

## THE ESSENCE OF HUMANITY AS A PEDAGOGICAL BEING

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Objectives** - This study aims to analyze the essence of humanity as a pedagogical being through a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing education, neuroscience, and Islamic studies.

**Method** - The qualitative method employed is library research, utilizing content analysis to explore the concept of *fitrah* and learning instruments from the perspectives of the Qur'an and modern educational theories.

**Research Findings** - The findings indicate that humans possess an innate potential (*fitrah*) comprising hearing, sight, and the heart as integral learning instruments. This aligns with neuroscience findings on the interconnectedness of emotion, spirituality, and the learning process. Holistic education must optimize these three instruments by balancing cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects.

**Theory and Practical Implications** - The theoretical implication is the enrichment of multimodal learning theory by incorporating the kalbu (heart) dimension as a center for meaning processing. The policy implication recommends the development of an integrative *fitrah*-based curriculum.

**Novelty** - The novelty lies in the integration of Qur'anic perspectives, neuroscience, and modern pedagogy in formulating a holistic educational model.

## INTRODUCTION

The advancement of education in the digital age and knowledge-based economy demands a more holistic and adaptive pedagogical approach (Schleicher, 2022). Within economic and social contexts, education not only enhances individual capacities but also serves as a strategic instrument for reducing social disparities and improving national competitiveness (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). However, conventional educational approaches often overlook the essence of humans as pedagogical beings with multidimensional potential—physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual (Nurdin, 2023). Yet, understanding human nature as unique and dynamic educational subjects is key to designing effective learning systems amid the challenges of globalization and technological disruption.

Previous research has extensively examined pedagogy from cognitive and behaviorist psychological perspectives (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978) but has largely neglected the spiritual dimension and innate human nature (*fitrah*) as educational foundations (Lickona, 2016). Recent Scopus-indexed studies, such as research by Almenayes (2022), indicate that Western educational approaches tend to be secular and rarely integrate divine dimensions into learning. Meanwhile, studies in Islamic education (Qutub, 2021; Hashim, 2020) remain limited to theoretical discussions without in-depth empirical exploration of how human innate faculties (hearing, sight, and heart) can be optimized in pedagogical processes. Additionally, constructivist and humanistic learning theories (Bruner, 1996; Rogers, 1983) have not been fully linked to the Qur'anic concept of humans as beings with inherent potential (Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]:172).

A critique of prior research is the lack of integration between modern educational theories and Qur'anic perspectives, as well as neuroscience concerning human cognitive-affective functions (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Contemporary neuroscience (Immordino-Yang, 2016) demonstrates that effective learning must engage emotional and spiritual aspects, aligning with the Islamic concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul). Thus, there is an academic gap in developing a pedagogical model that combines scientific approaches with divine values.

This study offers novelty by integrating modern pedagogical theories (such as constructivism and multiple intelligences theory) with the Qur'anic perspective on human *fitrah*. It also empirically examines how learning instruments (hearing, sight, and heart) can be optimized through neuroscience and Islamic educational approaches. Furthermore, this research develops a new conceptual framework connecting humanity's role as *khalifah* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]:30) with 21st-century educational objectives.

The objective of this study is to analyze the essence of human beings (learners) as pedagogical entities through a multidisciplinary approach: education, neuroscience, and Islamic studies. However, this research has limitations in scope, focusing solely on formal education settings with samples restricted to specific environments. Nevertheless, the findings are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of a more holistic pedagogy.

## METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative method with a library research approach. The qualitative approach was chosen due to the nature of the research which aims to deeply understand the concept of human beings as pedagogical entities, requiring theoretical and philosophical exploration (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Several previous studies have employed similar methods, such as Almenayes' (2022) research that analyzed Islamic pedagogy through a qualitative approach to religious texts and modern educational theories. Similarly, Hashim (2020) successfully integrated spiritual values in learning through literature study methods. The selection of this method is based on the need to conduct an in-depth synthesis of various philosophical, psychological, and religious perspectives on human nature in education.

Data collection in this research was conducted through exploration of relevant secondary sources. Data were gathered from academic literature including educational philosophy books, scholarly journals, research articles, theses and dissertations, as well as educational policy documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data collection process followed a systematic literature review technique by recording key points related to the research theme through content note-taking (Saldana, 2021). This approach aligns with Zohar & Marshall's (2000) study which examined the relationship between spiritual intelligence and learning through in-depth textual analysis, as well as Immordino-Yang's (2016) work that combined neuroscience perspectives with pedagogy through literature study. The use of various secondary sources enables researchers to compare and triangulate theories to obtain a comprehensive understanding.

