

Al-Zarnūjī's Concept of Knowledge ('Ilm)

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Abstract

Education is important for every Muslim society as the Prophet made it incumbent on all Muslims. However, the issue of what category of knowledge is permitted for Muslims, the method for imparting this knowledge, and what to impart (content) are arguably the main challenges in Islamic education. Many Muslim scholars have looked at the concept of knowledge from various perspectives. In his monumental work, *Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim*, the classical Muslim scholar, Al-Zarnūjī, expounds the basic principles of education in Islam, which, indeed, have been used as the teaching methodology by many scholars throughout the Muslim world. Using content analysis, this article evaluates the concept of knowledge and its imperatives in Islam from the perspective of Al-Zarnūjī. It was found that Al-Zarnūjī classified knowledge into two main categories. One is perceived as the core of society's survival and is thus seen as binding on the entire society. This is known as *farḍu kifāyah*. The other is individually required and is called *farḍu 'ayn*. He argues that both should be guided by the Islamic religious values. Therefore, Al-Zarnūjī considers knowledge as a means for advancement and the perfection of the individual and the society both in this world and the hereafter. This makes his concept of knowledge inseparable from the Islamic ethical values. Al-Zarnūjī's contribution to knowledge lies in the packaging and dissemination of the Islamic academic heritage, particularly, the methodology for teaching and learning which is relevant to all the levels of the education ladder.

Keywords

Al-Zarnūjī, *Ta'lim Al-Muta'allim*, Islam, knowledge, fiqh

Introduction

Since the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, it spread through several processes and brought about many developments. One major development that Islam brought to the host societies was its system of education. The Islamic system of education has produced different scholars in different fields like philosophy, science, theology, and many more. Islam, particularly its education system, while bringing a new social order into society, also underwent some degree of adaptation due to its interaction with different cultures in the course of its spread (Yasin & Jani, 2013). Due to the spread and the increasing patronage of the Islamic teachings, the classical Muslim scholars left no stone unturned in pushing the Islamic education system into the core domains of the society that received Islam, of which Southeast Asia, particularly, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei are no exception (Nata, 2005).

In every community where Islam has been present, Muslim scholars have made a landmark in the development of education so that there has occurred the design of the appropriate methodology and curriculum for dispensing knowledge as well as achieving appropriate goals in the educational process (Azizy, 2003; Halstead, 2004). It is, therefore, a fact that the development of the Islamic education

system throughout the Muslim world is closely linked with the effort of the leading intellectuals in the field. The argument is that the classical Muslim scholars contributed significantly to the formulation of the basic principles of Islamic education. They did this by articulating interesting scholarly theories on education from the Islamic perspective. Thus, a distinctive Islamic education system developed immediately after the era of Prophet Muhammad, which has been able to stand the test of time, survive colonialism, and is still operational in many Muslim countries (Dzilo, 2012) and beyond. The traditional Islamic education system, when comprehended as a whole, could make a significant input toward the development of a better education system that is useful for meeting the challenges of today. In this context, however, the difficult task is about what pedagogy and curriculum could be used to dispense knowledge in the current education system to transform the students into dynamic "usable products" that can respond to the contemporary challenges.

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The Islamic theory of knowledge is integral to Islamic education, an academic discipline that was developed and discussed by the scholars in the past (Rosenthal, 2007). As a continuous process, knowledge could be conceived as a connecting thread between the past and the present. Hence, extensive resources could be found in the books and treatises, compiled by numerous past Muslim scholars in the field of education, which discuss topics from the perspective of Islamic theology (Bakar, 1998). These treatises, which have been transmitted over the ages, form what is known as *Kitab Kuning* in the Malay terminology, a term denoting the whole of the transmitted written heritage of Islam (Van Bruinessen, 1994). Al-Zarnūjī's best seller, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, is one of the classical Islamic collections. It explains the Islamic concept of education or knowledge, and it is not only widely used in the Muslim world but has also been transmitted over generations as part of the tradition of the *Kitab Kuning*. This treatise serves as a source of guidance for Islamic education because it presents fascinating theories on teaching and learning, which are relevant for the teaching of religious values at all levels of education in the Muslim world. Taking today's Islamization of knowledge into consideration, it is hoped that the exploration of Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge, that is, the content of his book, could help to understand the concept of knowledge from the Islamic perspective. Al-Zarnūjī's work attracted and still attracts the interest of not only Muslim scholars but modern Western academics as well (Afandi, 1993; Gilliot, 2012). Therefore, this article places his theory of knowledge into the contemporary educational perspective by reviewing his framework, which is connected with the pedagogy for imparting knowledge in Islam. The aim is to find out how this concept can contribute to the dispensation of knowledge in the contemporary era.

A Brief Biography of Al-Zarnūjī

Al-Zarnūjī was born in a well-known town around the Oxus River in the eastern part of the present day Turkistan called Zarnuj (Yahya, 2005). He lived between the 12th and the 13th centuries CE. His theology was based on the Ḥanafī School of Islamic jurisprudence. His biographers associate him with the name Tājuddīn Nu'mān b. Ibrāhīm b. Al-Khalīl Al-Zarnūjī (Afandi, 1993; Mu'izzuddin, 2014). Not much is known about his private life as it is about his intellectual contribution. However, he was one of the classical Islamic educational philosophers who lived during the Abbasid caliphate. He died in 1243 CE (Gilliot, 2012). Although he was an educational pedagogue who passes unconditionally for Hossein Nasr's later ideology of the moral educator (Nasr, 1987), who transforms both the "soul" and the "mind" (the rational self) of his students, Al-Zarnūjī's intellectual output is known not only in the area of education. However, it appears that his treatise on the concept of knowledge and educational pedagogy, titled *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, earned him his fame. He

outlined his educational thoughts in this treatise, which formulates the ethical yardstick for both the teacher (the *Mu'allim*) and the student (the *Muta'allim*) in the teaching and learning process. In recognition of his learning, he was given the honorific name, *Burhān al-Dīn* or *Burhān al-Islām*, which means "the proof of the religion" (i.e., Islam). The *nisbah*, "Al-Zarnūjī," indicates his native origin. However, his honorific name *Burhān al-Dīn* or *Burhān al-Islām* [*Al-Zarnūjī*] is so popular among his biographers that his original name is entirely forgotten. In the course of his intellectual interactions, Al-Zarnūjī encountered many renowned Sheikhs of his time from whom he is believed to have acquired various degrees of knowledge on Islam. Among those scholars were the following:

1. Fakhr al-Islām al-Ḥasan Ibn Mansūr al Farghānī Khadīkan (1196 CE);
2. Zahir al-Dīn al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī al-Marghinanī (1204 CE);
3. Fakhr al Dīn al Kashanī (1191 CE);
4. Burhān al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Farghinanī al-Marghinanī (1195 CE);
5. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr Khwarzade (491-576 AH; Afandi, 1993).

