



Philosophy of Education: Islamic Educational Thought of Ibn Sina

Ariesta Setyawati

Fakultas Agama Islam, Universitas Islam Syekh-Yusuf
E-mail: ariestasetyawati@unis.ac.id

Abstract. *Education is guidance, leadership, from educators to students with physical and spiritual development, education systematically shapes the character, nature and behavior of students. In the world of education there are several educational figures who explore the world of education, one of which is Ibn Sina. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) was a well-known Muslim philosopher in the field of medicine, but many of his ideas were also related to education and are considered to have contributed to the development of modern educational thought. The purpose of this study is to analyze Ibn Sina's educational thinking and his contribution to Islamic education in modern times. In this writing using descriptive and qualitative methods with literature studies and data sources obtained from research whose subjects are in the form of literature and raised from documentation derived from scientific journals, e-books, and other related reference sources.*

Keywords: *Ibn Sina; Islamic Education; Philosophical*

Abstrak. *Pendidikan adalah bimbingan, kepemimpinan, dari pendidik kepada siswa dengan perkembangan fisik dan spritual, pendidikan secara sistematis membentuk watak, sifat dan tingkah laku peserta didik. Dalam dunia pendidikan terdapat beberapa tokoh pendidiakan yang mendalami dunia pendidikan, salah satunya adalah Ibnu Sina. Ibnu Sina (Avicenna) adalah seorang filsuf muslim terkenal di bidang kedokteran, namun gagasannya banyak juga yang berkaitan dengan pendidikan dan dianggap berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan pemikiran pendidikan modern. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis pemikiran pendidikan Ibnu Sina dan kontribusinya pada pendidikan Islam di masa modern. Dalam penulisan ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dan kualitatif dengan studi pustaka dan sumber data didapat dari penelitian yang subjeknya berupa literatur kepustakaan dan di angkat dari dokumentasi yang berasal dari jurnal ilmiah, e-book, dan sumber referensi terkait lainnya.*

Kata Kunci : *Ibnu Sina; Pendidikan Islam; Filsafat*

INTRODUCTION

Humans possess extraordinary abilities bestowed by God Almighty, one of which is the openness of thought and good reasoning that forms the foundation for the development of individual thinking (Rahman, 2017). This cognitive ability is further cultivated through the process of education. The evolution of ideas and thoughts has given rise to civilizations and new eras (Nisbet, 2017). Throughout history, many figures have emerged, contributing their ideas and insights to the world.

Numerous philosophers, both from the Western world and from the Islamic tradition, have made significant contributions to the advancement of their times. Within the realm of Islamic scholarship, prominent figures such as Ibn Khaldun, Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Farabi, and Ibn Sina, among others, have provided ideas that shaped progress (Karagözoğlu & Karagözoğlu, 2017). One such influential Islamic figure is Ibn Sina, who made notable contributions to advancements in science, technology, health, education, and the social sciences (Ashimi, 2018).

Ibn Sina, a distinguished scholar of the medieval Islamic world, is renowned for his brilliance and remains a highly regarded figure in the history of philosophy and its development into the

modern era. Born in the village of Afshana near Bukhara in the month of Safar in 370 AH (corresponding to 900 CE), his full name is Abu Ali Al-Husain bin Abdillah bin Sina (Herman et al., 2024). He earned the title *Asy-Syaikh Ar-Rais*, reflecting his high intellectual stature. Known in the West as Avicenna, Ibn Sina's expansive thought and impactful contributions have inspired generations across centuries. His works continue to be studied and have been the subject of extensive research and publication.

Ibn Sina's educational philosophy emphasizes the role of the intellect, asserting that it is the source of all phenomena and must be developed to achieve educational goals (Supriyatno, 2017). Recent research indicates that educational thought is closely tied to character development among students (Munawati et al., 2021; Nurislamiah et al., 2022; Solihah et al., 2024). Today, Ibn Sina's educational philosophy offers solutions to the complexities of education in Indonesia. Based on the trends in these studies, it appears that Ibn Sina's educational philosophy has been recognized as an objective force with significant appeal in educational research.

