
The model of knowledge acquisition in Islam as a foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm

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Abstract

Studies on knowledge in Islam have extensively discussed epistemology, ethics, and education; however, these aspects have largely been examined separately, leaving the process of knowledge acquisition without a comprehensive conceptual model that can serve as a foundation for learning paradigm reconstruction. This study aims to formulate a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam and examine its relevance as a foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm. This research employed a qualitative conceptual study by synthesizing the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Islamic scholarship, and academic literature through concept reduction, thematic analysis, and conceptual synthesis. The findings identify five interconnected stages of knowledge acquisition: epistemological foundation, preparation, knowledge acquisition, internalization, and dissemination. The proposed model reconstructs the learning paradigm by shifting its orientation from knowledge transfer toward the formation of knowledgeable, ethical, and practice-oriented individuals. This study contributes to the advancement of Islamic epistemology and philosophy of Islamic education by offering a systematic conceptual model that provides a theoretical foundation for developing holistic Islamic learning.

Keywords: Knowledge acquisition; Islamic epistemology; Learning paradigm; Philosophy of Islamic education; Islamic education.

Abstrak

Kajian mengenai ilmu dalam Islam telah banyak membahas epistemologi, *adab*, dan pendidikan. Namun, sebagian besar kajian tersebut masih mengkaji aspek-aspek tersebut secara parsial sehingga belum menghasilkan model konseptual yang menjelaskan proses perolehan ilmu secara utuh sebagai landasan rekonstruksi paradigma pembelajaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan merumuskan Model Proses Perolehan Ilmu dalam Islam serta menganalisis relevansinya sebagai landasan rekonstruksi paradigma pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis kajian konseptual melalui sintesis terhadap Al-Qur'an, hadis, pemikiran ulama, dan literatur ilmiah yang dianalisis menggunakan reduksi konsep, analisis tematik, dan sintesis konseptual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa proses perolehan ilmu dalam Islam terdiri atas lima tahapan yang saling terintegrasi, yaitu fondasi epistemologis, persiapan, perolehan ilmu, internalisasi, dan diseminasi. Model yang dihasilkan menjadi landasan konseptual dalam merekonstruksi paradigma pembelajaran dengan menggeser orientasinya dari transfer pengetahuan menuju pembentukan insan yang berilmu, beradab, dan beramal. Penelitian ini berkontribusi memperkaya epistemologi dan filsafat pendidikan Islam melalui penyusunan model konseptual yang sistematis sebagai landasan teoretis bagi pengembangan pembelajaran Islam yang lebih holistik.

Kata Kunci: Proses perolehan ilmu; Epistemologi Islam; Paradigma pembelajaran; Filsafat pendidikan Islam; Pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Knowledge occupies a fundamental position in Islamic civilization, as it constitutes the foundation for the development of faith, the advancement of civilization, and the progress of human life (Iqbal, 2007). Since the revelation of the first divine message, Islam has regarded the acts of reading, understanding, and developing knowledge as forms of worship that are inseparable from the life of every Muslim (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020). Consequently, the process of acquiring knowledge in Islam is understood not merely as an intellectual endeavor aimed at mastering information, but also as a process of character formation, spiritual cultivation, and the development of social responsibility (Juwairiyah & Fanani, 2025). This perspective demonstrates that knowledge encompasses dimensions far beyond the accumulation of information, as it is intended to nurture individuals capable of integrating knowledge, faith, *adab*, and righteous deeds into a holistic way of life.

Although the concept of knowledge has been extensively discussed in Islamic scholarship, the process of knowledge acquisition continues to present conceptual challenges. Existing studies have primarily examined the sources of knowledge, the obligation to seek knowledge, the *adab* of knowledge seekers, or learning methods as separate and independent themes (Abdillah, 2026; Anshari, 2023). As a result, the relationships among these components have yet to be articulated as an integrated system capable of explaining how knowledge is acquired, internalized, and disseminated. This condition has led the process of knowledge acquisition to be understood as a collection of disconnected concepts rather than as a coherent framework. Consequently, the literature has not yet provided a comprehensive conceptual model that explains the interrelationships among the epistemological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of knowledge within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Yet, a systematic understanding of the process of acquiring knowledge constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for developing a more holistic Islamic learning paradigm.