The circumstances surrounding the compilation of the treatise under study are unclear. However, judging from its content, which has stood the test of time till today, one could argue that the book assumed a greater prominence in the classical knowledge acquisition in the Muslim world, including Muslim Spain, that is, Andalusia (Gilliot, 2012). It has a lot to offer all categories of the propagators of knowledge whether rational or religious and across time and space. It appears that, at the time he wrote the book, students had some challenges in applying the knowledge they acquired (Hafidzah, 2014). Thus, there was the passion for the type of knowledge which combined rational or scientific thinking and religious morality. In Islam, the exclusion of morality from the teaching and learning process means, in effect, an educational crisis. Therefore, to enable a superior and ethical learning process, there was the need to construct the guidelines that took into cognizance the right methods of learning.

Why the Ta'lim al-Muta'allim?

The choice of Al-Zarnūjī's masterpiece is due to its classical content, which has, in many quarters, set the principles for the dispensation of knowledge in both traditional and conventional educational institutions. Aside from that, it is often emphasized that this work contains a valuable ethical discourse on classroom management, and it has been useful as a guide in many Islamic schools (Hafidzah, 2014). In terms of giving the best to the students, Al-Zarnūjī points out that the content should be balanced so that the students can uphold

morality in behavior as part of the learning process while, at the same time, improving their cognitive abilities (the ability to reason). The implication of this concept of knowledge is that there should be a balance in all the dynamics of the learning process to keep up with the objective of Islamic education, which is producing men of wisdom and high ethical standards in the society. Thus, reviewing the content of this work can help to (a) identify the objective of Islamic education, (b) conceptualize the Islamic perspective of knowledge and learning, and (c) evaluate the Islamic view of education discussed by the classical scholars to help reassess the objective of learning in the Muslim world today. The book contains 13 chapters each of which has specific principles for mitigating students' learning problems. With both physical and mental efforts, students may excel in the learning process through the appropriate approach that facilitates the achievement of goals (Hitti, 1948). By adopting the recommended methods of teaching and learning, the teacher and the students maximize time to derive good outcomes as the students will be able to put the lesson received into practice (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947). Here, the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* is important because its principles are essential for guiding students and teachers, on one hand, and teaching and learning, on the other, in the Islamic institutions today (Hafidzah, 2014; Huda & Kartanegara, 2015b).

Al-Zarnūjī wrote his book in the 13th century during the reign of the Abbasid Caliphs (Grunebaum & Abel, 1947). It is generally regarded as a treatise which made a major contribution to Islamic education and is still widely admired by scholars for its succinct theories. It is also acknowledged as a collection of guidelines that serves as a point of significant reference in the formulation of academic principles by Islamic intellectuals as well as Western scholars, especially in the field of education (Yahya, 2005). Aside from that, it also contains significant theories, rules, and techniques that guide students in the learning process. For that reason, it has been extensively studied and applied in the Islamic schools, particularly, in Indonesia (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015b). The book contains principles that guide Islamic intellectuals in the formulation of new theories because it sets very detailed ethical codes for the teaching and learning process from the Islamic point of view. Its major focus is the good moral upbringing of students in Islamic schools.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, which are mostly devoted to issues relating to the development of the soul as well as the rational mind. Among its salient principles is the efficient way to facilitate a systematic and comprehensive grasp of wisdom. It also discusses the nature and merit of knowledge, how to conduct oneself during the learning process (i.e., attitude toward and respect for knowledge and those who possess it, the teachers), and personal choices in the learning process. Other important issues discussed include how to learn with devotion and perseverance, an efficient guide for the teacher on how to start and organize the lesson, and the process of *tawakkul* (reliance on God for

guidance). The book also discusses issues such as time management in learning, compassion toward one's fellows in the course of learning, and the merits of combining the training of the mind (the rational self) with the teaching of moral values (i.e., paying attention to the development of the soul in the learning process). Finally, there is a discussion on how to boost one's memory and prevent forgetfulness in learning and how to survive in terms of livelihood in the period of learning (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008; Grunebaum & Abel, 1947). Thus, Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge could be helpful for creating an academic atmosphere in which the education principles facilitate the development of moral values in the students. The book could, therefore, be useful for today's educational institutions because its principles could be applied in the teaching and learning processes from the global perspective, especially, now that almost all Islamic educational institutions are pushing for the integration of Western knowledge, which is free from religious values.

Islamization of Knowledge Versus Islamic Knowledge

The Islamic perspective of knowledge (*'ilm*) is derived from the Qur'ān, which is regarded as the fountain from which a chunk of knowledge about humankind's existence (Rosenthal, 2007), both in this world and in the hereafter, is drawn. From this perspective, therefore, and, of course, based on sound reasoning, the Qur'ān serves as the essence of rational or scientific knowledge as well as religious knowledge in Islam. Scientific knowledge is, however, stimulated by experimentation, observation, and empirical data as opposed to spiritual or religious knowledge which is mainly driven by the abstract interpretation of revealed (sacred) data which ultimately leads to certain conclusions often based on mystical experience rather than experimental reality. As a result, the study of the human intellect (*'aql*), which plays an important role in the development of all kinds of knowledge, even in the area of science, has attracted much scholarly attention in the Islamic literature (Dzilo, 2012).

