



# The Philosophy of Qalb in Islamic Thought: Ethical Foundations for Multicultural Education

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Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: 2025-12-08 Revised: 2026-01-15 Published: 2026-02-03  <b>Keywords:</b> <i>Qalb;</i> <i>Islamic Philosophy;</i> <i>Ethical Epistemology;</i> <i>Moral Consciousness;</i> <i>Plurality;</i> <i>Ethics.</i>	Recent discussions on multiculturalism within Islamic contexts reveal a persistent philosophical problem: ethical engagement with difference is often approached procedurally, without a sufficiently grounded epistemological framework. This study addresses the lack of a philosophically robust account of ethical consciousness capable of mediating truth, morality, and plurality in Islamic thought. The study aims to examine the concept of qalb as articulated in Islamic philosophy and to articulate its role as a foundational ethical-epistemological principle for engaging with diversity. This research employs a qualitative philosophical-empirical design, combining conceptual analysis of classical Islamic philosophical texts with empirical data derived from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with scholars and practitioners of Islamic thought. Data were analyzed through thematic and hermeneutic interpretation, allowing normative philosophical concepts to be examined in dialogue with lived ethical experience. The findings demonstrate that qalb functions as a dynamic epistemological faculty through which moral discernment, ethical awareness, and openness to truth are integrated. Empirical insights reinforce classical philosophical claims that ethical failure stems not from cognitive deficiency but from the neglect of inner moral consciousness. The study implies that the philosophy of qalb offers a comprehensive ethical framework for engaging plurality as a moral and epistemic reality, contributing to contemporary Islamic philosophical discourse on ethics and human coexistence.

Artikel Info	Abstrak
<b>Sejarah Artikel</b> Diterima: 2025-12-08 Direvisi: 2026-01-15 Dipublikasi: 2026-02-03  <b>Kata kunci:</b> <i>Qalb;</i> <i>Islamic Philosophy;</i> <i>Ethical Epistemology;</i> <i>Moral Consciousness;</i> <i>Plurality;</i> <i>Ethics.</i>	Diskusi mutakhir tentang multikulturalisme dalam konteks Islam mengungkapkan adanya persoalan filosofis yang terus bertahan: keterlibatan etis terhadap perbedaan sering kali didekati secara prosedural, tanpa kerangka epistemologis yang cukup kokoh. Penelitian ini menanggapi kurangnya pemaparan filosofis yang kuat mengenai kesadaran etis yang mampu memediasi kebenaran, moralitas, dan pluralitas dalam pemikiran Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep qalb sebagaimana dirumuskan dalam filsafat Islam serta menjelaskan perannya sebagai prinsip etis-epistemologis yang fundamental dalam menghadapi keberagaman. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif filosofis-empiris dengan mengombinasikan analisis konseptual terhadap teks-teks klasik filsafat Islam dan data empiris yang diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur dengan para cendekiawan dan praktisi pemikiran Islam. Data dianalisis melalui interpretasi tematik dan hermeneutik, sehingga konsep-konsep filosofis normatif dapat dikaji dalam dialog dengan pengalaman etis yang dihayati. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa qalb berfungsi sebagai fakultas epistemologis yang dinamis, melalui mana penalaran moral, kesadaran etis, dan keterbukaan terhadap kebenaran terintegrasi. Temuan empiris memperkuat klaim filsafat klasik bahwa kegagalan etis tidak bersumber dari kekurangan kognitif, melainkan dari pengabaian terhadap kesadaran moral batiniah. Penelitian ini mengimplikasikan bahwa filsafat qalb menawarkan kerangka etis yang komprehensif untuk memahami pluralitas sebagai realitas moral dan epistemik, serta berkontribusi pada wacana filsafat Islam kontemporer mengenai etika dan koeksistensi manusia.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity constitutes a social reality that is inseparable from modern societies, particularly in countries with high levels of pluralism such as Indonesia. (Waston et al. 2024) Empirical data indicate that

Indonesia is home to more than 300 ethnic groups, over 700 local languages, and six officially recognized religions practiced by a population exceeding 275 million, rendering it one of the most multicultural countries in the world. (Djamaluddin et al. 2024) This condition

poses significant challenges for the field of education, especially in cultivating ethical, tolerant, and just attitudes amid differences in social and religious identities. (Ma'rifah 2023) At the global level, reports by UNESCO and various educational studies demonstrate that the failure to manage diversity ethically within educational systems contributes to the rise of intolerance, discrimination, and identity-based conflicts, particularly among younger generations. (Foroutan 2023) Consequently, multicultural education is no longer understood merely as an additional pedagogical approach, but rather as a fundamental necessity for fostering social cohesion and public civility.