The need for a more comprehensive conceptual framework has become increasingly urgent as contemporary learning paradigms continue to emphasize competency attainment and measurable academic achievement. While such approaches have successfully enhanced learners' cognitive abilities, they have not fully integrated the dimensions of *adab*, spirituality, and social responsibility that constitute the primary objectives of Islamic education. Consequently, learning success is more frequently assessed through knowledge acquisition than through the ability to apply knowledge meaningfully in everyday life (Borkowski & Thorpe, 2022). This condition indicates that the fundamental challenge facing Islamic education lies not only in instructional methods but also in the paradigm that underpins them. Therefore, a conceptual model capable of explaining the process of knowledge acquisition in a comprehensive

manner is needed, not only to clarify how knowledge is acquired but also to provide a foundation for developing a learning paradigm that is consistent with Islamic epistemology and the objectives of Islamic education.

Research on knowledge from the perspective of Islam has been conducted across various areas of inquiry. Rahmani et al. (2026) demonstrated that Islamic epistemology is founded upon the integration of revelation, reason, and experience as sources of knowledge; however, the discussion primarily focused on classifying the sources of knowledge rather than explaining the process through which knowledge is acquired. Pallathadka et al. (2023) found that *adab* constitutes the principal foundation for successful Islamic education, yet their study did not systematically relate *adab* to the stages of knowledge acquisition. Trisnawaty et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of teachers, intention, and the application of knowledge within the tradition of Islamic education, but each of these elements was examined as an independent concept. Therefore, there remains considerable scope for developing a conceptual model that integrates these components into a unified framework of knowledge acquisition that can serve as a foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm.

Based on these issues, this study aims to formulate a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam through the synthesis of normative Islamic sources and the intellectual contributions of Muslim scholars, while also examining its relevance as a foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm. This study is significant because it not only integrates concepts that have previously been discussed separately but also proposes a conceptual framework that explains the relationships among the stages of knowledge acquisition. The proposed model is expected to enrich the discourse on Islamic epistemology and the philosophy of Islamic education while providing a theoretical foundation for developing a more holistic learning paradigm—one that integrates knowledge, *adab*, spirituality, and the application of knowledge as inseparable components of the educational process.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a conceptual study design to formulate a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam through the synthesis of diverse literature sources (Laurence & Margolis, 2003). Unlike conventional literature reviews that primarily describe existing studies, the conceptual approach adopted in this research was intended to develop a new theoretical framework by integrating ideas derived from both normative and academic sources. The primary sources consisted of the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical works of Muslim scholars relevant to Islamic epistemology and education, including *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Az-Zarnuji, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* by Al-Ghazali, *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim* by Ibn Jama'ah, and *The Concept of Education in Islam* by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Secondary sources were obtained from scholarly journal articles, books, and academic publications

addressing Islamic epistemology, the philosophy of Islamic education, and learning paradigms.

The data were analyzed through three sequential stages: concept reduction, thematic analysis, and conceptual synthesis. Concept reduction involved identifying the principal ideas related to the process of knowledge acquisition contained in each source. Subsequently, thematic analysis was conducted to classify related concepts into major themes, including epistemological foundations, preparation for knowledge acquisition, the learning process, value internalization, and knowledge dissemination. The final stage, conceptual synthesis, integrated these themes into a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam, which was then analyzed as a conceptual foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm. The conceptual validity of the study was ensured through source triangulation by comparing the consistency of normative sources, classical Islamic literature, and contemporary academic scholarship, thereby ensuring that the proposed model possessed both theoretical coherence and relevance for the advancement of Islamic education.

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the model of knowledge acquisition in Islam

Discussions on the process of knowledge acquisition in Islam have thus far developed in a fragmented manner. Sufyan and Hartono (2023) emphasized Islamic epistemology by examining the sources of knowledge, whereas Helmi et al. (2026) focused more on *adab*, learning methods, and the ethics governing the relationship between teachers and students. These studies have made significant contributions to the development of Islamic scholarship; however, they have not fully explained how these components interact to constitute a comprehensive process of knowledge acquisition. Consequently, the process of acquiring knowledge is often understood as a collection of independent concepts rather than as an integrated system characterized by interconnected stages, orientations, and objectives. Therefore, a conceptual synthesis is needed to identify the essential characteristics of knowledge acquisition in Islam and formulate them into a comprehensive model.

