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Beyond Bruner's Constructivism: An Epistemological Synthesis of Discovery Learning in the Qur'an for Holistic Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of discovery learning in the Qur'an through the perspective of tafsir tarbawī (educational exegesis). Amid the growing demand for

student-centered learning in contemporary education, instructional models that promote active learner participation have become increasingly significant. Employing a qualitative library research approach, this study aims to analyze the manifestation of discovery learning principles in Qur'anic verses, particularly through the narratives of the prophets. The study applies a thematic (mawḍū'ī) interpretation of verses related to the process of seeking knowledge and truth, with a particular focus on the journey of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in Qur'an 6:74–79. The findings reveal that the Qur'an implicitly incorporates learning stages that correspond to the discovery learning model, including stimulation through the observation of natural phenomena (tafakkur), problem identification, data collection, hypothesis testing, and conclusion drawing. The story of Prophet Ibrahim demonstrates the integration of cognitive and spiritual processes in the formation of faith and certainty. This study concludes that the Qur'an functions not only as a source of theological guidance but also as a source of pedagogical inspiration that is highly relevant to the development of contemporary Islamic education. Its educational principles contribute to fostering learners who are critical, reflective, and possess strong moral character.

Keywords: Discovery Learning; Tafsir Tarbawī; Islamic Education; Jerome Bruner; Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham).

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep *discovery learning* dalam Al-Qur'an melalui pendekatan tafsir tarbawi. Di tengah tuntutan pendidikan modern yang menekankan partisipasi aktif peserta didik, model pembelajaran yang berpusat pada siswa menjadi semakin penting. Penelitian kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka ini bertujuan menganalisis manifestasi prinsip-prinsip *discovery learning* dalam ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, khususnya melalui kisah para nabi. Metode yang digunakan adalah tafsir tematik (*maudhu'i*) terhadap ayat-ayat yang berkaitan dengan proses pencarian pengetahuan dan kebenaran, dengan fokus pada perjalanan Nabi Ibrahim a.s. dalam QS. Al-An'am [6]: 74–79. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Qur'an secara implisit memuat tahapan yang selaras dengan model *discovery learning*, meliputi stimulasi melalui pengamatan fenomena alam (*tafakkur*), identifikasi masalah, pengumpulan data, pengujian hipotesis, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Kisah Nabi Ibrahim a.s. memperlihatkan integrasi antara proses kognitif dan spiritual dalam memperoleh keyakinan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Al-Qur'an tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sumber ajaran teologis, tetapi juga sebagai sumber inspirasi pedagogis yang relevan bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam kontemporer untuk membentuk peserta didik yang kritis, reflektif, dan berkarakter.

Kata kunci: Discovery Learning, Tafsir Tarbawi, Pendidikan Islam, Jerome Bruner, Nabi Ibrahim a.s.

Introduction

Contemporary Islamic education faces a dual challenge: preserving the foundational values of the Qur'an and Sunnah while adapting to modern pedagogical developments. In many contexts, educational practices remain dominated by secularistic and reductionist paradigms that emphasize information transmission and memorization rather than meaningful understanding and character formation. As a result, education often produces intellectually capable individuals who lack strong moral foundations. Islamic educational scholars argue that this condition stems from the separation of educational processes from their revelatory foundations (Haq, 2025).

Similarly, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is frequently characterized by the rote transmission of theological doctrines (taqlid) without adequately engaging students' cognitive and empirical reasoning. Although constructivist approaches such as Jerome Bruner's discovery learning have been introduced to address this limitation, they are often treated as imported methodologies rather than pedagogical concepts rooted in Islamic epistemology. Reconstructing discovery learning through the perspective of Tafsir Tarbawi is therefore essential for integrating contemporary educational needs with Qur'anic values.

This effort is supported by the convergence between Islamic educational principles and modern learner-centered theories. Learning is increasingly understood as a process in which students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024). In this regard, Bruner's discovery learning emphasizes independent concept formation through reflection, critical thinking, exploration, and experimentation (Balim, 2009). The teacher functions as a facilitator who guides learners in the discovery process rather than serving as the sole source of knowledge (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024). Empirical studies further demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in Islamic education, showing that discovery-based learning significantly increases student engagement in PAI classrooms (Rahayu et al., 2023).

As the primary source of Islamic teachings (uṣūl al-tarbiyah), the Qur'an contains rich pedagogical insights that can be explored through Tafsir Tarbawi, an interpretive approach that focuses on educational values and character formation (Mirza & Siroj,

2025). Beyond explaining textual meanings, this approach examines the pedagogical concepts, principles, and methods embedded within Qur'anic verses (Haq, 2025). Through Tafsir Tarbawi, the Qur'an functions as a comprehensive guide for shaping knowledge, ethics, and human conduct.