Within the context of Islamic education, multicultural education is generally developed through the internalization of values such as tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), justice (*ʿadl*), and human fraternity (*ukhuwwah insāniyyah*). Numerous contemporary studies indicate that the implementation of multicultural education in Islamic educational institutions focuses on integrating these values into curricula, (Mustapa et al. 2025) instructional strategies, (Muhajir et al. 2025) and social interactions within schools and higher education institutions. (Al Hadi, Maksum, and Rohmat 2025) Meanwhile, classical studies in Islamic educational philosophy have long positioned the *qalb* as the center of human moral, spiritual, and epistemological consciousness, (Anwar, Sukisno, and Waston 2024) as articulated by thinkers such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, and Ibn ʿArabi. Nevertheless, these two scholarly trajectories—multicultural education and the philosophy of the *qalb*—have largely developed in relative isolation. The current state of the art reveals that most studies on multicultural education in Islam are normative-practical in nature and oriented toward policy or pedagogical methods, whereas discussions of the *qalb* are predominantly situated within the domains of Sufism, ethics, and Islamic philosophy, with limited direct engagement with contemporary issues of multicultural education. (Nizam et al. 2025)

A research gap thus emerges in that the concept of the *qalb*, which in the Islamic philosophical tradition is understood as the center of knowledge (*maʿrifah*), (Agustono, Arroisi, and Zain 2025) moral judgment, and the pursuit of truth, has not yet been systematically developed as an ethical foundation for multicultural education. The paucity of studies integrating the philosophy of the *qalb* with the

theory and practice of multicultural education has resulted in Islamic educational approaches to diversity often lacking philosophical depth. As a consequence, multicultural education within the Islamic context tends to be procedural and normative, (Rafi, Qameer, and Salonen 2025) without an epistemological foundation capable of explaining how attitudes of openness, empathy, and justice can be cultivated from the inner consciousness of the human being. Moreover, research that links the *qalb* to the pursuit of truth and social ethics within plural societies—including within the framework of Islamic democracy—remains extremely limited.

Based on these conditions, the central problem addressed in this study is that multicultural education within Islamic educational contexts has yet to develop a robust philosophical framework rooted in the concept of the *qalb* as the center of human ethical and epistemological consciousness. The absence of such a foundation has resulted in Islamic multicultural education being insufficiently equipped to cultivate learners who are not only socially tolerant but also possess moral depth and philosophical awareness in engaging with difference.

The urgency of this research lies in the pressing need to formulate an ethical foundation for multicultural education that is not only socially relevant but also philosophically authentic within the Islamic tradition. (Mistar 2025) By examining the *qalb* as a central concept in Islamic philosophy, this study seeks to offer a holistic ethical framework for multicultural education—one that integrates rational, spiritual, and moral dimensions in the formation of the human person. This approach is expected to bridge the gap between modern multicultural education theory and the rich heritage of Islamic philosophy, while also contributing conceptually to the development of a more inclusive, reflective, and truth-oriented model of Islamic education in multicultural societies.

## II. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative philosophical empirical research design, integrating conceptual analysis in Islamic philosophy with empirical data obtained through in-depth interviews. This design is employed to explore the concept of *qalb* in Islamic thought and to examine its ethical significance as a foundational framework for multicultural education. Rather than pursuing generalization, the study aims to achieve

theoretical depth and contextual understanding, which is consistent with qualitative inquiry in philosophy of education and religious studies.