In essence, the pursuit of knowledge is a universal privilege in Islam. Nonetheless, the moral dimensions are much emphasized by the scholars of all the Islamic sciences. In Islam, the effort to study any of the sciences, be it the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, or any other that relates to the needs of society, is extolled (Hourani, 1993; Saeed, 2005). A tradition of the Prophet quotes him as saying thus, "the search for knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim" (Bukhārī & Bahreisy, 1981). In another tradition, Muslims are encouraged to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, while the learned men are extolled as the inheritors of the Prophet (Bukhārī & Bahreisy, 1981). The importance of the above traditions in the context of this article is that the esteemed scholars inherited the Prophet in his duty as the "teacher par excellence," and are, therefore, not only expected to learn or seek

knowledge as much as possible wherever it is available but also under the obligation to teach it to others with devotion and professionalism (cf. “the best among you are those who learn the Qur’ān and teach it” [*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ḥadīth no. 5027]). These traditions underscore the merit of teaching and learning in the Islamic context. This element of knowledge guides the student on the path of righteousness and good moral values for the well-being of the society. Islam considers the acquisition of knowledge as an act of worship (*‘ibādah*). This is because when knowledge is properly packaged, it leads one to the point where not only one’s fear of God (*taqwā*) increases, but one is also rightly positioned to distinguish between the right and the wrong, which, for all intents and purposes, form the theological bedrock of Islamic beliefs. The pursuit of quality knowledge is expected to be done simultaneously with the suppression of one’s immoral carnal desires for the pleasure of God and in order to render the desired service to humanity in one’s chosen field.

The knowledge acquired this way ultimately transforms the person into one with a good worldview as the knowledge is acquired with pure, selfless, and Godly intention. A good character that promotes virtuous actions is manifest or embodied in knowledgeable people. Therefore, the Qur’ān extols those who occupy high positions in the field of knowledge (Qur’ān, 58:11) because they often sacrifice their comforts in the search for it (Ali, 2011). Islam is a religion that is comprehensive in terms of its approach to knowledge (J. B. Yusuf & Abdulsalam, 2011). It urges its adherents to apply their intellects to gain insights into the purpose of creation at all levels, that is, whether at the individual or social levels. This is because man was created for a purpose. However, the search for the true purpose of man’s creation on this earth is for which reason Allah taught him the Qur’ān and gave him the power to search for its explanation (*Bayān*; Qur’ān 55:1-4). The human effort to understand Islam, that is, the Qur’ān and its essence, is obscured in the mental exercise known as meditation (*murāqabah*), which delineates the process of applying one’s wisdom or intellect in a sober reflection to uncover the truth. The two principles of Al-Zarnūjī’s concept of knowledge (namely, the transformation of the rational mind and the nourishing or perfection of the soul) significantly manifest in this spiritual exercise to uncover the truth. Thus, the concept of knowledge, from the Islamic perspective, aims toward a holistic life.

The essence of the Islamic religious knowledge and experience is *tawhīd*. It is the main foundation of the Islamic intellectual discourse (Bakar, 2008). This makes the Islamic intellectual tradition a *tawhīdic* epistemology. For this reason, the Islamization of knowledge is not simply about an intellectual attempt to “Islamicize” the “un-Islamic” fields of knowledge but to integrate the Islamic ethical or *tawhīdic* principles into such fields of modern thought (Hashim & Rossidy, 2000). It means that the outcome will be a sort of hybrid knowledge formed from a blend of the Islamic norms and rational knowledge. These Islamic norms and rational

knowledge, together, form the basic foundation of Al-Zarnūjī’s concept of knowledge, the type of knowledge that will affect both the soul (*rūḥ*) and the rational mind (*‘aql*). “Islamization of knowledge” means that all fields of knowledge should be taught using an Islamic approach in which the *tawhīdic* principle will set the benchmark for assessing quality. Thus, the concept of “Islamization of knowledge,” which has been a major focus of scholarly attention for over three decades, also finds favor in Al-Zarnūjī’s discourse.

The implication of the above is that “Islamization of knowledge” and “Islamic knowledge” are not different in essence and in terms of philosophy. This is because, consistent with Al-Zarnūjī, Islamic knowledge upholds that any field of knowledge that is essential for the well-being of the Muslim society, whether scientific or rational, is an “obligation of sufficiency” (*farḍu kifāyah*; see also: Al-Qaradawī, n.d.; J. B. Yusuf, 2010), and so it should be pursued wherever it is found (even if it is found in *Bilād al-Ṣīn* [China] Soorma, 1934). This conceptualization of Islamic knowledge makes even the rational sciences such as natural science, for example, medicine, integral to Islamic knowledge (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). On the other hand, the philosophy of the “Islamization of knowledge” is that the rational knowledge such as what is named above that is useful for the well-being of the same Muslim society, even if it is “un-Islamic,” should be adapted to the Islamic standards and taught as part of the Islamic body of knowledge. Clearly, the concept of “Islamization of knowledge” is a modern Muslim intellectual response to the onslaught of secularism (Al-Attas, 1978; An-Na’im, 2010) and its threat to the moral values in Islamic educational institutions. Hence, both “Islamic knowledge” and the “Islamized knowledge” have their origins in the Islamic intellectual history and tradition. It is, therefore, important to emphasize that it is not the literal “Islamization” but a move to protect the Islamic heritage through its intellectual tradition. Thus, underneath the process of Islamization of knowledge is the revision of the methodology of the modern rational sciences and the attempt to fuse them with the Islamic religious ethics and values (Al-Faruqī, 1982) all of which form the pivot of Al-Zarnūjī’s discourse.

Islamic knowledge is usually defined as the type of knowledge that is used for religious discourse in Islam and for discovering and reflecting on the truth through the ritual of worship (I. Yusuf, 2012). However, with emphasis from the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, this type of knowledge, which is *tawhīdic*, is considered as the first priority in all kinds of beneficial knowledge and is assessed in the context of belief, morality, and worship (Saed, 2005). Consequently, it is expected to be the foundation of the other branches of knowledge. The objective of Islamic knowledge is to enable the Muslim student to understand the purpose of humankind’s creation and existence through an ethical analysis of nature and how nature behaves.

