmatic Thinking of John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun

John Dewey (1859–1952) was an American philosopher and educator widely recognized as the pioneer of pragmatism in education. He rejected traditional learning systems that emphasized rote memorization and instead introduced experience-based learning through the establishment of The Dewey School. His works, such as Democracy and Education and Experience and Education, greatly influenced the development of modern educational philosophy and practice. Ibn Khaldun, born in Tunisia in 1332, was a

prominent Muslim intellectual known for his contributions as a historian, philosopher, and educator. His involvement in both politics and scholarship shaped the depth and originality of his thought. Through his monumental work *Kitab al-'Ibar* and its introduction, the Muqaddimah, he became a pioneer of sociology and the philosophy of history.

The pragmatic approach to educational philosophy developed by John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun demonstrates important common ground in emphasizing real-world experience as the basis for knowledge formation, despite their differing epistemological frameworks. Dewey views experience as a democratic, empirical, and reflective process, in which learning occurs through the active involvement of learners in solving real-life social problems. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun places experience within a rational-moral framework integrated with spiritual values and the goals of civilization (*'umrān*), so that education serves not only to master practical skills but also to shape character and social cohesion. This comparison demonstrates that Dewey's pragmatism is contextual-democratic, while Ibn Khaldun's is normative-teleological. However, both reject education that is verbalistic and detached from the realities of life. Thus, a comparative study of these two schools of thought enriches the discourse on educational philosophy by offering a model of pragmatism that is not singular, but plural and contextual(Thi 2025).

John Dewey's pragmatism conceptualizes education as a dynamic process grounded in lived experience, democratic participation, and continuous problem solving within social life. Dewey emphasizes that knowledge emerges through the interaction between learners and their environment, where experience functions not only as a source of learning but also as a means of social reconstruction and democratic growth. This experiential orientation resonates with Ibn Khaldun's educational thought, which also places experience (*tajribah and rihlah*) at the center of intellectual formation, yet frames it within a moral-spiritual and civilizational context. While Dewey's pragmatism prioritizes empirical inquiry and democratic agency, Ibn Khaldun integrates experiential learning with ethical discipline and social cohesion, aiming at the preservation and development of civilization (*'umran*). This comparison demonstrates that although both thinkers reject abstract and purely theoretical education, their pragmatisms diverge epistemologically: Dewey's experience is primarily empirical and social, whereas Ibn Khaldun's experience is simultaneously empirical, normative, and spiritual, revealing distinct yet complementary foundations of pragmatic educational philosophy(Ye and Shih 2021).

A comparative reading of Dewey's and Ibn Khaldun's primary works reveals a shared emphasis on experience as the foundation of learning, although grounded in different epistemological traditions. Dewey frames experience within a pragmatic and democratic framework oriented toward social problem-solving, whereas Ibn Khaldun situates experience within a moral and spiritual framework aimed at character formation and civilizational stability. This comparison demonstrates that experiential education can be articulated through both secular pragmatic and Islamic philosophical perspectives (Dewey 1938)(Dewey 1916)(Khaldun 1967).

While both John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun place experience at the center of education, they conceptualize it in fundamentally different ways. Dewey understands experience primarily in empirical and social terms, emphasizing active engagement, experimentation, and problem-solving as foundations of knowledge. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun views experience as both empirical and moral-spiritual, integrating practical engagement with ethical formation and spiritual development. This distinction reveals that although both reject purely abstract learning, Dewey's experientialism is oriented toward democratic social reconstruction, whereas Ibn Khaldun's experience is directed toward civilizational continuity and moral balance.

The curricular aims proposed by Dewey and Ibn Khaldun reflect their differing philosophical orientations. Dewey's curriculum seeks to cultivate reflective thinking, adaptability, and democratic participation through problem-based and experiential learning. Ibn Khaldun, while also valuing practical competence, emphasizes a curriculum that harmonizes rational sciences with religious knowledge to achieve both worldly usefulness and spiritual integrity. Despite these differences, both thinkers converge in viewing curriculum as dynamic and responsive to social needs rather than as a fixed body of content.

Differences in teacher student relationships further reflect the philosophical foundations of each thinker. Dewey positions the teacher as a facilitator who supports learners' autonomy and inquiry, consistent with his pragmatic commitment to democracy and experiential growth. Ibn Khaldun, however, conceptualizes the educator as a moral and intellectual guide who directs learners through gradual stages of development, reflecting his concern for ethical discipline and social order. These contrasting roles illustrate how Dewey's pedagogy emerges from a philosophy of individual agency, whereas Ibn Khaldun's pedagogy is rooted in moral cultivation and civilizational stability.