Based on the introduction, the author formulates the following research problems: First, what is the biography of Ibn Sina? Second, what are the philosophical concepts of education proposed by Ibn Sina? Finally, which of Ibn Sina's key philosophical ideas remain relevant and applicable to contemporary education?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach. Data sources are derived from literature studies of scholarly journal articles, e-books, and other relevant materials. The data collection method used in this research is library research, involving the selection of data pertinent to the research topic. The library research methodology involves collecting and analyzing data based on established theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Biography of Ibn Sina

Ibn Sina's full name is *Abu Ali al-Husain bin Abdullah bin Hasan bin Ali bin Sina*. He was born in a small town called Afshana, near Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan, in 370 AH (980 CE) (Herman et al., 2024). Ibn Sina came from a devout family of Shia Isma'iliyah adherents. His father, Abdullah, and mother, Astarah, played significant roles in his upbringing. Ibn Sina passed away in Hamadan in 428 AH (1038 CE) at the age of 57. Turks, Persians, and Arabs all claim Ibn Sina as one of their own, as his mother was of Turkish descent and his father of mixed Arab heritage. His father resided in Balkh but relocated the family to Bukhara when Ibn Sina was still young, as he became a governor in the Samanid dynasty under Amir Nuh ibn Mansur's rule.

Ibn Sina's education and life journey reflected extraordinary intelligence (Taufik & Abidin, 2023). Even as a child, his brilliance was evident, particularly in his memorization of the Qur'an before the age of ten. Ahmad Fuad al-Ahwani noted that by the age of ten, Ibn Sina had mastered the Qur'an, literature, and the Arabic language. He studied Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) under the guidance of a teacher named Ismail, renowned for his asceticism. In addition, he learned mathematics and geometry from 'Ali Abu' Abdullah an-Natili. Subsequently, Ibn Sina pursued self-directed study, reading numerous texts, especially *Syarh* (explanatory works), and mastering semantic knowledge. He delved into Euclid's works on geometry and various medical texts, further broadening his expertise in multiple fields.

In addition, Ibn Sina pursued the study of medicine while refining his skills independently. At the age of 16, he was called upon to treat a ruler, Nuh bin Mansur, after numerous physicians had failed to cure him. Ultimately, after Ibn Sina attempted treatment, the Sultan recovered. From that point forward, Ibn Sina was warmly received and gained access to the Sultan's library, which contained rare and invaluable books. He enthusiastically read these works. For reasons unknown,

the library was later destroyed by fire, and Ibn Sina was accused of intentionally burning it to prevent others from benefiting from its resources.

Ibn Sina was also recognized for his expertise in governance. By the age of 18, he was already serving in state administration, teaching as a scholar, engaging as a philosopher, writing poetry, and becoming a prolific author in various fields of knowledge, including philosophy, medicine, politics, astronomy, logic, music, linguistics, measurement, theology, and more. His educational concepts were equally significant. Due to his mastery of diverse disciplines, he became known in the Western world as *Avicenna* and was referred to as the “New Aristotle.” In Arabic, he earned the title *Shaykh al-Rais* (Chief Master).

Among Ibn Sina’s more than 250 works, many were short treatises and letters. He authored 99 books, most of them written in Arabic, which was the language of religious and scientific discourse across the Muslim world at that time. His writings covered topics including natural philosophy and astronomy, theology and metaphysics, medicine, psychology, music, mathematics, physics, and poetry. His most renowned contributions were in philosophy and medicine.

In addition to being a teacher, philosopher, and physician, Ibn Sina was a highly productive author (Ramdani & Bakhtiar, 2024). Some of his most famous works include:

1. *Al-Shifa’* (The Book of Healing): An 18-volume encyclopedia covering mathematics, physics, and metaphysics.
2. *Al-Najah* (The Book of Deliverance): A summarized version of *Al-Shifa’*.
3. *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* (The Canon of Medicine): An encyclopedia on medical science that served as a standard reference in Western universities until the 17th century.
4. *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* (Remarks and Admonitions): A treatise on logic and philosophy.