Considering the modern challenges in education, it is important that Muslims integrate the two types of knowledge,

that is, rational sciences and religious values. Unfortunately, the modern world continues to rid the physical sciences of religious values (Al-Attas, 1993). However, the Islamic notion of knowledge not only considers the physical aspect but also covers the metaphysical (Kartanegara, 2014). Thus, the metaphysical aspect strikes the difference between the Western rational knowledge and its Islamic counterpart. The notion of “Islamization of knowledge” emerged from the apprehension toward the view that the modern knowledge, at any level, should be separated from religious values (Dzilo, 2012). From the secularist worldview, therefore, religious knowledge should be separated from all kinds of scientific or rational knowledge. It is in response to this view that the Muslim intellectuals reconstructed “Islamic knowledge” (the foundation) as “Islamization of knowledge” not only to counter this “strange” view but also to push the concept into the limelight of the worldwide Islamic higher education. Religious ethics are needed to effectively understand the social and environmental aspects and to make sense from the Islamic religious educational perspective (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015a). Therefore, Al-Zarnūjī argues that every Muslim should possess this knowledge to be able to distinguish between what is harmful and what is beneficial to the society in terms of behavior.

Al-Zarnūjī on the Significance of Knowledge (*‘Ilm*)

The Arabic word *‘ilm* often translated as “knowledge” implies “knowing about something” (*ma‘rifah*; Munawwir, 1984, p. 1037). Among others, it can mean learning, acquaintance, perception, or technical know-how about anything. Consequently, the study of nature and how nature behaves, known technically as “science,” is referred to in Arabic as *al-‘Ulūm*, which linguistically appears as the plural of *‘ilm*, the Islamic concept of knowledge. This interesting linguistic coincidence is significant for our purpose for three reasons. First, it buttresses our earlier argument that natural or rational science is part and parcel of the Islamic tradition of knowledge. Second, it also gives us the scientific background to explain our hypothesis that the concept of “Islamization of knowledge” (i.e., adding Islamic touch to the “un-Islamic” rational sciences) and “Islamic knowledge” revolve around the same pivot. Third, and indeed, most importantly, it implies that the Islamic concept of knowledge is a “science” in itself and the fact that today’s so-called Western rational disciplines like chemistry, physics, astronomy, and optometry, among many others, appear mostly as legacies of the Muslim forefathers like Al-Khawārizmī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Hayān, and so on makes this argument noteworthy. *‘Ilm* is, thus, regarded as the knowledge about reality, which needs to be understood both in depth and in extent. The Islamic perspective of science is, however, much deeper than the conventional sense. This is because the conservative understanding restricts it to the physical aspects of nature while Islam

expands it beyond that to include a metaphysical other through the application of revealed sources and the sound reasoning (*ijtihād*) of the *‘ulamā* (the *mujtahidīn*; Azizy, 2003).

There is a link between “knowing,” “inspiring,” and the production of the finished product (the all-round intellectual) from the Islamic perspective, and each of these variables determines the efficiency of the other. In other words, the one who has the right knowledge can inspire better while the one who inspires well produces good products (the graduates). Therefore, from these same variables must be derived the main pillars of training in all fields whether rational (*‘aqlī*) or religious (*naqlī*). Thus, for Al-Zarnūjī (2008), *‘ilm* (knowledge) is effective when it guides its patron against the evils of a chosen field. For him, knowledge is noble because it was through it that Allah ordered the Angels to prostrate for man (*‘Ādam*). Nonetheless, due to the lack of the same knowledge, Iblīs and his company, who thought (with the wrong know-how) that they were higher than man, refused (Qur’ān 2:34). Knowledge is also a divine blessing because it affects all human characteristics, such as arrogance and courage. He argues that the mere knowledge of the disliked human characteristics like arrogance and prodigality protects one against them (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). Al-Zarnūjī’s discusses the significance of knowledge by looking at three main aspects. They are its special features, its priority, and its role in character perfection. These are examined below.

The Special Feature

Al-Zarnūjī (2008) argues that knowledge is significant for the individual. In essence, it is a God-bestowed blessing which is available for all human beings. Society is always in need of all kinds of knowledge such as medicine which becomes the corporate responsibility of all members of the society. In spite of this, Al-Zarnūjī also argues that not all fields of knowledge are recommended for the individual because knowing about certain fields could be counterproductive as they can affect one’s belief in God. Thus, the special feature of the right form of knowledge, which in his view is important, is that it is God-centered. For him, the latter is important because it is necessary for guiding man in his (vertical) relationship with the Creator and the horizontal relationship with his fellow humans as well as in his quest for sustenance (*rizq*). The quest for quality well-being or sustenance is, indeed, one of the reasons for higher education today. Yet, for Al-Zarnūjī, without the God-centered feature, such knowledge is defective. It must be emphasized, however, that the special feature (the aspect) of knowledge, which, from the Islamic perspective, is incumbent on all human beings, is neutral in nature; therefore, it is compatible to all fields of knowledge.

Priority

Knowledge and its pursuit are of primary importance in Islam. Thus, they are accorded a high priority in the lives of

humans. This priority is justified from several verses of the Qur'an (e.g., 2: 31; 35:28; 55:2-4; 58:11, and 96:4-5) in which God makes reference to "knowledge," teaching and "learning" (sometimes by the pen), and ways of understanding among humankind under various circumstances. For the sake of knowledge, God raised the status of 'Ādam even among the Angels who were ordered to prostrate before the mortal 'Ādam, the first of man and the father of all humankind, to show him their respect for his knowledge, which Allah Himself bestowed on him (Qur'an 2:31-33). This fact is interpreted by Al-Zarnūjī as evidence that God prioritized those who have knowledge over those who did not have. However, a critical review of the above Adamic allegory also uncovers the basic truth that no matter how endowed one's status in life can be, one's quality knowledge (*ma'rifah*) for distinguishing between the right and the wrong is always metaphysical (i.e., from on high [Godly or religious knowledge]). This is evident from the fact that, by his nature, 'Ādam would by no means know more than the Angels to the extent of giving names, which the Angels were ignorant about, to the creatures (Qur'an 2:31-33). The implication is that 'ilm or *ma'rifah*, the ethical or religious knowledge about the purpose of creation, is the first priority in knowledge acquisition from the Islamic worldview. Therefore, it cannot, under any circumstance, be compromised on the altar of rational knowledge, which tackles well-being from a totally opposite perspective.