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are generated through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a purposively selected group of participants consisting of Islamic education scholars, philosophy of education academics, and experienced practitioners involved in multicultural educational contexts. Participants were selected based on predefined criteria, including academic expertise, professional experience in Islamic education or ethical studies, and engagement with multicultural educational practices. A limited number of participants (approximately 6–10 informants) was considered sufficient to achieve thematic saturation, in line with qualitative research standards in interpretive and philosophical studies.

Secondary data consist of authoritative classical and contemporary texts in Islamic philosophy, particularly those addressing *qalb*, ethics, and epistemology, as well as peer-reviewed literature on multicultural education and ethical theory. These sources provide the conceptual framework necessary for interpreting the empirical findings.

Data collection was conducted in two interrelated phases. The first phase involved a systematic conceptual analysis of key philosophical texts to establish a theoretical understanding of *qalb* as an epistemological and ethical construct within Islamic thought. The second phase involved the collection of empirical data through semi-structured interviews, guided by an interview protocol designed to elicit participants' reflections on ethical awareness, moral judgment, and attitudes toward diversity in educational settings. Interviews were conducted in a manner that allowed flexibility and depth, enabling participants to articulate nuanced ethical perspectives grounded in their professional experiences.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach informed by hermeneutic and philosophical interpretation. Interview transcripts were coded inductively to identify recurring ethical themes such as empathy, moral discernment, openness to truth, and justice. These themes were subsequently interpreted in dialogue with the conceptual framework derived from Islamic philosophical sources. A comparative-interpretive analysis was employed to examine points of convergence and tension between

normative philosophical concepts of *qalb* and empirical insights from educational practice. The final stage of analysis involved conceptual synthesis, through which an ethically grounded framework for multicultural education based on the philosophy of *qalb* was articulated.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied established qualitative criteria, including credibility, dependability, and interpretive rigor. Strategies such as prolonged engagement with data, iterative coding, and theoretical triangulation between philosophical texts and empirical findings were employed. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Result

##### 1. The Concept of *Qalb* in Islamic Philosophy

The findings of this study indicate that *qalb* occupies a central and multidimensional position in Islamic philosophical thought, functioning as an epistemological and ethical faculty rather than merely a spiritual metaphor. Analysis of classical Islamic philosophical texts, combined with empirical data from in-depth interviews, reveals that *qalb* is consistently understood as the locus of moral discernment, inner awareness, and the apprehension of truth. This understanding contrasts sharply with dominant modern educational paradigms that tend to privilege cognitive rationality while marginalizing inner moral consciousness. (Ali et al. 2020)

Classical Islamic philosophers conceptualize *qalb* as the core of human consciousness where knowledge, ethics, and spirituality converge. Al-Ghazali explicitly identifies *qalb* as the true essence of the human being and the primary medium through which *ma'rifah* (true knowledge) is attained, emphasizing that intellectual knowledge without moral purification leads to ethical distortion. (Faqihuddin, Suresman, and Abdullah 2025) Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh associates moral virtue with the refinement of the *qalb*, arguing that ethical behavior is not produced through external instruction alone but emerges from an internally cultivated moral disposition. Ibn 'Arabi further deepens this conception by

presenting *qalb* as a dynamic and receptive faculty capable of recognizing truth in its diverse manifestations, thereby providing a philosophical basis for ethical openness toward difference.

These philosophical foundations are strongly echoed in the empirical findings. Interview data reveal that participants consistently perceive ethical engagement in multicultural educational settings as originating from an inner moral awareness rather than from formal rules or institutional policies. One participant, an Islamic education scholar, stated:

“In my experience, educators who truly respect diversity are not those who simply understand the concept of tolerance, but those whose hearts are trained to feel justice and compassion. This inner awareness is what Islam refers to as *qalb*.” (Participant 3)

Another informant, a senior educator working in a multicultural school environment, emphasized that ethical sensitivity toward difference is deeply connected to inner moral formation:

“You can teach students about diversity cognitively, but without cultivating the *qalb*, tolerance remains superficial. The *qalb* shapes how one responds emotionally and morally to others.” (Participant 6)

These statements align closely with the Islamic philosophical position that ethical knowledge is inseparable from the condition of the *qalb*. The data suggest that *qalb* functions as an internal ethical compass, guiding individuals in interpreting and responding to cultural and religious diversity. Ramzy, Saad, and Sulaiman, “Religious Ethics For Appreciating Cultural Diversity.” Participants repeatedly noted that educators who lack this inner moral orientation often struggle to translate multicultural values into genuine practice, even when they possess adequate pedagogical competence.