Other notable essays include *Hayy bin Yaqzan*, *Tahsil al-Sa’adah*, *Risalat al-Tair*, *Risalat fi al-’Ishq*, and *Risalat fi Sirr al-Qadar*. Ibn Sina produced numerous additional works that further cemented his legacy as one of the most influential scholars of all time. From these excerpts, it can be understood that Ibn Sina possessed remarkably brilliant ideas across various fields of knowledge. During his lifetime, he was not only a scientist whose name was celebrated in the Western world but also a statesman actively involved in political affairs of his era and an admired teacher. Ibn Sina was also renowned as a prolific writer, with his works gaining significant recognition and influence during his time.

b. Education from Ibn Sina’s Perspective

Ibn Sina’s educational philosophy views education as the primary means of preserving the unique characteristics of *karamah* (nobility and dignity) bestowed by Allah upon humans (Q.S. Al-Isra: 70). This perspective underscores that education is inherently tied to the essence of humanity. The importance of focusing on humans in all educational concepts stems from the fact that human beings are central to any educational endeavor. One notable limitation in the study of religious education is its tendency to emphasize the cognitive aspects over the affective and psychomotor dimensions of students.

In principle, all activities within the educational process are inseparable from the underlying concepts, theories, and functions of education. The events that occur in the educational process are inherently connected to these foundational ideas. Concepts and theories provide a core framework for understanding the fundamental issues of education, determining what actions need to be taken, and how these actions should be implemented. In the context of contemporary educational studies, Ibn Sina must be regarded as a philosopher of education. In other words, he stands among the prominent educational philosophers whose ideas have left a significant influence, comparable to figures such as Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas.

Ibn Sina classified knowledge according to a philosophical paradigm, dividing it into two main branches: theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy. The goal of theoretical philosophy is to enrich the soul with knowledge, while practical philosophy aims not only to enhance knowledge but

also to guide actions according to the will of the information received. In essence, theoretical philosophy seeks to refine thought, while practical philosophy focuses on refining actions.

Theoretical philosophy, aimed at refining thought, is further divided into three fields (Nasr, 2003; Tirmizi, 1982):

1. Natural sciences (Tabi'i): Including medicine, astrology, divination, magic, dream interpretation, and chemistry.
2. Mathematics: Encompassing spatial sciences, moving shadows, load-bearing, the science of weights, optics, water transfer techniques, and arithmetic.
3. Theology: Covering the understanding of revelation, miracles, supernatural declarations, and the nature of the soul.

Practical philosophy, which seeks to refine actions, is also divided into three disciplines:

1. Ethics: Focusing on regulating human behavior and its purity.
2. Household management: Studying the relationships between spouses, their children, and domestic workers, as well as the organization of livelihoods within the family.
3. Politics: Examining social relationships within a city, between cities, among nations, and between leadership and society.

Ibn Sina's integration of philosophy and education reflects his comprehensive approach to knowledge, balancing intellectual development with practical applications for human betterment.

c. Humanity and Education

To understand humanity comprehensively, it is insufficient to refer to just one or two verses from the Qur'an (Asghari, 2023). Instead, such references must include all Qur'anic verses addressing the relevant topic, considering their context and seeking confirmation from the Prophet's explanations and existing scientific facts. Every religion should provide descriptive information about humans as creations of God. A philosophy of humanity that emphasizes religion and divinity falls into the category of religious or theocentric philosophy.

Ibn Sina's thoughts on education often address humanity indirectly, particularly from a psychological perspective. His views incorporate insights into human nature that have led to the development of child psychology concepts, especially those related to individual differences, which serve as a foundation for educational practice. As quoted by Hasan Langgulung, Ibn Sina states in his book *Assiyasah*:

"The reasons behind individuals choosing different professions often remain unclear, driven by hidden factors that are difficult to understand or measure."

From a scientific standpoint, understanding humanity and its application in education requires examining human existence across multiple disciplines. In this regard, Redja Mudyardjo analyzes humans through the lenses of anthropology, sociology, psychology, politics, and economics.

d. Goals of Education

The objectives of education, as outlined by Ibn Sina, can be traced through his philosophical thought. He asserts that reason (*'aql*) is the source of all occurrences and a unique human attribute. Regarding physical education, Ibn Sina emphasizes that educational goals must include the development of physical well-being, encompassing activities such as movement, proper nutrition, adequate sleep, and cleanliness (Lueddeke, 2015). Physical exercise is considered vital for promoting brain growth and enhancing intelligence. At the same time, character education aims to instill manners in students, while artistic education sharpens their senses and cultivates imagination.