Data analysis in this study uses content analysis techniques involving several important stages. The first stage is identifying main themes relevant to the concept of humans as pedagogical beings (Krippendorff, 2019). The next stage involves textual interpretation from various perspectives including educational philosophy, developmental psychology, and Islamic theology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final stage synthesizes findings to produce integrated theoretical conclusions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation by comparing various literature (Denzin, 2017) and cross-checking between theories to avoid interpretive bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research framework can be visualized in a flow diagram that includes: (1) collection of secondary sources, (2) content analysis, (3) philosophical-theological interpretation, (4) findings synthesis, and (5) pedagogical conclusions, illustrating a systematic and comprehensive research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**The Essence of Humanity as Homo Pedagogicus.** Humans, as the pinnacle of God's creation, are endowed with distinct characteristics that set them apart from other beings. These fundamental distinguishing characteristics are reason, thought, emotion, and belief, which enable humans to continuously improve their quality of life in the world (Sumantri, 2015). These cognitive and affective capacities form the foundation for the inherent pedagogical potential within humanity.

The term "pedagogical being" is rooted in the word "pedagogy," which etymologically originates from the Greek words *pais* or *paidos*, meaning child, and *aggos*, meaning to guide or lead (Herlambang, 2021). Thus, pedagogy literally refers to the science or art of guiding children towards maturity. In this context, humans as pedagogical beings imply that every individual possesses an innate potential and intrinsic need to be educated and to develop through a lifelong educational process (Alfurqon & Harmonedi, 2017). This process is not limited to formal education in schools but also includes non-formal education through courses or training, as well as informal education through social interaction and life experiences. Without diverse guidance, learning, and educational experiences, the optimal development of human potential would be hindered.

Etymologically, the term "pedagogical being" consists of two important elements: "being," derived from the Arabic word "*makbluq*" (something created), referring to humans as unique creations of God with reason, emotion, and free will; and "pedagogical," which has been explained previously as the process of guiding towards maturity. Thus, etymologically, a pedagogical being can be interpreted as an entity that inherently requires guidance on its journey of growth and development towards maturity (Tafiati, 2023).

Terminologically, a pedagogical being is a human who inherently possesses the potential for continuous development and, therefore, requires education in the form of structured guidance, direction, and learning so that this potential can be maximally actualized in their life (Alfurqon & Harmonedi, 2017). From an educational science perspective, this concept further asserts that humans are not only capable of learning but also need the learning process, especially in the early stages of life. Education is not merely an addition but an integral part of human existence. Moreover, with increasing age and accumulated experience, humans also have the capacity for self-education (Herlambang, 2021).

Human birth is marked by helplessness and dependence. Individuals are unable to develop their potential independently. Therefore, environmental intervention, especially from parents, family, and the wider community, becomes crucial in stimulating physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual growth (Sumantri, 2015). This further underscores that education is not merely a supplementary process but a fundamental need for human existence. From early childhood to old age, humans are continuously involved in learning processes, both consciously and unconsciously.

Several distinctive characteristics indicate that humans are pedagogical beings (Slamet, 2008): first, a high capacity for learning: humans possess extraordinary cognitive capacities, including reasoning power, complex memory, and reflective abilities that enable continuous lifelong learning. Research in cognitive neuroscience demonstrates brain plasticity that allows for adaptation and the acquisition of new knowledge at various ages (Draganski & May, 2008). Second, dependence on guidance in early life: in childhood, individuals are highly dependent on education from their surroundings for the internalization of values, social norms, and the development of essential life skills. Erik Erikson's theory of social-emotional development (1950) highlights the importance of social interaction and guidance in shaping individual identity and competence in the early stages of development. Third, a tendency for self-development: humans have an internal drive or intrinsic motivation to grow, develop, and reach their maximum potential. Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization (1943) emphasizes a hierarchy of human needs, the pinnacle of which is the desire for self-realization and the development of unique potential. Fourth, potential as educators: in addition to being subjects of education, humans also have the capacity to act as agents of education for their fellow beings, especially in the context of social interaction, cultural transmission, and the inheritance of values. The concepts of peer education and collaborative learning demonstrate the effectiveness of individual roles in facilitating the learning of others (Topping, 2005).

The initial phase of human life is characterized by the absence of innate knowledge. However, through interaction with the environment using the senses, a gradual process of knowledge transformation occurs. This phenomenon aligns with the word of Allah SWT in Surah An-Nahl [16]:78:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

"And Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs while you knew nothing, and He gave you hearing, sight, and intellect, so that you might be grateful."