Character Perfection

Al-Zarnūjī gives a clear explanation regarding the significance of knowledge as far as character excellence is concerned. The process of perfecting one's character through knowledge is mediated by piety (*taqwā*). Al-Zarnūjī compares knowledge to a jewelry or adornment in the life of a Muslim. As it was indicated earlier, knowledge affects all human characteristics, be it negative or positive. These characteristics include the mutually exclusive such as cowardice and courage, arrogance and humility, generosity and stinginess. Knowing about them enhances one's personal discipline. Therefore, for Al-Zarnūjī, the knowledge combined with discipline makes one superior to Satan and protects one from his evil machinations. Quoting from an eminent Muslim scholar, Muḥammad b. ḥasan, Al-Zarnūjī argues that a disciplined scholar is superior to Satan than a thousand ordinary worshippers of Allah wallowing in ignorance (Hitti, 1948). This is because they risk being enslaved by their low desires about which they lack knowledge. Here, again comes the issue of necessity; society needs more disciplined people whether innately scholarly or nonscholarly to move it forward. When people who are perceived as knowledgeable behave based on conscience, that is, the good sense of right and wrong, the well-being of the society improves naturally. Thus, the objective of integrating the religious (*naqlī*) sciences with the rational ('*aqlī*) sciences is in the need to

facilitate a deeper understanding that will naturally acknowledge this reality.

Personal Knowledge and Knowledge Required by the Community

Classification of knowledge in Islam is another area where much interest has been shown in the modern era (Bakar, 1998). Al-Zarnūjī classifies knowledge into two main categories: individually needed knowledge (*farḍu 'ayn*) or what is obligatory on the individual and knowledge required by the entire Muslim community (*farḍu kifāyah*).

Farḍu 'Ayn as Individually Needed Knowledge

In every society, the obligation to acquire knowledge about any relevant skill to the recommended level to better one's livelihood is an individual responsibility (Esposito, 2002). This is probably what the Holy Prophet had in mind when he said, "The quest for knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim" whether male or female. In the *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes that one of the aspects of knowledge that is important for the individual is *tawhīd* (i.e., knowledge about the unity of God). *Tawhīd* is the cardinal principle around which all Islamic beliefs revolve. Other aspects that are emphasized for the individual include knowledge about '*aqīdah* (i.e., matters a Muslim must firmly believe in, both in heart and soul), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *akhlāq* (theology about virtue and good character). There is, therefore, some similarity between Al-Zarnūjī's concept of personally required knowledge and that of the influential Muslim ethicist of all times, Abū ḥamīd Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī. Al-Ghazzālī also upheld that the pursuit of knowledge, particularly in areas relevant to religious discourse, attitude, and character, is obligatory on all Muslim individuals (Bakar, 1998). Nonetheless, for Al-Zarnūjī, these aspects of knowledge are significant for directing the course of human life at all levels. As a result, every individual has the obligation to acquire this kind of knowledge to be an active participant in religious observances.

The above is a requirement set by the principles of *Sharī'ah* (*maqāsid al-sharī'ah*). Thus, there is no room for avoiding it, and that is why it is obligatory (*farḍ*; Khallaf, 1978). Al-Zarnūjī argues that personally needed knowledge (i.e., the *farḍu 'ayn*) is necessary for the individual's own existence, namely, his relationship (personal communion) with God.

Knowledge Required by the Society (Farḍu Kifāyah)

This type of knowledge is not just an obligation for its own sake, but it is an obligation by necessity which Muslim societies should not compromise under any circumstance. It is a compulsory knowledge for the society (Bakar, 1998). This refers to the fields considered as societal necessities because

they are essential for the well-being not just of the individual but also the entire society. Al-Zarnūjī opines that a discipline like medical science is very important for the society, and so there must always be individuals who will be experts in it to take care of the members of the society in times of disease outbreak. However, in today's Muslim society, there are more disciplines that could be classified as *farḍu kifāyah*. For example, every society needs engineers and, particularly, meteorologist (for weather forecast). For Al-Zarnūjī, however, not all disciplines should be perceived as potentially good for the well-being of the society. Examples are astrology and astronomy. For him, there are some conditions governing the study of astronomy by a Muslim. He maintains that it could be studied only as much as it can help to determine the times for prayers. However, meteorology or the study of the behavior of the weather is an important discipline that is necessary for government policy-making, particularly in the areas of agriculture and industry. Nonetheless, unlike the personally required type of knowledge (*farḍu 'ayn*), the fields of knowledge that are incumbent on the entire society are reserved for fewer people. This is because not everybody can be an engineer or a medical doctor, for example. Thus, once a few people take up that responsibility, it does not bind on the society anymore (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). Others among this type of knowledge include the science of logic, mathematics, or geometry (Ridha, 2003). Let us now look at religious knowledge as a major dimension of learning in Islam.

Sacred or Religious Knowledge in Society

As the fundamental aspect that is necessary for fulfilling the learners' spiritual needs, particularly, in the area of perfection of the self (*nafs*), religious knowledge serves as the basic foundation of holistic education in Islam. It is the type of knowledge that covers the issues relating to humankind's vertical relationship with God (*'ibādāt*) and one's relationship with one's fellow human beings as well as other creatures (*mu'āmalāt*). This type of knowledge, which forms part of the individually needed body of knowledge, is the entire knowledge about the Islamic religious experience, theology, and history as well as Islamic scriptural exegesis. As it has been indicated, this type of knowledge has some core dimensions according to Al-Zarnūjī. They are *tawhīd* (the unity of God), which is the main foundation of religious theology; *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), for guiding prayers or worship; and *akhlāq*, the knowledge about moral character. As this category of knowledge forms the nub or the bottom line of Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge, we shall digest it further in the following pages.

Unity of God (*Tawhīd*) as the Foundation of Knowledge in Islam

Although Al-Zarnūjī did not explicitly expound the significance of the unity of God (*tawhīd*) in his work, he minutely

emphasized the significance of mastering its knowledge. In this regard, he emphasized relationship with God and the need to allow one's knowledge about God to guide one's interaction with one's fellows in the society. The unity of God is judged as the core foundation of one's personal interactions (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). It relates to the position of Allah as the only Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos. It also delineates the Islamic worldview that God brought nature into existence in accordance with His divine will (Mohamed, 2014).