Ibn Sina identifies three key goals of education that guide its practical application (Hamid, 2011):

1. Clarifying the direction of instructional communication to ensure that teaching is purposeful and effective.
2. Setting desired outcomes and offering improvements to meet educational aspirations.

3. Ensuring the goals are meaningful and motivational, thereby encouraging students to invest their energy toward achieving these objectives.

These objectives, according to Ibn Sina, form the foundation of communication within the educational process. Furthermore, Ibn Sina emphasizes that the ultimate aim of education is the holistic development of an individual's potential, leading to perfection in physical, intellectual, and moral growth, culminating in the realization of the ideal human being (*insan kamil*) (Nasr, 2003). This concept refers to individuals who develop their full potential in a balanced and comprehensive manner. He also highlights the role of education in preparing individuals for societal life, enabling them to contribute through chosen professions or skills that align with their abilities, readiness, inclinations, and potential.

e. Educators/Teachers

Ibn Sina outlined his thoughts on the concept of teachers, particularly the characteristics of an ideal teacher. According to him, a good teacher is someone who is intelligent, religiously observant, inspiring, capable of nurturing children, calm in demeanor, willing to engage playfully with students, cheerful, polite, tidy, and clean (Yusuf et al., 2020). He further emphasized that a teacher should be a strong and exceptional male figure, intelligent, meticulous, patient, diligent in teaching children, fair, time-efficient, easily understood by students, gentle, and well-mannered.

Additionally, a teacher should prioritize societal interests over personal gain, avoid arrogance, exhibit humility, adhere to ethical principles in advancing knowledge, and communicate respectfully during discussions and interactions. Ibn Sina also stressed that a teacher should not merely impart theoretical knowledge but also provide practical training, influence students' character, and foster independent thought.

Ibn Sina advocated for balanced attention to all aspects of learning:

1. Cognitive (reasoning) through comprehensive understanding in classroom teaching.
2. Affective (emotional) engagement in learning that fosters emotional development.
3. Psychomotor (practical) training through hands-on activities.

From this description, it is clear that Ibn Sina's portrayal of an ideal teacher combines expertise with moral integrity. His vision aligns closely with modern expectations of educators—individuals who possess both strong qualifications and exemplary character. Consequently, Ibn Sina can be regarded as a profound thinker whose contributions to educational development, particularly in Islamic education, remain invaluable.

f. Learners/Students

In general, a learner is anyone influenced by an individual or group involved in educational activities. According to Article 1, Paragraph (4) of Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, learners are members of society striving to develop their potential through the learning processes present in specific pathways, levels, and types of education.

Traditionally, learners were perceived as empty vessels, devoid of knowledge, requiring teachers to fill them with information. However, more contemporary theories depict learners as vessels already containing some knowledge. In this perspective, the educator acts as a facilitator, guiding students to further develop their knowledge, potential, or skills.

This modern view emphasizes the learner's active role in education, recognizing their individuality, prior experiences, and inherent capabilities. This approach resonates with Ibn Sina's insights on individualized attention in education, where students' unique needs and potentials must be considered to optimize learning outcomes (Norman, 2021).

g. Educational Methods

Ibn Sina's educational methods consist of Talqin, Demonstration, Modeling and Habituation, Discussion, Apprenticeship, Assignments, and Targhib and Tarhib (Aprison, 2021). The Talqin method is essential in teaching the recitation of the Qur'an, starting with the teacher reading portions of the Qur'an aloud to the students (Roji & El Husarri, 2021). Afterward, the students are instructed to listen and repeat the recitation slowly and repeatedly until they have memorized it. Ibn Sina also suggests that the Talqin method can be used by a teacher who enlists the help of more advanced students to assist their peers who are lagging behind. This approach is akin to peer teaching in modern education, similar to modular learning. The Demonstration method is used in teaching writing. In this method, the teacher first provides an example by writing a letter in front of the students, after which the students copy it. The Modeling and Habituation method is applied in moral education. This approach differs from the view that children, by nature, tend to imitate what they see, hear, and experience. The Discussion method is employed by the teacher in class to facilitate joint problem-solving among students. This method teaches theoretical and rational knowledge. The Apprenticeship method is used to combine theory with practice, where students are required to apply the theory they have learned. This method helps students become proficient in the discipline they are studying. The Assignment method is implemented by the teacher, who prepares and assigns modules for students to study. Lastly, the Targhib and Tarhib method refers to the use of rewards (*targhib*) and punishments (*tarhib*) in education.