From a critical perspective, the findings also reveal a structural tension between the Islamic philosophical understanding of *qalb* and contemporary educational practices. Several participants criticized modern education systems for prioritizing

measurable learning outcomes while neglecting moral and spiritual formation. (Mohammad Mizan Habibi 2017) As one academic informant observed:

“Education today is obsessed with indicators and performance. There is little space for nurturing the inner life of students. When *qalb* is ignored, ethics becomes procedural, not transformative.” (Participant 1)

This critique resonates with Islamic philosophical concerns regarding knowledge divorced from ethical grounding. (Syafaq et al. 2024) In Islamic epistemology, *qalb* does not negate reason (*‘aql*) but provides its moral orientation. Knowledge that is detached from the *qalb* is considered incomplete and potentially harmful, as it lacks the ethical sensibility required to engage responsibly with others. This insight is particularly relevant for multicultural education, where ethical engagement demands empathy, humility, and openness to truth—qualities rooted in the cultivated *qalb* rather than mere cognitive awareness. (Johari et al. 2018)

The synthesis of textual analysis and interview data demonstrates that *qalb* is best understood as a dynamic ethical faculty that mediates between knowledge and action. (Suhendi et al. 2025) It shapes how individuals perceive difference, interpret moral responsibility, and respond to pluralism. Participants emphasized that meaningful multicultural education requires educators and learners to undergo inner moral formation, not merely acquire conceptual knowledge about diversity. Without this foundation, multicultural education risks becoming symbolic or performative, rather than genuinely transformative.

In summary, the concept of *qalb* in Islamic philosophy offers a robust epistemological and ethical framework for rethinking education in pluralistic contexts. The integration of philosophical insights and empirical data in this study shows that *qalb* provides a critical foundation for cultivating authentic ethical engagement with diversity. This understanding establishes a conceptual basis for subsequent discussions on *qalb* as an epistemological

and ethical foundation for multicultural education.

## 2. Qalb as an Epistemological and Ethical Foundation

The findings of this study reveal that *qalb* in Islamic philosophy functions not only as a moral faculty but also as a foundational epistemological structure that shapes how knowledge is apprehended, evaluated, and ethically oriented. (Azram 2012) Unlike modern epistemological frameworks that separate knowledge from values, Islamic philosophy conceptualizes *qalb* as the integrative center where cognition, ethics, and spirituality converge. (Sibawaihi 2022) This holistic epistemology provides a critical foundation for understanding ethical engagement in multicultural educational contexts.

Classical Islamic thought consistently positions *qalb* as a prerequisite for genuine knowledge. Al-Ghazali asserts that true knowledge (*'ilm ḥaqīqī*) is attained not merely through rational inference but through the purification of the *qalb*, which enables clarity of perception and moral discernment. From this perspective, epistemic failure is not simply an intellectual deficiency but a moral and spiritual one. Ibn Sina complements this view by acknowledging the role of rational intellect while maintaining that ethical orientation remains essential for the proper use of reason. Together, these perspectives suggest that knowledge divorced from ethical grounding is epistemologically incomplete.

Empirical findings from the interviews strongly support this philosophical position. Participants consistently emphasized that ethical understanding in education emerges from inner moral awareness rather than cognitive mastery alone. One informant, a philosophy of education scholar, articulated this connection explicitly:

"In educational practice, knowledge becomes dangerous when it is not guided by ethical awareness. In Islamic terms, *qalb* ensures that knowledge serves justice rather than domination." (Participant 2)

Another participant highlighted the epistemological dimension of *qalb* in relation to diversity:

"Understanding different cultures is not only about information. It requires an openness of the heart. Without *qalb*, knowledge about others remains superficial and often biased." (Participant 5)

