THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING STUDENTS' NATIONAL SELF-AWARENESS BASED ON THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL IDEAS IN THE WORKS OF AZIZIDDIN NASAFI

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DOI:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24051711

Abstract. This thesis investigates the theoretical and methodological foundations for developing university students' national self-awareness through a critical educational engagement with the moral and spiritual heritage of the thirteenth-century thinker Aziziddin Nasafi. Rather than treating medieval Sufi anthropology as a ready-made theory of modern national identity, the study differentiates the historical meaning of self-knowledge and human perfection from their contemporary pedagogical interpretation. Through conceptual analysis, historical contextualization, hermeneutic reading and pedagogical modeling, a four-dimensional framework is proposed: historical-cultural literacy, value-based judgment, reflective self-positioning and responsible participation. The paper specifies methodological principles, a text-based instructional sequence and assessment indicators. The framework is conceptual; its educational effectiveness requires subsequent empirical validation.

Keywords: Aziziddin Nasafi, national self-awareness, spiritual heritage, moral education, perfect human, historical consciousness, hermeneutics, reflective learning, higher education.

Introduction

National self-awareness in higher education is not reducible to the memorization of prominent historical figures or cultural symbols. It also involves the ability to interpret inherited meanings, distinguish evidence from idealization, and relate cultural belonging to ethical responsibility in a plural social environment. The intellectual heritage associated with Aziziddin Nasafi provides an important case for such work because it addresses self-knowledge, human development, the pursuit of truth and the moral orientation of the person. At the same time, medieval metaphysical discourse and contemporary civic identity belong to different historical and conceptual contexts. Their relationship must therefore be established through careful pedagogical interpretation, not asserted as direct equivalence.

The Republic of Uzbekistan's Law "On Education" (No. O'RQ-637, 23 September 2020) establishes the general legal framework for education, while Presidential Decree No. PF-158 of 11 September 2023, concerning the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy, provides a contemporary policy context for cultural and educational development. Presidential Decree No. PF-5847 of 8 October 2019 also sets strategic directions for the development of higher education. These documents establish the relevance of educational work with cultural heritage but do not themselves verify the effectiveness of any particular instructional model.

The purpose of this study is to formulate a theoretically defensible and methodologically applicable framework for developing students' national self-awareness through the study of moral and spiritual ideas attributed to Nasafi. The research questions concern (a) the conceptual resources of his heritage, (b) the boundaries of their modern educational interpretation, and (c) the instructional procedures by which historical understanding may become reflective and ethically responsible learning. Methods include

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comparative conceptual analysis, historically contextualized interpretation, synthesis of educational theory and model construction.

Theoretical Foundations: Self-Knowledge, Moral Formation and Cultural Belonging

Aziziddin Nasafi is associated in scholarly and institutional accounts with works including Kitab al-Insan al-Kamil (The Book of the Perfect Human), Zubdat al-Haqa'iq, Kashf al-Haqa'iq and Maqsad al-Aqsa. Because the present paper does not undertake manuscript collation or quote a verified critical edition, it does not attribute precise sentences or page-specific claims to Nasafi. Instead, it examines themes commonly discussed in research on his intellectual legacy.

First, self-knowledge can be understood as a process that links knowledge of the person with moral self-examination. In pedagogical terms, this provides an entry point for asking students not simply what they inherit from a cultural tradition, but how they interpret that inheritance and what responsibilities they associate with it. The distinction is essential: personal reflection is a modern educational application of the theme, not a claim that Nasafi formulated contemporary identity theory.

Second, the ideal of the "perfect human" (insan al-kamil) provides a historically situated account of moral and spiritual maturation. In a university setting, it can serve as a subject of critical comparison with contemporary notions of integrity, responsible agency and ethical judgment. It should not be presented as a direct synonym for a measurable psychological competency or as an exclusive criterion of cultural belonging.

Third, the relationship between knowledge and moral practice suggests an educational movement from interpretation to action. Students may investigate how claims about truth, self-discipline and responsibility have been understood in different contexts and then formulate their own evidence-based positions. The educational value lies in historically informed dialogue rather than in uncritical repetition of inherited maxims.

These themes can be connected with the distinction between historical consciousness and identity formation. A historically conscious student recognizes that traditions are transmitted through texts, institutions and changing interpretations. National self-awareness, as used in this study, therefore refers to an informed sense of cultural belonging accompanied by the capacity for self-criticism, respect for other cultures and responsibility toward the wider community. This operational definition is proposed for pedagogical analysis; it is not presented as Nasafi's own terminology.