In Islam, it is important that one unconditionally believes in the Oneness of God; that is, the principle that there is no god except Him in whose hands is one's soul. As it has already been emphasized, it is the pivot around which all Islamic theologies revolve. It is the belief that Allah is the sole source of life and death as well as the Sustainer of humankind from the time of birth through to the time of death and the hereafter. This is the central theme that is reiterated in the creed (*al-shahādah*) as the first pillar of Islam. *Tawhīd* also refers to the nature of God as a unit and an independent Being with Whom nothing is comparable in essence (Qur'ān 112:1-4). The concept of the unity of God, His Essence, and Attributes has appeared in scholarly discourse throughout Islamic history. The science of *tawhīd*, as understood by Muslim scholars, is the systematic theology by which the fundamental knowledge of God may be reached through in-depth understanding of its concepts and roots (Bakar, 2008). The knowledge about the unity of God extends to religious experience and vision. Thus, the role of knowledge is in the understanding of its rules, which require self-discipline and reflection on humankind's duty and responsibility. The study of these rules is also embedded in jurisprudence, which Al-Zarnūjī considers as "the science of the fine points of knowledge."

Jurisprudence as an Essential Knowledge

Another aspect that Al-Zarnūjī considers as an important branch of the Islamic religious knowledge is jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or the study of the law (*Sharī'ah*). This is to enable one not only to judge between what is right and wrong, from the Islamic perspective, but also to grasp the rules of prayers and one's own relationship with his fellows. It is recommended that every Muslim society promotes the subject of jurisprudence. This is needed to ensure informed religious behavior and perfect interaction. Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) deals with the rules of rituals, morals, and social legislations in Islam. Technically, it refers to the body of legal theories which are extracted from the Islamic sources and studied for the purpose of formulating the principles of law (the *Sharī'ah*). Regarding the significance of *fiqh*, Al-Zarnūjī pays considerable attention to issues relating to the daily prayers, that is, *Ṣalāt*, particularly among the youth (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). The study of jurisprudence enables one to master the laws that differentiate the acts that are required (*farḍ* or *wājib*) from those

that are optional as well as those that are strongly recommended (*mandūb* or *mustahabb*), permitted (*mubāh*), disapproved (*makrūh*), or prohibited (*harām*; Halstead, 2007). The above constants of *fiqh* are essential for every Muslim learner because they form the basis for judging human act in Islam. However, jurisprudence also has different categories.

Jurisprudential Knowledge for the Ritual Aspects

It is obligatory on all Muslims to perform the ritual or sacramental prayers known as *Ṣalāt*. These prayers also have various categories. Some are obligatory (*fard* or *wājib*), while others are supererogatory or very much recommended (*sunnah al-mu'akkadah*, *mandūb* or *mustahabb*). Yet, many others are optional, in which case, the choice of doing it or not is left for the individual. Furthermore, some of these prayers or rituals are daily, for example, the five daily prayers, while others are weekly or annual (e.g., the *'Īd* prayers). Others depend on nature and its behavior (e.g., prayer in times of eclipse, the *Khusūfayn*), and so on. Each of these rituals has rules that govern it. Therefore, for one to be deemed to have correctly discharged those duties, one has to know and, indeed, follow them thoroughly from the beginning to the end. These are known as the rules of *'ibādah* (worship). One can be a good worshipper if one knows the rules of worship. The knowledge about these rules is, therefore, central to the Islamic conception of education. It is also known as *fiqh 'ibādāt* or ibadaic jurisprudence. It plays a significant role in Islam because *'ibādah* permeates through all Muslim activities. Thus, for Al-Zarnūjī, equipping the students with the knowledge about these issues must be a priority.

Jurisprudential Knowledge for Social Interaction

This type of knowledge is meant to guide the student in his interpersonal interaction with other human beings. This is also known as *fiqh mu'āmalāt*. However, Al-Zarnūjī does not give clear explanation about or definition for the concept of interpersonal dealings (*mu'āmalāt*). Yet, the term has to be interpreted to set the background for examining what the knowledge on interpersonal dealings covers from the Islamic scholarly point of view. The etymological origin of the term *mu'āmalāt* is rooted in the verbal noun, *'amal*, which delineates an effort to work or do something, or even implement a policy in an establishment (Munawwir, 1984). From this background, *mu'āmalāt* came to be used for the ordinances on daily affairs and conduct at the individual and social levels of nonritual human interactions. Therefore, *fiqh mu'āmalāt* is the scholarly study of the Islamic rules or ordinances governing interpersonal or business related relationships. These rules also have several aspects. These include the rulings on private affairs, civil and criminal law, ruling relating to judiciary issues, laws on governance, and economic laws (Khallaf, 1978). From the above, it has become clear that the knowledge about interpersonal dealings (*fiqh*

mu'āmalāt) is still applicable to the contemporary needs. They are needed today for the purpose of ensuring social harmony in the society. This type of knowledge, required for interpersonal dealings, invariably relates to the principles of the *Sharī'ah* and, for that matter, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in all its branches. Al-Zarnūjī considers jurisprudence, in general, as an important branch of knowledge and concludes that it is one's knowledge about one's rights and obligations (Al-Zarnuji, 2008). In business transaction, for example, a salient determinant of peaceful coexistence is the knowledge of the various parties about each other's obligations and responsibilities amply recommended in Qur'ān 2:282 (Mustafa, Abdulsalam, & Yusuf, 2016). Therefore, Al-Zarnūjī recommends all the aspects of this branch of knowledge that are necessary for gaining a profound understanding of the essentials of the religion including *aqīdah* and *akhlāq*, which are all rich with rules on interpersonal dealings. The point here is that the matters relating to business transaction, trade and commerce, or financial lending and borrowing are also governed by the regulations on conduct known collectively as *akhlāq* or ethics.