h. Punishment in Education

In principle, regarding the concept of punishment in Ibn Sina's educational philosophy, as discussed by Abuddin Nata, it appears that Ibn Sina did not have any issues with the use of punishment (Roji & El Husarri, 2021). This is based on his strong emphasis on upholding human dignity. However, Ibn Sina seems to allow punishment when necessary, provided it is carried out with great care. Furthermore, as expressed by Ali al-Jumbulati, Ibn Sina stated that when disciplining students, it is best to issue warnings and threats first, rather than resorting to violence. The teacher should act with kindness, offering encouragement and persuasion, sometimes using a stern expression or praise to motivate the child to behave properly.

From this explanation, it can be understood that, according to Ibn Sina, the use of punishment in the educational process is generally prohibited. However, it may be employed very cautiously if required. Therefore, upon closer examination, Ibn Sina's concept of punishment aligns closely with the perspectives of modern education experts, who emphasize the psychological aspects of punishment, based on the dignity and worth of the individual.

i. Ibn Sina's Concept of Curriculum in Education

Ibn Sina stated: "When a child is taught to read the Qur'an and memorize the fundamentals of a language, only then should they be guided toward their vocation, with the teacher understanding that not every desired occupation will be realized, but rather one that aligns with the child's character. If the child wishes to become a public servant, they should be taught correspondence, speeches, debates, and arguments, among other skills. They should also study mathematics and learn to write well. If another vocation is desired, the child should be directed accordingly."

The curriculum plays a crucial role in strategic learning to achieve educational goals because, without a curriculum (content), it would be impossible to fully attain the intended educational outcomes (Solihah et al., 2024). Simply put, the term "curriculum" refers to a set of subjects that must be completed to obtain a degree or diploma. This understanding aligns with Crow and Crow's view that the curriculum is a learning plan that includes a series of systematically organized topics necessary to complete a specific educational program.

Ibn Sina did not use the term *curriculum* in his discussions on education; instead, he used the term *manhaj* (plural: *manhij*). Most educational experts translate the word *manhaj* as curriculum. This can be understood because, at that time, the field of education had not yet fully developed. However, from his explanations, it is evident that Ibn Sina's approach to education contains a process of thought that could be developed into a specific educational theory, including curriculum theory. Furthermore, when Ibn Sina discussed the dissemination of knowledge, his views on knowledge became the foundation for the development of his curriculum. In the structure of *manhij* that he proposed, Ibn Sina attempted to organize the delivery of subjects based on the age of the students as follows:

1. Curriculum for Children Aged 3-5 Years

Ibn Sina had his own well-known views on parenting (Putri & Nurhuda, 2023). His perspective on the primary level of Islamic education curriculum can be summarized as follows: First, a child should learn the Qur'an, but only when they are physically and mentally ready to learn. Simultaneously, they should begin to learn the alphabet, the basics of religious knowledge, and memorize simple poetry that is easy to remember. The content of the poetry should include themes such as moral character, understanding knowledge, criticizing ignorance, encouraging good deeds, and respecting parents, among others.

In other words, the first lesson for a child should be the Qur'an. The teacher begins by reading short verses, verse by verse, and then the child repeats them until they memorize them. At the initial stage, the child is unable to read, so the teacher acts as a model, encouraging the child to follow the verses being recited (Nurislamiah et al., 2022). Afterward, the child can move on to other lessons such as reading and writing the Arabic alphabet, understanding punctuation marks like *fathah*, *kasrah*, and *dhammah*, and practicing combining letters into words and words into sentences. Once the child has memorized the short surahs of the Qur'an and understands the basic elements of Arabic grammar, they can be guided to study other subjects based on their readiness and ability.