Methodological Principles for Educational Interpretation

The proposed methodology rests on five principles. Historical contextualization requires that Nasafi's intellectual environment and Sufi vocabulary be explained before modern comparisons are introduced. Source criticism requires students to distinguish primary texts, translations, secondary interpretations and contemporary commentary. Dialogic comparison invites students to discuss similarities and differences between medieval ethical ideals and modern educational values without collapsing the two. Reflective agency requires students to articulate their own positions with reasons. Finally, inclusive cultural education frames national belonging as compatible with intercultural respect and human dignity, in line with UNESCO's approach to cultural diversity.

This methodology also draws on educational research on reflective learning and the relationship between experience and meaning-making. Dewey's account of reflective inquiry emphasizes the examination of problems and consequences, while Mezirow's work on transformative learning foregrounds critical reflection on assumptions. These are interpretive resources for the proposed teaching model; they should not be mistaken for historical influences on Nasafi.

A Conceptual Model for Developing National Self-Awareness

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The framework consists of four interrelated dimensions. Historical-cultural literacy concerns accurate knowledge of the thinker, works and intellectual context. Axiological judgment concerns the reasoned assessment of ethical values. Reflective self-positioning concerns the student's capacity to identify assumptions and explain personal cultural belonging. Responsible participation concerns the translation of reasoned commitments into educational or community activities. None of these dimensions alone exhausts national self-awareness.

Table 1. Theoretical and Methodological Framework for Studying Nasafi's Heritage in Higher Education

Dimension	Theoretical focus	Teaching procedure	Evidence of learning
Historical-cultural	Text, context, intellectual tradition	Source comparison and timeline	Contextualized source commentary
Axiological	Moral self-formation and human perfection	Structured ethical discussion	Reasoned comparison of values
Reflective	Self-knowledge and identity interpretation	Reflective essay and peer dialogue	Explicit, justified personal position
Practical-social	Ethical responsibility in action	Heritage outreach mini-project	Project rationale and reflection

The model deliberately separates knowledge of the historical source from students' value judgments and subsequent social actions. This sequence reduces the risk of presenting contemporary educational goals as literal statements by a medieval author. It also makes assessment more transparent: an accurate account of a text, a justified moral interpretation, an articulated reflective position and a responsibly designed project provide different types of evidence. The table represents an author-proposed pedagogical synthesis rather than a classification found in Nasafi's writings.

Instructional Sequence and Assessment

A practical module may be organized into four stages. During orientation, students examine a brief account of Nasafi's historical milieu and map the provenance of selected texts and translations. During interpretation, they compare two scholarly explanations of self-knowledge or human perfection and record where the evidence is strong or uncertain. During dialogue, they address a contemporary ethical dilemma—for example, academic integrity or responsibility in the digital environment—while explicitly separating historical description from present-day application. During synthesis, they produce an analytical essay, curated exhibition or small public-history project and explain its educational purpose.

Assessment should combine a source-analysis rubric, reflective writing and a project portfolio. Four criteria may each be rated from 0 to 3: (1) accuracy of historical contextualization, (2) distinction between textual evidence and interpretation, (3) coherence of ethical reasoning, and (4) reflective and socially responsible application. A total score of 12 is possible, but such a score should not be described as a complete measure of national identity. Interviews and longitudinal observation may be necessary to examine changes in self-awareness more meaningfully.

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For future empirical investigation, a pretest–posttest design with a comparison group may be considered, alongside qualitative analysis of student writing. The study should document sampling, assessment reliability, baseline differences and ethical safeguards. No experimental participants, measured gains or statistical significance values are claimed in the present theoretical thesis.

The methodological contribution of this approach is the distinction among three levels of knowledge: what a historical source can support, what a modern scholar infers from it, and what an educator designs on that basis. Maintaining these levels prevents anachronism and allows students to encounter cultural heritage as a subject of inquiry rather than a fixed set of slogans. It also encourages an inclusive understanding of national self-awareness: respect for one's intellectual tradition need not imply disregard for the traditions of others. A potential limitation is that translated or selectively edited passages may obscure technical meanings; whenever possible, instruction should identify the edition and translator used.

Conclusion

The moral and spiritual heritage associated with Aziziddin Nasafi offers significant theoretical material for exploring self-knowledge, moral formation and the pursuit of human perfection. Its educational application, however, requires historical contextualization, critical source work and explicit differentiation between medieval philosophical concepts and contemporary national self-awareness. The proposed historical-cultural, axiological, reflective and practical-social framework provides a structured way to connect scholarly interpretation with student learning. Its principal value lies in fostering informed cultural belonging, independent judgment and ethical responsibility. The model remains a theoretical proposal until evaluated through appropriately designed pedagogical research.

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