The first characteristic underlying this model is the orientation toward divine revelation as its epistemological foundation. Unlike the modern scientific tradition, which generally places reason and empirical experience at the starting point of knowledge acquisition, Islam regards revelation as the ultimate source of truth that guides the use of reason and experience, ensuring that they remain aligned with the purpose of human creation. This principle is evident from the first revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as stated in Surah Al-'Alaq (96:1-5):

أَفْرَأَ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ① خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ② أَفْرَأَ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ③ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ④ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ⑤

"Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clinging substance. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not." (Qur'an, Al-'Alaq [96]: 1-5)

The command *iqra'* in this passage extends beyond the act of reading written texts; it encompasses observing, examining, and comprehending reality in its entirety. Significantly, the command is preceded by the phrase *bismi rabbik* ("in the name of your Lord"), indicating that the pursuit of knowledge must always be grounded in a theocentric orientation (Shihab, 2002). Accordingly, knowledge is not viewed merely as an instrument for achieving worldly interests, but as a means of knowing Allah, advancing civilization, and promoting the common good. This orientation is further reinforced in Surah Al-Mujādilah (58:11), where Allah affirms the elevated status of those endowed with knowledge:

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

"...Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who have been given knowledge by degrees." (Qur'an, Al-Mujādilah [58]: 11)

An analysis of these two verses demonstrates that the Qur'an not only establishes knowledge as an object to be pursued but also defines its orientation, purpose, and moral consequences. In other words, revelation is not merely one source of knowledge; it is the foundational principle that directs the entire learning process in accordance with the values of *tawhīd*. This perspective was subsequently elaborated in greater depth by both classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. Az-Zarnuji (2007) emphasized intention, teachers, diligence, and perseverance as prerequisites for acquiring knowledge. Al-Ghazali (2005) expanded this framework by emphasizing spiritual purification and the practical application of knowledge, whereas Ibn Jama'ah (2012) regarded the *adab* of teachers and students as indispensable for the transmission of blessed knowledge. Meanwhile, Al-Attas (1999) argued that the ultimate purpose of education is to cultivate the *insān adabī* through the process of *ta'dīb*. The synthesis of these four perspectives demonstrates that they all originate from the same revelatory foundation, despite their differing emphases.

Asy-Syifa and Khaerudin, The model of knowledge acquisition

Table 1. Synthesis of scholars' perspectives as the foundation of the model of knowledge acquisition in Islam

Scholar	Primary Focus	Implications for the Model
Qur'an and Hadith	Revelation as the source of knowledge, <i>tawhīd</i> -oriented worldview, and knowledge as a path toward righteous action	Serves as the epistemological foundation of the model of knowledge acquisition
Az-Zarnuji (2007)	Intention, teachers, diligence, patience, preparation, and perseverance	Demonstrates that knowledge acquisition begins with internal readiness and guidance from teachers
Al-Ghazali (2005)	Spiritual purification, sincerity, and the application of knowledge	Emphasizes that successful learning is measured through self-transformation and righteous action
Ibn Jama'ah (2012)	<i>Adab</i> of teachers and students and learning ethics	Positions educational relationships as an integral component of knowledge acquisition
Al-Attas (1999)	<i>Ta'dīb</i> and the formation of the <i>insān adabī</i>	Directs the ultimate goal of knowledge acquisition toward the formation of civilized human beings

Source: Authors' synthesis (2026).

The synthesis presented in Table 1 indicates that the differing emphases of these scholars do not represent contradictions but rather complementary perspectives that collectively explain the process of knowledge acquisition. Az-Zarnuji (2007) emphasized preparation through intention, teachers, diligence, and perseverance as the foundation of learning. This perspective was further developed by Al-Ghazali (2005), who argued that knowledge reaches its perfection only when it is internalized through spiritual purification and manifested in righteous action. Ibn Jama'ah (2012) subsequently highlighted the relational dimension by emphasizing the *adab* of teachers and students as the medium through which blessed knowledge is transmitted, whereas Al-Attas (1999) situated the entire process within the framework of *ta'dīb*, whose ultimate aim is the formation of the *insān adabī*. Therefore, the characteristics of knowledge acquisition in Islam should not be understood in isolation but rather as a coherent and interconnected process encompassing epistemological, methodological, moral, and social dimensions.