This verse contains several important pedagogical implications (Telaah Tafsir Tais et al., 2023). **First, the inherent weakness of humans in early life.** Allah SWT reminds us that humans are born in a vulnerable state and without prior knowledge. This indicates the innate human need for assistance and guidance to learn and develop. Second, Allah's blessings that shape human potential. Allah SWT bestows three important instruments: a) hearing (*as-sam'a*), as the primary tool for recognizing sounds and language, the initial foundation for communication and receiving information; b) sight (*al-abṣār*), enabling observation and understanding of the visual environment, developing spatial orientation and observational skills; and c) the heart (*al-af'idah*), the center of cognition, emotion, and decision-making. In the context of education, the heart is where meaning is processed and values are internalized. The existence of these three instruments shows that humans are created with innate potential to learn and develop holistically. Third, the purpose of the bestowal: gratitude. The blessings of hearing, sight, and heart are given so that humans may be grateful. Gratitude here is not limited to mere words but also includes using these gifts for good purposes, including seeking knowledge and practicing religious teachings.

Thus, humans are unique and perfect beings, endowed with reason to think and acquire knowledge. Education becomes a manifestation of human aspirations to internalize, transform, and develop divine and human values, equipping themselves with the ability to function effectively according to their developmental stages.

Education is the primary vehicle for humans to achieve their essence as whole and dignified individuals. This understanding should serve as the foundation for designing an educational system centered on holistic human development (Herlambang, 2021). The awareness that humans are pedagogical beings has significant implications in the realm of education (Slamet, 2008), including that a) education must be viewed as a fundamental need, on par with other primary needs, not merely a formal obligation; b) every individual has an equal right to quality learning opportunities tailored to their unique potential; c) the role of educators is crucial in facilitating the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of learners, as well as in shaping their character and morality; d) the educational process must be comprehensive and integrative, touching all aspects of human development in a balanced manner.

From a spiritual perspective, humans have had an awareness of divinity since being in the womb, as indicated in Surah Al-A'raf [7]: 172 and Surah As-Sajdah [32]: 9:

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ۙ

"Then He proportioned him and breathed into him from His [created] soul and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful."

This verse highlights that Allah SWT perfected human creation by giving them a soul and equipping them with learning instruments (hearing, sight, and heart), which should be used to recognize and be grateful to Him.

**Fitrah as Innate Potential, and Hearing, Sight, and Heart as Learning Instruments.** Humans inherently possess the potential to develop. This potential is a divine gift present since birth, enabling humans to absorb various educational influences from their surroundings from an early age, even from within the womb (Kesuma, 2013). The basic potential bestowed upon humans since birth includes fitrah, the senses of hearing, sight, and the heart. All of these function as essential instruments or learning tools. Thanks to this potential, humans are able to recognize their Lord, master knowledge and technology, produce various innovations, develop personally and socially,

interact with others and the environment, and perform various other complex activities, all made possible by the human ability to maximize the function of their potential optimally and proportionally.

Etymologically, *fitrah* originates from the Arabic root word "*faṭara*," which means to open, create, or originate something from its essence (Asrori & Munawir, 2020). Terminologically, *fitrah* refers to the original or innate human condition since creation, encompassing a natural inclination towards goodness, the acknowledgment of God's oneness, and the capacity for holistic development (Alfurqon & Harmonedi, 2017). The Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

"Every child is born in a state of *fitrah*, then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." (HR. Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith indicates that *fitrah* is an innate potential that is neutral and requires a conducive environment and proper guidance to develop positively. *Fitrah* becomes the natural foundation for humans to receive education. In the Islamic perspective, education is an effort to cultivate and direct this *fitrah* to develop optimally in accordance with the purpose of human creation. *Fitrah* not only includes the potential for faith but also encompasses (Tosan et al., 2023): a) intellectual potential (cognitive): the ability to think logically, analyze, solve problems, and understand abstract concepts; b) moral potential: the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, and to have a drive to do good; c) social potential: the ability to interact with others, build relationships, empathize, and contribute to society; d) spiritual potential: a natural tendency to seek the meaning of life, acknowledge the existence of a transcendent power, and develop a relationship with God.

As mentioned in Surah An-Nahl [16]: 78 and Surah As-Sajdah [32]: 9, Allah SWT affirms that after creating humans, He bestowed upon them the tools of learning, namely: a) hearing (*As-Sam'a*): this is the first sense to function, even from within the womb. Through hearing, a child begins to recognize their mother's voice and the surrounding environment. In the context of education, hearing is the foundation for receiving verbal information and developing language skills. Research shows that auditory stimulation during the prenatal period can influence the language and cognitive development of infants (Partanen et al., 2013). b) sight (*Al-Absār*): after birth, sight enables humans to explore the visual world. This sense is crucial in developing spatial understanding, orientation, and observational skills. Visual development in early life has a significant impact on cognitive and motor development (Teller, 1997); c) the heart (*Al-Af'idah*): in the Qur'an, the term "heart" refers not only to the emotional aspect but also encompasses intellect, consciousness, intuition, and the center of spirituality. The heart is the center of moral decision-making, internalization of values, and faith. It functions as a "processing" place for information received through hearing and sight, providing deeper and contextual meaning. Research in transpersonal psychology and neurotheology explores the relationship between spiritual experiences and brain function (Newberg & Waldman, 2006).