These statements illustrate that *qalb* operates as an epistemic filter that shapes not only what is known but how knowledge is interpreted and enacted. Participants indicated that educators who lack this inner ethical orientation often reproduce stereotypes or engage in tokenistic multicultural practices, despite possessing formal knowledge about diversity. (Lawless 2021)

Critically, the findings expose a fundamental limitation in contemporary multicultural education frameworks that rely heavily on cognitive and procedural approaches. While such frameworks emphasize awareness, skills, and attitudes, they frequently overlook the inner ethical formation required for sustained moral engagement. Islamic philosophy, through the concept of *qalb*, challenges this limitation by asserting that ethical education must address the internal moral condition of the learner. In this sense, *qalb* functions as the epistemological ground that enables ethical responsiveness to difference.

From an ethical standpoint, *qalb* provides the foundation for virtues essential to multicultural education, such as empathy, justice, humility, and openness to truth. (Husen 2025) Interview participants repeatedly stressed that these virtues cannot be instilled through instruction alone but require intentional cultivation of inner moral awareness. As one educator noted:

"Rules can teach students what is allowed, but only the *qalb* teaches them why they should care about others." (Participant 7)

This insight underscores the ethical significance of *qalb* as the internal source of moral motivation, bridging the gap between knowing ethical principles and embodying them in practice.

The integration of philosophical analysis and empirical data suggests that *qalb* mediates the relationship between epistemology and ethics. It enables individuals to recognize truth not as an abstract concept but as a moral reality that demands ethical response. (Kresna 2023) In multicultural contexts, this means acknowledging difference not as a threat but as a site of ethical responsibility. Without this epistemological-ethical foundation, education risks promoting compliance rather than moral commitment.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that *qalb* serves as a foundational epistemological and ethical framework in Islamic philosophy, offering critical insights for rethinking multicultural education. (Affan and Awaludin 2023) By integrating knowledge with moral awareness, *qalb* provides a holistic model of ethical education that addresses both cognitive understanding and inner moral formation. This framework not only complements but also critically enriches contemporary theories of multicultural education, laying the groundwork for a more ethically grounded and transformative educational practice.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Multicultural Education from an Islamic Philosophical Perspective

The findings of this study indicate that multicultural education, when examined through the lens of Islamic philosophy, cannot be reduced to a set of pedagogical strategies or curricular adjustments. Rather, it constitutes a fundamentally ethical project rooted in a particular understanding of human nature, knowledge, and moral responsibility. (Fahmi et al. 2025) Islamic philosophy, with *qalb* as its central ethical and epistemological construct, offers a distinctive framework that both complements and critically interrogates dominant multicultural education paradigms.

Contemporary theories of multicultural education, largely developed within Western liberal traditions, emphasize equality, recognition, and social justice through cognitive awareness and institutional reform. (Levy and Monterescu 2022) While these approaches have

contributed significantly to addressing structural inequalities, the findings suggest that they often underemphasize the role of inner moral formation. Several interview participants acknowledged the value of these frameworks but highlighted their limitations when applied without ethical depth. (Sanabria, Sheplak, and Aydin 2024) One participant noted:

“Multicultural education today often focuses on policies and methods. These are important, but they do not necessarily change how people feel or judge others. Without inner ethical formation, diversity remains an abstract ideal.” (Participant 4)

From an Islamic philosophical standpoint, education is intrinsically moral, aimed at the formation of a virtuous and ethically responsible human being (*al-insān al-akhlāqī*). In this view, multicultural education must go beyond teaching about diversity to cultivating ethical dispositions such as empathy (*raḥmah*), justice (*ʿadl*), humility (*tawāḍuʿ*), and openness to truth. These virtues are grounded in the cultivation of the *qalb*, which enables learners to recognize the moral worth of others and engage with difference as an ethical responsibility rather than a mere social fact. (R'boul 2021)

Empirical data further illustrate how educators perceive the gap between policy-driven multicultural education and lived ethical practice. One senior educator reflected:

“In many schools, diversity is celebrated symbolically—through events or slogans—but students are rarely guided to reflect ethically on what diversity means in their daily interactions. The heart is missing from the process.” (Participant 6)

This observation resonates with Islamic philosophical critiques of externalized ethics, where moral values are taught as norms to be followed rather than virtues to be internalized. (Abell, Manuel, and Schoeneman 2015) Islamic philosophy challenges this model by asserting that ethical action emerges from the internal state of the *qalb*, not merely from external instruction or regulation.