2. Curriculum for Children Aged 6-14 Years

According to Ibn Sina, the curriculum for children aged 6 to 14 years includes subjects such as reading and memorizing the Qur'an, religious education, poetry, and physical education (Putri & Nurhuda, 2023). Ibn Sina, being a devout believer, emphasized the importance of memorization during this stage of education. His philosophical and scientific background gave him strong reasons for this approach. Historical records show that Ibn Sina could read the Qur'an by the age of 10. Therefore, the practice of memorizing the Qur'an was considered appropriate for children aged 6 to 14, as it helps develop both memorization and cognitive abilities. Memorizing the Qur'an is seen as a way to learn and understand the language of the Qur'an, which forms the foundation for further studies in subjects such as fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), and ulumul al-Qur'an (the sciences of the Qur'an).

In addition to religious education, Ibn Sina also recommended physical education for children aged 6 to 14. At this stage, children are ready to engage in physical activities that require skill, and the level of difficulty and types of sports should be appropriate for their age. This differs from the physical activities recommended for younger children, as they are tailored to match the developing abilities of children within this age group.

3. Curriculum for Students Aged 14 and Above (Specialization)

For students aged 14 and above, Ibn Sina recommended that educators choose subjects based on the students' abilities to master them (Günther, 2006). The subjects mentioned earlier are divided into theoretical and practical categories. Ibn Sina was influenced by the thought of the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who also categorized knowledge into theory and practice. The theoretical sciences include: (a) natural sciences

(including medicine, astrology, physics, magic, dream interpretation, alchemy, etc.); (b) mathematics; and (c) divine knowledge, which includes the nature of divine revelation, miracles, divine signs, inspiration, knowledge of the soul's immortality, etc (Tirmizi, 1982). The practical sciences include: moral sciences, which deal with regulating human behavior; household management, which studies relationships between spouses, children, and financial management in the home; and political science, which examines relationships between individuals and governments, cities, nations, and states.

Looking closer, one can see that Ibn Sina's ideas are applicable to the high school (or Madrasah Aliyah) and technical school levels. At this age, students have already specialized in certain fields, whether in sciences, social studies, or languages, depending on their interests, skills, and potential (Munawati et al., 2021).

From Ibn Sina's statement, it is clear that when a teacher transfers knowledge to students, the material should be adapted to the psychological level of the child. Initially, subjects related to reading the Qur'an, spelling, and memorizing poetry (starting from proverbs and qasidah) are introduced at the elementary school level. At the high school level (or Madrasah Tsanawiyah), students focus on reading and understanding the Qur'an, studying religious subjects like tafsir, fiqh, tawhid, and akhlak—subjects that primarily stem from the Qur'an (Nurislamiah et al., 2022). At the senior high school level (Madrasah Aliyah), students are introduced to subjects based on their interests and talents. In other words, at this stage, subjects should be aligned with students' abilities and interests, as seen in the modern division into sciences, social studies, and languages.

Ibn Sina's educational philosophy is timeless and offers valuable insights for modern educational systems, particularly in the context of Islamic education. His integration of moral and intellectual development, emphasis on the role of the teacher, and student-centered approach to curriculum make his ideas highly relevant today. In countries like Indonesia, where education is deeply rooted in Islamic values, Ibn Sina's educational concepts can be used as a guide for creating a balanced and comprehensive educational system that fosters both intellectual and moral excellence.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that although Ibn Sina's ideas on education were not derived from the modern era, his thoughts remain highly relevant in today's context. His educational philosophy continues to offer valuable insights, especially in the realm of Islamic education. Several of Ibn Sina's educational concepts, including his emphasis on the importance of the teacher's role, the balanced development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and the structuring of a curriculum based on age and developmental readiness, remain applicable in contemporary education systems. His ideas align closely with the values of Islam, rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. By incorporating Ibn Sina's thoughts, it is hoped that education in Indonesia will continue to evolve and better fulfill the objectives outlined in the National Education System Law. His approach to education, which addresses the relationship between knowledge, humanity, the curriculum, and the roles of teachers and students, can guide the improvement of educational practices in Indonesia. Ultimately, the integration of Ibn Sina's educational philosophy can help achieve the goals of fostering intellectual growth, moral development, and balanced personal development in modern education, particularly within the context of Islamic education.

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