Akhlāq as Knowledge for Guiding Morality and Character

For the purpose of enhancing good character and personal discipline among the students, Al-Zarnūjī places considerable emphasis on moral values by distinguishing between good morals and bad morals (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015c). Knowledge about ethics facilitates one's reflection on one's actions. These actions are particularly influenced by one's desires. The point is that bad desires, which are distinctive features of bad morals, are destructive to the soul. They are, therefore, expected to be avoided in favor of good ones. However, this can happen only with the right knowledge about both good and bad morals. That is why Al-Zarnūjī emphasizes it in the process of education, which is purported to transform the student's personality. For Al-Zarnūjī, this knowledge does not come by default; it is rather inspired through the teaching and learning process. *Akhlāq* (i.e., knowledge about moral values) comprises the ethics of character-building.

As it has been indicated earlier, *akhlāq* is a major component of learning at all levels of education in Islam. It moves alongside the other components of *fiqh* (the science of the law, the *Sharī'ah*; Halstead, 2007). Islamic ethics (*akhlāq*) is also divided into several components (Al-Qardawi, 1981). These are individually motivated ethics; social or family-motivated ethics, that is, the ethical rules that govern social life; ethical rules that govern human interaction with animals; ethical rules that discourse how humankind should relate to the physical environment; and finally, ethics that regulate human communication with the Creator (Al-Qardawi, 1981). There are some other aspects that address issues relating to the individual's responsibilities in certain obligatory acts (Halstead, 2007).

According to Al-Zarnūjī, it is obligatory on every Muslim to study the science of ethics so that, from the Islamic point of view, he can differentiate what is good from what is ethically destructive to the self (Al-Zarnūjī, 2008). As a yardstick for judging human conducts, ethics concerns itself with human attitude, interpersonal skills, and commitment to the realization of the common human good (i.e., social peace) within the broader context of socioeconomic harmony. It affects individual development, social reformation and transformation, and environmental renewal, which, for Al-Zarnūjī, are important variables for creating a God-centered community and promoting a sound intellectual life (Huda & Kartanegara, 2015d). In the school context, therefore, ethics can promote good character through the implementation of programs that are rich in good values and, of course, promote good character in the students during the learning process. To promote good character and values among students, ethics has to reflect in all the fields of learning. In fact, the reorientation of higher research ethics is needed today in higher educational institutions.

In today's higher educational institutions, the ethics of research has become a source of major concern for stakeholders. The ethics of data collection is always violated by both lecturers and students. Subjectivity has replaced objectivity in research, while the phenomena of plagiarism, copying, and impersonation during examinations (Clark, 1999; Simmons, 1999; Stover & Kelly, 2002) have conspired together to infiltrate universities and other institutions of higher learning with unqualified students. The unfortunate repercussion is that the global education standards keep falling every day (Bruce, 1991; Hartnett & Naish, 1993; Machin & Vignoles, 2006; Modisaotsile, 2012; Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2006) apparently because the "unqualified" candidates taught as teachers are detailed to teach at the lower levels. According to Clark (1999), "concern with plagiarism in writing center instruction reflects a pervasive cultural concern with intellectual property rights that has gained particular prominence in academia" (p. 157). The alarming rate of plagiarism and other unethical scholarly behavior in the academia has been a major concern for both journal and book publishers. Yet, from the Islamic perspective, quality and reliable knowledge delivery is crucial for building efficient human resource and maintaining a socially and ethically balanced society in which unethical transaction will be kept at bay (Mustafa et al., 2016). Thus, Al-Zarnūjī (2008) argues that it is impossible to avoid the ethical aspects at any level of education. Therefore, its obligation and relevance today originate from the very important role it can play within the educational hierarchy in maintaining a rationally ('*aqlī*) and ethically balanced (*akhlāq*-oriented) intellectuality. This could only be possible if both the teacher and, particularly, the trainee, that is, the student, acknowledge, through the moral lessons given and absorbed, that there is a reward in being honest in all their dealings. The principle is that a student taught, for example,

by a plagiarist or copyist (i.e., a morally corrupt teacher) invariably turns to be one himself because that phenomenon demonstrates lack of originality in the entire teaching and learning process. This makes the ethical foundation of education, which is not only an indispensable aspect of the Islamic concept of education but is central to Al-Zarnūjī's theory of knowledge, very imperative today.

Some Reflections on Al-Zarnūjī's Concept of Knowledge

Al-Zarnūjī perspective on knowledge is not different from the notion of classification and meaning, perhaps, known to many other scholars before him like Abū ḥamīd Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111). Nonetheless, what makes Al-Zarnūjī's collection unique is that it is devoted not only to the methodology of teaching and learning as well as the relationship between the teacher and his students, but it also dilates on the lesson and its contents. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of teaching what is good for the student and the ills of teaching what is undesirable for him. This makes the book relevant to addressing various educational challenges today. Al-Zarnūjī's discourse on the classification of knowledge emanates from two important premises.

1. His religious orientation was instrumental to his prioritization of the religious science over all the others in the teaching and learning process.
2. The ethical or religious challenges posed by certain phenomena in the classical period of Islam, such as the worship of celestial bodies like the moon and the stars as well as the use of stars in divination and foretelling, feature prominently in his prohibition of some scientific disciplines like astronomy and astrology. It is for the same reason that some Muslim scholars completely write-off philosophy and all its associates from the Islamic stream of teaching and learning (Kuspinar, 2016).

The question, however, arises as to what the justification is today for still holding on to the fear of studying subjects such as astronomy and philosophy when scientific thought and rationalism direct the course of global thinking. In other words, with the transformation of natural science and human thought, could astronomy and philosophy still be considered as "inimical" to the Islamic thinking or teaching and learning? Certainly, there is the need to revise the approach to certain disciplines bearing in mind the contemporary conditions. Through philosophy and rational thinking from Western scholars, the Islamic beliefs and doctrines have come under intense intellectual attack. It is said that "one way of defeating any threat is by first knowing what it is at any material moment," and the knowledge about philosophy today is *sine qua non* for countering the onslaught of its patrons.

Our argument is that, although, perhaps, in the classical period, due to the challenges these fields posed to the Islamic doctrines, there was an apparent justification for discouraging or even prohibiting them. Yet, their relevance for the same Muslims in today's educational discourse offers another justification for not only permitting them but also promoting them. In this context, therefore, while an ethical balance is significant by way of reflecting on the purpose of human life, the rational (*ma'qūlāt*) sciences should not be compromised. Thus, knowledge must have the following essential characteristics to fulfill the objective of learning in today's world from the Islamic point of view.