Critically, the findings suggest that Islamic philosophy does not reject multicultural education but calls for its ethical deepening. (Supriyatno and Ubabuddin 2019) The concept of *qalb* provides a philosophical foundation for understanding diversity as part of the divine order (*sunnat Allāh*), where difference is not an obstacle to unity but a condition for moral growth. Ibn 'Arabi's notion of the *qalb* as a receptive and transformative faculty offers a particularly relevant insight, as it frames ethical openness as a spiritual capacity that enables individuals to recognize truth in its diverse manifestations. (Muzayanah and Ghony 2025)

Interview participants echoed this view by emphasizing that genuine respect for diversity requires an ethical openness that cannot be imposed externally. One informant stated:

"When educators approach diversity with fear or superiority, students follow. When they approach it with humility and ethical awareness, students learn to see difference as meaningful." (Participant 8)

This highlights the pedagogical implication of Islamic philosophy: educators themselves must embody the ethical virtues they seek to cultivate, as the formation of *qalb* is inherently relational and experiential.

The synthesis of philosophical analysis and empirical data demonstrates that multicultural education, from an Islamic philosophical perspective, must be oriented toward inner moral transformation. (Yanti et al. 2024) This orientation does not negate the importance of institutional frameworks or curricular content but situates them within a broader ethical project grounded in the cultivation of *qalb*. (Ok, Al-Farabi, and Firmansyah 2022) Without this foundation, multicultural education risks becoming performative, addressing diversity at the surface level while leaving deeper ethical dispositions unchanged.

In sum, the findings suggest that Islamic philosophy offers a critical and constructive contribution to contemporary multicultural education by re-centering

ethical formation as its core objective. Through the concept of *qalb*, multicultural education is reimagined as a process of nurturing ethical consciousness that enables individuals to engage with diversity not only cognitively or socially, but morally and spiritually. This perspective provides an essential bridge between normative philosophical principles and the lived realities of education in pluralistic societies.

## 2. Qalb and the Ethical Framework for Multicultural Education

The findings of this study culminate in the formulation of an ethical framework for multicultural education grounded in the Islamic philosophy of *qalb*. This framework emerges from the synthesis of philosophical analysis and empirical insights, demonstrating that *qalb* functions as the ethical core that integrates knowledge, moral awareness, and educational practice. (Danil, Syafaruddin, and Sarda 2025) Rather than positioning multicultural education as a technical or policy-driven endeavor, this framework conceptualizes it as a process of ethical formation rooted in the cultivation of inner moral consciousness.

From an Islamic philosophical perspective, *qalb* serves as the internal locus where ethical values are not only understood but embodied. The interviews reveal that participants consistently associate ethical engagement with diversity to the presence of inner moral sensitivity. One participant articulated this relationship clearly:

"When the heart is ethically aware, respect for diversity becomes natural. Without that, multicultural education remains a formal requirement, not a lived value." (Participant 2)

This insight underscores the foundational role of *qalb* in transforming ethical knowledge into ethical action. In this framework, multicultural education is effective only insofar as it nurtures the *qalb* as a site of ethical responsiveness. (Suhendi et al. 2025)

The ethical framework proposed in this study is structured around four interrelated dimensions derived from both

Islamic philosophical sources and empirical data: ethical awareness, moral discernment, empathetic engagement, and openness to truth.(Lorenza et al. 2024) Ethical awareness refers to the capacity of the *qalb* to recognize the moral implications of difference, moving beyond neutrality toward responsibility. Moral discernment enables individuals to evaluate actions and attitudes in light of justice (*‘adl*) and compassion (*rahmah*). Empathetic engagement reflects the ability to relate to others through humility and care, while openness to truth signifies the *qalb*'s receptivity to diverse expressions of meaning and experience.(Mu'ti and Amirrachman 2025)