The essence of human *fitrah* is an inherent inclination towards faith and goodness. However, within humans there is also the potential for *fujur* (negative tendencies) and *taqwa* (God-consciousness) which interact, making humans dynamic beings with choices (*khayari*) in determining their attitudes and actions (Ali, 2019), as stated by Allah SWT in Surah Asy-Syams [91]:8:

فَالْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۚ

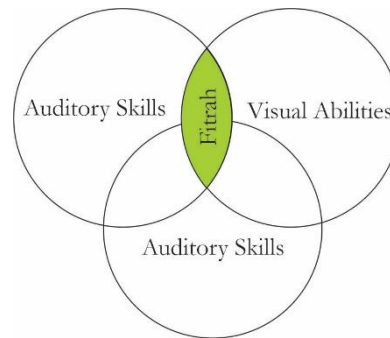
"And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness,"

This duality of potential distinguishes humans from angels (who only have a tendency towards goodness) and devils (who tend towards evil). This potential also makes humans beings with free will, accountable for their choices, and will receive recompense according to their deeds (Ali, 2019). *Fitrah* encourages humans to seek purity and truth, equipped with a conscience as an internal compass that guides towards goodness and truth (Pransiska, 2017). In this context, the purpose of human life can be understood as an endeavor to return to absolute truth, namely Allah SWT, who is the origin and destination of all existence (Pransiska, 2017).

Thus, *fitrah* is an innate potential bestowed by God upon humans, which naturally guides humans towards a noble degree of humanity. If humans are able to follow the voice of their

conscience without being distorted by negative external influences, they will achieve the perfection of life, which is true happiness, tranquility, and peace.

The learning instruments of hearing, sight, and the heart possess vital potential for human survival and development. From birth, humans are in a state without knowledge, and then Allah SWT equips them with these three potentials for the further development of life, as affirmed in Surah An-Nahl [16]: 78.



**Figure 1** Tripartite Integration Diagram of Learning Instruments with Fitrah as the Integration Center

The above verse implies that: a) humans are pedagogical beings who need education from an early age to optimize their innate potential; b) effective education must be comprehensive and touch upon sensory, intellectual, and emotional aspects in an integrated manner; c) the main goal of education is to produce grateful human beings with deep self-awareness and spiritual and social responsibility.

The verse also indicates that even though humans are born without knowledge, they have a great opportunity to develop themselves by utilizing the potential of hearing, sight, and heart to gain knowledge and understanding of the world around them. All natural phenomena created by Allah SWT on this earth are sources of learning that can be explored, researched, and utilized by humans as a form of gratitude to Him. Specifically, this verse highlights the basic human potential related to the tools or means for acquiring knowledge.

Psychologists estimate that humans only use a small portion (around 10%) of their brain capacity since birth (Ratey & Johnson, 2001). Therefore, the primary task of parents, educators, and society is to develop the full potential of each individual so that they can develop optimally through effective and holistic learning processes. Physically, hearing is related to the ear organ, sight to the eye organ, while the heart (*fu'ad*) in this context is often associated with cognitive and emotional functions centered in the brain, although in Islamic tradition.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a thorough literature analysis, this research concludes that the essence of humanity as a pedagogical being is manifested through the innate potential known as fitrah. This fitrah endows humans from birth with integral learning instruments, including hearing, sight, and the heart (*kalbu*). These findings reinforce the view that humans are active learners from an early age, as revealed in the Qur'anic perspective and corroborated by hadith. Although Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes environmental interaction in human development, this study offers a new perspective by integrating the spiritual dimension often overlooked in Western educational studies. The harmony between the concept of fitrah in Islamic teachings and modern neuroscience findings regarding the connection between emotion, spirituality, and learning further asserts that fitrah is not merely a theological concept but has a significant neurobiological basis in the educational process.

This research also identifies an integral learning system that includes hearing (*as-sam'a*), sight (*al-abshar*), and the heart (*al-af'idah*), as explained in the Qur'an. These findings contribute to Mayer's multimodal learning theory by adding the *kalbu* dimension as the center of meaning processing, extending beyond a sole focus on cognitive aspects. The holistic educational model resulting from

the synthesis of these findings emphasizes the recognition of fitrah, the optimization of the tripartite learning instruments, and the balance of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. This addresses criticisms regarding the lack of a values-based approach in character education and recommends a curriculum that integrates sensory observation, critical discussion, and reflection on meaning. The novelty of this research lies in integrating spiritual and neurobiological dimensions to understand human pedagogical potential and formulating a more holistic educational model that aligns with fitrah.

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