Although Ibn Khaldun's educational methods such as *tadrij* (gradual learning), *takrir* (repetition), and *rihlah* (experiential exploration) share practical similarities with Dewey's "learning by doing," they are grounded in a distinct epistemological framework. Dewey's methods are explicitly pragmatic, aimed at problem-solving and social experimentation, whereas Ibn Khaldun's methods function within a normative and moral-spiritual framework oriented toward character formation and societal cohesion. Therefore, Ibn Khaldun's pedagogy cannot be reduced to pragmatism but should be understood as a contextually grounded experiential tradition with ethical and spiritual foundations.

John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun both viewed education as a dynamic and comprehensive process rather than mere memorization or knowledge transfer. They stressed that education must develop the full range of human potential, intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual. For Dewey, true learning arises from direct experience, while for Ibn Khaldun, meaningful understanding emerges through lived experience and intellectual exploration (*rihlah*). Both rejected the separation of theory and practice, believing that knowledge gains value only when applied to real life. In their perspectives, learners are active agents who construct knowledge through engagement and reflection, while teachers serve as guides and facilitators who lead with empathy, patience, and awareness of individual differences.

Despite their similarities, Dewey and Ibn Khaldun differ fundamentally in their philosophical foundations and educational orientations. Dewey's thought is grounded in modern pragmatism and democratic values, emphasizing practical skills, reflective thinking, and social progress. In contrast, Ibn Khaldun's educational ideas are rooted in Islamic principles that highlight spirituality, moral formation, and faith. These philosophical differences shape distinct epistemological views: Dewey conceives knowledge as provisional and evolving through experience and inquiry, whereas Ibn Khaldun understands knowledge as both rational and normative, oriented toward ethical truth and spiritual meaning. Ethically, Dewey prioritizes autonomy, critical reflection, and social responsibility, while Ibn Khaldun emphasizes moral discipline, character formation, and religious commitment. Consequently, the educational purposes of each thinker diverge: Dewey aims to cultivate reflective and adaptive individuals for democratic society, whereas Ibn Khaldun seeks to form morally grounded individuals who contribute to social cohesion while maintaining spiritual integrity. For Dewey, education aims to shape

reflective and adaptive individuals who contribute to democratic society, whereas for Ibn Khaldun, education also strengthens faith and cultivates noble character.

These differences are shaped by their historical contexts: Dewey lived during America's industrial transformation and democratic expansion, while Ibn Khaldun lived in the 14th-century Islamic world, which emphasized moral and social balance. In terms of curriculum, Dewey championed experience-based and problem-centered learning, whereas Ibn Khaldun advocated a balanced integration of religious and rational sciences aligned with societal needs. In values, Dewey's approach is secular and empirical, while Ibn Khaldun's is theocentric and ethical, placing divine values at the core of education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that although John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun emerge from distinct historical and philosophical traditions, both conceptualize education as a transformative process rooted in lived experience rather than mere knowledge transmission. Dewey's pragmatism emphasizes experiential learning oriented toward democratic participation and social problem-solving, while Ibn Khaldun's educational thought integrates real-life experience with moral and spiritual formation grounded in Islamic principles. This comparison suggests that experiential education can be theorized through multiple epistemological frameworks, not solely within secular pragmatism.

The findings contribute theoretically by offering a comparative framework that bridges modern pragmatic philosophy and classical Islamic educational thought, enriching contemporary discourse on educational philosophy. Practically, this study provides a conceptual foundation for developing Islamic education models that are context-sensitive, ethically grounded, and responsive to modern societal challenges. Future research may extend this analysis by exploring empirical applications of this integrated framework within educational institutions or by examining other classical Islamic thinkers through a comparative philosophical lens.

By engaging directly with the primary works of John Dewey and Ibn Khaldun, this study demonstrates that experiential education is not confined to a single philosophical tradition. Instead, it can be understood through both pragmatic and Islamic epistemological frameworks, offering a broader conceptual foundation for contemporary educational thought.

Although emerging from distinct historical contexts and philosophical frameworks, both thinkers agree that education is more than the transmission of knowledge; it is a comprehensive process that nurtures the full potential of the human being. Dewey's ideas are rooted in modern pragmatism and democratic values, while Ibn Khaldun's are grounded in the theocentric and ethical principles of Islam. Integrating their perspectives offers a relevant educational model for the contemporary era. This farework is particularly applicable to Islamic educational institutions and curriculum development efforts seeking to integrate moral formation with experiential and socially responsive learning in contemporary context.

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