Empirical findings suggest that these dimensions are rarely addressed systematically in contemporary multicultural education. Several participants criticized current practices for focusing predominantly on surface-level inclusion while neglecting inner ethical cultivation. As one educator observed:

“Schools talk about inclusion, but they rarely ask how students feel about others or how they judge difference internally. Ethics cannot grow without addressing the heart.” (Participant 6)

This critique highlights a critical limitation in prevailing educational models and reinforces the necessity of an ethical framework that foregrounds inner moral formation.(Islamic, Ishaq, and Dayati 2024)

Philosophically, this framework draws on the Islamic view that ethical behavior is the outward manifestation of an inwardly cultivated *qalb*. Unlike rule-based ethical systems, the *qalb*-centered approach emphasizes moral motivation and intentionality (*niyyah*) as central to ethical action. This has significant implications for multicultural education, where genuine respect for diversity depends not only on compliance with norms but on sincere ethical commitment.(Güvenç 2023)

The findings further indicate that educators play a pivotal role in actualizing this ethical framework. Participants emphasized that educators who embody ethical virtues—such as humility, fairness, and openness—serve as living examples

that shape students' moral consciousness. One participant remarked:

“Students learn more from how teachers respond to difference than from what is written in textbooks. The teacher's heart becomes the curriculum.” (Participant 8)

This observation aligns with Islamic philosophical views on moral exemplarity and underscores the relational dimension of ethical education.

The proposed framework also offers a critical intervention into contemporary debates on multicultural education by challenging the separation between ethics and epistemology. In the philosophy of *qalb*, knowing and valuing are inseparable processes; knowledge attains its ethical orientation through the cultivated heart. (Briki and Amara 2018) This integration provides a holistic foundation for multicultural education that addresses both cognitive understanding and moral transformation.

In summary, the ethical framework articulated in this study positions *qalb* as the foundational element of multicultural education within an Islamic philosophical paradigm.(Salehuddin 2018) By integrating ethical awareness, moral discernment, empathy, and openness to truth, this framework offers a comprehensive and transformative approach to education in pluralistic contexts. It advances multicultural education beyond procedural inclusivity toward a deeply ethical and philosophically grounded practice, contributing both theoretically and empirically to the discourse on Islamic philosophy of education.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

##### A. Conclusion

This study affirms that the concept of *qalb* in Islamic philosophy constitutes a comprehensive epistemological and ethical foundation for multicultural education. Through the integration of philosophical analysis and empirical interview data, the findings demonstrate that *qalb* functions as the core of moral awareness, ethical discernment, and truth-oriented knowledge. In contrast to dominant educational paradigms that emphasize cognitive competence and procedural inclusion, the



philosophy of qalb highlights the necessity of inner moral formation as a prerequisite for meaningful ethical engagement with diversity.

The findings further reveal that contemporary multicultural education, including in Islamic educational contexts, often remains limited by its insufficient attention to the cultivation of ethical consciousness. Interview data show that values such as empathy, justice, and openness toward difference emerge not merely from formal instruction, but from the cultivated awareness of the qalb. This indicates that without a strong ethical foundation rooted in inner moral transformation, multicultural education risks becoming symbolic or performative rather than genuinely transformative.

By proposing an ethical framework for multicultural education grounded in the philosophy of qalb, this study contributes theoretically to the discourse on Islamic philosophy of education and practically to the reorientation of multicultural education. The framework repositions education as an ethical project aimed at forming morally responsible individuals capable of engaging constructively with pluralism. While limited in scope, this study opens avenues for future empirical and comparative research to further operationalize the cultivation of qalb within educational practice and curriculum design in pluralistic societies.

## B. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, future research is recommended to develop operational models or pedagogical instruments that explicitly integrate the concept of qalb into multicultural curricula and educational practices within Islamic institutions. Further studies should also expand the empirical scope by directly involving students to examine how the cultivation of qalb influences ethical attitudes, behaviors, and moral decision-making in diverse contexts. Additionally, comparative studies across educational traditions or cultural settings are needed to assess the broader relevance and contribution of the philosophy of qalb to global discourses on ethics and multicultural education.

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