Religion/Ethics as the Main Foundation

Religiosity is an important foundation of the Islamic understanding of knowledge acquisition and dispensation conventionally known as "education." Thus, being knowledgeable in Islam does not mean only being well grounded in a particular discipline that is useful for living in the society but also being well exposed to the expertise for judging between what is right and wrong (i.e., knowledge about the existence of God). This is because Islam is not just perceived as a civilization but also as a way of life (J. B. Yusuf & Abdulsalam, 2011) with rules that permeate all aspects of human life including business and intellectual relations. Hence, to understand and apply these rules in one's chosen field, one has to be guided at every step of the educational ladder. Religious knowledge suppresses despair and hopelessness in life, and the sound knowledge about religious values could guide graduates in order that they do not lose hope in the face of unemployment sometime after their higher education. Patience (*Ṣabr*) and trust in God (*tawakkul*) do not come by default; they are inculcated from childhood. Therefore, the promotion of religious values in schools could help students to trust in Allah and avoid the crimes associated with unemployment.

The Teacher–Learner Relationship in the Teaching and Learning Process

Al-Zarnuji dwells much on the student–teacher discourse because much of the character building takes place in this context. Knowledge is delivered, through the teaching process, by the teacher to the student. The student obeys the teacher as his ethical duty or service to him while the teacher's own duty is to serve the student in the same manner. This process reflects the concept of servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*) because they mutually serve each other in humility and devotion just like service to God (*'ibādah*). This boils down to the issue of education as a component of *'ibādah* (service to God and humanity) in the Islamic understanding. Man is referred to in the Qur'ān as *'abd* ("servant" or "slave"). He is to serve God, and the relationship between him and God

is that of a servant and a master. In the school context, the teacher's relationship with his student is almost similar because while the student serves him, although, he, the teacher, also serves the student in return, the teacher shoulders an additional duty of serving as the moral judge (master) of the student's conduct. It is, therefore, a give-and-take process. Nonetheless, the role of the teacher as the moral judge in the Islamic context places a heavy responsibility on him in the teaching and learning process. A teacher must, therefore, be morally or ethically sound to qualify to take on the responsibility of correcting others. There is, therefore, the issue of trait because he is expected to make a positive impact on the student.

Promotion of Problem-Solving Qualities in the Students

Knowledge is worth pursuing if it equips the individuals with the capacity for creative *and* original thought as well as problem-solving skills. This is a major goal of knowledge acquisition in every society whether religious or innately secular. The global thinking process has become very complex today and that requires very rigorous approach to scholarship. While teaching and inculcating the religious value of trust in God (*tawakkul*), the ideal education system should also inculcate in students the power of reason (the *ma'qūlāt* sciences) and practical knowledge for economic productivity and relevance in the society.

Relevance to Society and Motivation for Good Results

Al-Zarnuji's recognition of the two categories of knowledge, namely, the individually required knowledge and the knowledge required by the society (i.e., *farḍu 'ayn* and *farḍu kifāyah*), also implies the notion of relevance. While disciplines such as medical science and engineering, the *farḍu kifāyah*, in essence, are not binding on all members of the society or that society is free from the web of its obligation once some members specialize in them, it is appropriate to also add that society is always in need of these fields. It is a fact that the number of people with medical science expertise can never be enough at any material moment in Muslim societies. Therefore, for any educational institution to achieve a balance in the promotion of knowledge, it should bear these essentials in mind so that there can be no damping in the society due to the over production of knowledgeable people in the irrelevant fields at the expense of the more essential ones. There is always the need for specialization in areas where investment is necessary for the society's well-being. The training package should, therefore, be result oriented. One can talk of a society where people live ethical lifestyles when facilities for self-improvement are available. A student trained with knowledge that is on high demand in

the society stands a better chance of making the appropriate use of his knowledge than the one with irrelevant knowledge. Thus, although the pursuit of quality knowledge grounded in religious values is an unparalleled asset for the one who pursues it, this should not be promoted solely and at the expense of scientific knowledge. Nonetheless, Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge demonstrates the need to take the ethical aspect more serious in the teaching and learning process in all the disciplines so that, with it as the guiding principle, human understanding can reflect the knowledge of the transcendental.

Conclusion

The article engaged the concept of knowledge and its significance from the perspective of one of the Muslim educational pedagogues of all times, Burhān al-Dīn Al-Zarnūjī, according to his popular treatise titled *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*. It explores its relevance to the contemporary education system and the teaching and learning process. It was found that Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge could be understood using two major coefficients. They are knowledge about religious-based values (for spiritual self-development, that is, the development of the soul) and knowledge about fields necessary for societal well-being (*farḍu kifāyah*), otherwise known as material or rational knowledge, for example, medical science for treating diseases. He argues that any of these categories of knowledge that are necessary for the individual's own well-being is obligatory (*farḍu 'ayn*). This also includes jurisprudence, which is meant to bring about equilibrium or balance between the spiritual and material aspects to promote well-being in the society. However, we found that his main emphasis was on religious knowledge (knowledge about jurisprudence), which was the main objective of education from the classical point of view. Furthermore, in explaining the fields that are useful for the society, although the knowledge that is necessary for the entire society's survival, that is, "obligation of sufficiency" (*farḍu kifāyah*; J. B. Yusuf, 2010, p. 221) encompasses mostly scientific knowledge, he approves fields such as astronomy only to the extent that one learns enough for determining the times of the prayers. However, we have argued that the concept of *farḍu kifāyah* has expanded today in view of the present global demands. Therefore, although areas such as philosophy and astronomy were initially and are still perceived to be inconsistent with the Islamic tradition, the same Muslim society needs them for *ḥalāl* reasons due to, in the case of philosophy, its use by the adversaries in the intellectual attack on Islam. The above phenomenon has led to another concept known as the "Islamization of knowledge," which is an attempt to adapt the rational sciences to the Islamic terminologies. In spite of these, Al-Zarnūjī's concept of knowledge is still relevant to the contemporary education system and its essence. His contribution to knowledge lies

in the packaging and dissemination of the Islamic academic heritage, particularly the methodology for dispensing and receiving knowledge at the feet of the *mu'allim*, the teacher.

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