Based on this synthesis, the present study formulates a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam as a conceptual framework illustrating the interrelationships among the stages of acquiring knowledge. The model demonstrates that the process of knowledge acquisition does not begin with learning activities themselves but with an epistemological foundation rooted in divine revelation. This orientation is subsequently translated into a preparatory stage involving the cultivation of intention,

spiritual readiness, the presence of qualified teachers, and commitment to learning. The process then proceeds to the acquisition stage through activities such as reading, listening, understanding, discussion, and writing. However, knowledge mastery alone does not constitute successful learning unless it is followed by internalization through *adab* and the practical application of knowledge. The final stage of the model is dissemination, whereby knowledge is transmitted through teaching, *da'wah*, and contributions to societal development. The characteristics of the proposed model are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the model of knowledge acquisition in Islam

Stage	Characteristics	Purpose
Epistemological Foundation	Revelation as the basis for the use of reason, the senses, and experience	Establishes the orientation and purpose of knowledge
Preparation	Intention, teachers, diligence, patience, and preparation	Develops spiritual and intellectual readiness
Knowledge Acquisition	Reading, listening, understanding, discussion, and writing	Promotes the systematic acquisition of knowledge
Internalization	<i>Adab</i> , spiritual purification, and the application of knowledge	Cultivates moral character and personal integrity
Dissemination	Teaching, <i>da'wah</i> , and contributing to society	Realizes the social function of knowledge in advancing civilization

Source: Authors' synthesis (2026).

The model presented in Table 2 demonstrates that each stage is hierarchically organized while remaining mutually interdependent. The epistemological foundation determines the direction of the learning process, whereas the preparation stage develops the learner's readiness before engaging in academic activities. The knowledge acquisition stage enhances intellectual capacity through various learning activities; however, it is not regarded as the ultimate goal because it must be followed by internalization through *adab* and the practical application of knowledge. The dissemination stage further emphasizes that knowledge carries a social responsibility, meaning that its success is measured not only by intellectual mastery but also by the ability to benefit others. Accordingly, the proposed model illustrates that knowledge acquisition in Islam constitutes an integrated learning system encompassing epistemological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. These characteristics subsequently provide the conceptual foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm in a manner that is more consistent with the objectives of Islamic education.

Reconstructing the learning paradigm based on the model of knowledge acquisition in Islam

A learning paradigm constitutes a set of fundamental assumptions that shape the way educational objectives, processes, and outcomes are understood (Widari & Jazadi, 2019). Kuhn (1962) argued that a paradigm is not merely a method or procedure but a conceptual framework through which reality is interpreted. Within the educational context, a paradigm influences learning orientation, the roles of teachers and students, instructional methods, and the criteria used to evaluate learning success. Consequently, any change in the way knowledge is acquired inevitably leads to a transformation of the learning paradigm as a whole. Based on this perspective, the Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam proposed in this study should be understood not only as an epistemological concept but also as a conceptual foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm in accordance with the objectives of Islamic education, which regard knowledge as the pathway toward the holistic development of human beings.

The need to reconstruct the learning paradigm arises from the fact that contemporary educational practices continue to be dominated by an orientation toward knowledge transfer and the achievement of academic competencies. Although this approach has successfully enhanced learners' intellectual abilities, it often ends with the acquisition of information without adequately fostering character, spirituality, or social responsibility. Freire (1970) criticized this condition through the concept of the *banking model of education*, in which students are treated as "empty vessels" whose primary role is to receive knowledge transmitted by teachers. From an Islamic perspective, such a model does not reflect the true nature of knowledge acquisition as formulated in the proposed model, because knowledge is not merely transmitted but also internalized, practiced, and disseminated as a form of devotion to Allah and service to society.

Accordingly, the objective of reconstructing the learning paradigm extends beyond improving instructional strategies; it seeks to transform the fundamental orientation of learning from *knowledge transfer* toward the formation of individuals who are knowledgeable, possess *adab*, and demonstrate social responsibility. This orientation is consistent with Bruner's (1966) view that learners should function as active participants in constructing knowledge through the process of *discovery learning*. Nevertheless, the Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam broadens this perspective by positioning *tawhīd*-oriented consciousness as the foundation of all learning activities. Knowledge is therefore understood not as an end in itself but as a means of cultivating faith, moral character, and the capacity to apply knowledge in everyday life. Consequently, the reconstructed learning paradigm aims not only to produce intellectually capable learners but also individuals who possess moral integrity and spiritual maturity.

The reconstruction of the learning paradigm also redefines the roles of teachers and learners within the educational process. Traditionally, teachers have often been positioned as the primary source of information, while students have been regarded as passive recipients of instructional content. The Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam demonstrates that this relationship should instead be dialogical, emphasizing guidance directed toward character formation. This perspective aligns with the educational philosophy of Ki Hajar Dewantara (1977), who described teachers as role models, motivators, and facilitators of students' development through the principles of *ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madya mangun karso, tut wuri handayani*. Within the Islamic tradition, these functions are further developed into the roles of *mu'allim*, *murabbi*, and *mu'addib*, while learners are positioned as active, critical seekers of knowledge who assume responsibility for their own learning process.

A further implication of this reconstructed paradigm concerns instructional methods and learning assessment. Rather than centering learning on the transmission of content, the reconstructed paradigm emphasizes the process of knowledge acquisition through active learning, reflection, habituation, and the practical application of knowledge. This perspective resonates with Dewey's (1938) concept of *learning by doing*, which underscores the importance of experience in the learning process. However, the Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam extends this concept by asserting that learning experiences should contribute not only to the development of practical competencies but also to the cultivation of *adab*, spiritual refinement, and social benefit. Accordingly, learning assessment should not be confined to measuring cognitive achievement alone but should also evaluate changes in attitudes, behaviors, and the implementation of knowledge in real-life contexts.

Table 3. Reconstructing the learning paradigm based on the model of knowledge acquisition in Islam

Aspect	Conventional Paradigm	Reconstructed Paradigm
Orientation	Knowledge transfer	Transformation of knowledge, <i>adab</i> , and righteous action
Objective	Academic competence	Knowledgeable, ethical, and socially responsible individuals
Teacher's Role	Knowledge transmitter	<i>Mu'allim</i> , <i>Murabbi</i> , and <i>Mu'addib</i>
Learner's Role	Information recipient	Active participant in acquiring and developing knowledge
Learning Method	Teacher-centered knowledge delivery	Integration of active learning, reflection, practice, and habituation
Assessment	Cognitive achievement	Cognitive, affective, psychomotor, <i>adab</i> , and the social benefit of knowledge

Source: Authors' synthesis (2026).

As illustrated in Table 3, reconstructing the learning paradigm involves more than modifying instructional practices; it requires transforming the fundamental assumptions concerning the nature of knowledge, the objectives of education, and the roles of all educational stakeholders. By adopting the Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam as its conceptual foundation, learning is no longer understood merely as the transmission of information but rather as a transformative process that integrates knowledge, faith, *adab*, and righteous action. Consequently, the reconstructed paradigm proposed in this study not only provides a conceptual framework for advancing Islamic learning but also reinforces the role of education as a means of cultivating civilized individuals who are capable of actualizing their knowledge for the benefit of both themselves and society.

Conclusion

Conclusion

This study successfully formulates a Model of Knowledge Acquisition in Islam as a conceptual framework demonstrating that the process of acquiring knowledge extends beyond the mere pursuit of information and instead unfolds through five interconnected stages: epistemological foundation, preparation, knowledge acquisition, internalization, and dissemination. The model was developed through the synthesis of normative Islamic sources and the intellectual contributions of Muslim scholars, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge acquisition from an Islamic perspective. The significance of this model lies in its ability to address a gap in previous studies, which have generally examined Islamic epistemology, *adab*, learning methods, or educational objectives as separate domains, thereby leaving the relationships among these components insufficiently articulated. The proposed model demonstrates that knowledge acquisition constitutes an integrated system encompassing epistemological, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions, while simultaneously providing a conceptual foundation for reconstructing the learning paradigm from one centered on knowledge transfer to one aimed at cultivating knowledgeable, ethical individuals who are capable of applying their knowledge for the common good.

The principal contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual model that connects the process of knowledge acquisition in Islam with the reconstruction of the learning paradigm, thereby extending the discourse in the philosophy of Islamic education beyond normative discussions toward a more systematic conceptual framework. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on a conceptual approach based on literature synthesis, meaning that the proposed model has not yet been empirically validated within Islamic educational institutions. Future research is therefore encouraged to develop assessment instruments and instructional designs based on this model, as well as to examine its effectiveness across different educational

levels and contexts of Islamic education. Accordingly, the proposed model not only contributes theoretically to the advancement of Islamic epistemology and the philosophy of Islamic education but also offers practical potential as a framework for developing a more holistic learning paradigm oriented toward the formation of civilized human beings.

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