Among the Qur'an's educational resources, Qur'anic narratives (qaṣaṣ al-Qur'an) occupy a central position because they convey moral and pedagogical lessons (‘ibrah). One of the most significant examples is the intellectual and spiritual journey of Prophet Ibrahim in Surah Al-An'am (6): 74–79. Rather than accepting belief dogmatically, Ibrahim arrived at faith through observation, hypothesis testing, reflection, and rational-spiritual inquiry. This process closely corresponds to the principles of discovery learning, which emphasize observation, problem-solving, and independent conclusion-making (Saputri et al., 2024). Its practical relevance is further supported by findings showing that discovery learning can be effectively implemented in Islamic educational settings, enabling students to construct religious understanding through guided exploration (Ahnaf, 2025).

Based on this intersection between discovery learning and Qur'anic pedagogy, this study examines how the principles of discovery learning are manifested in the Qur'an through the lens of Tafsir Tarbawi. It argues that discovery learning is not foreign to the Islamic intellectual tradition but is deeply embedded in the Qur'anic method of guiding humanity toward knowledge and faith. The novelty of this research lies in its epistemological synthesis that reconstructs Bruner's secular-cognitive framework into a holistic Qur'anic pedagogical paradigm, expanding discovery learning to seamlessly integrate intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions aimed at the formation of an insān kāmīl. By analyzing the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim and related Qur'anic verses, this study seeks to reconstruct a Qur'anic model of discovery-oriented learning and contribute theoretical as well as practical foundations for more meaningful, learner-centered approaches to Islamic Religious Education.

Theoretical Framework

Jerome Bruner's Concept of Discovery Learning

Discovery learning is an instructional model that emphasizes a learning process in which students are not presented with information in its final form. Instead, they are encouraged to organize information independently, discover concepts, and draw conclusions through their own experiences and experimentation (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024). According to Jerome Bruner, this approach enables students to engage actively in cognitive processes, resulting in deeper understanding and longer-lasting knowledge retention (Wardani et al., 2013). The effectiveness of this model has also been evidenced in Indonesian Islamic education research. Fauziah and Suhendi found that the application of discovery learning in PAI instruction at the junior secondary level significantly enhanced students' creative thinking abilities, demonstrating that Bruner's framework produces measurable cognitive and creative outcomes when implemented in religiously contextualized settings (Fauziah, 2023).

For Bruner, learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on their existing and prior knowledge. Within this framework, students are encouraged to go beyond the information provided in order to discover more fundamental truths.

Bruner proposed three hierarchical modes of representation through which individuals acquire and organize knowledge (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024). The enactive stage involves learning through direct action and physical experience (learning by doing). The iconic stage represents knowledge through images or mental representations, enabling learners to understand concepts via visual media such as pictures, diagrams, and maps. The symbolic stage is the highest level, where knowledge is represented through abstract symbols, including language and mathematical notation, allowing individuals to think abstractly, formulate hypotheses, and apply logical reasoning (Binti & Murniyati, 2021).

To facilitate knowledge construction, Bruner developed six stages of discovery learning (Wardani et al., 2013): (1) stimulation, where teachers present questions or situations that arouse curiosity; (2) problem identification, in which students define the issues to be investigated; (3) data collection, through reading, observation, experimentation, or inquiry; (4) data processing, involving the organization and analysis of information; (5) verification, where hypotheses are tested against available evidence;

and (6) generalization, in which learners formulate conclusions or principles that become newly acquired knowledge.

The Tafsir Tarbawi Approach

Tafsir Tarbawi is an approach to Qur'anic interpretation that focuses on uncovering the educational values (tarbiyah) embedded within the Qur'an and positioning it as a primary source for developing the concepts, objectives, principles, and methods of Islamic education (Haq, 2025). Derived from the term tarbiyah, this approach emphasizes the pedagogical dimensions of Qur'anic teachings and seeks to translate them into educational practices that foster noble character and holistic human development (Mirza & Siroj, 2025). Accordingly, the Qur'an is understood not merely as a sacred text to be memorized but as a practical guide for education and character formation (Kadri, 2020). This perspective aligns with the broader goal of Islamic education to cultivate learners' moral, intellectual, and spiritual capacities in an integrated manner (Maragustam, 2018).

One of the principal methods employed in Tafsir Tarbawi is the thematic (maudhu'i) approach, which examines and synthesizes Qur'anic verses related to a particular educational theme in order to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework (Nazhifah & Isyti Karimah, 2021). Through this method, educational messages dispersed throughout the Qur'an are systematically integrated into a coherent conceptual framework. Thematic analysis reveals interconnected pedagogical principles that remain relevant to contemporary Islamic education, particularly in fostering inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, spiritual awareness, ethical character formation, and meaningful learner engagement within diverse educational contexts. (Ananta, 2022). Therefore, Tafsir Tarbawi aims to revitalize the Qur'an's role as a living educational guide while providing a foundation for curriculum development, instructional strategies, and educational evaluation in Islamic education (Mirza & Siroj, 2025).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative library research approach to examine and interpret the concept of discovery learning in the Qur'an and its relevance to

contemporary educational theory. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of meanings, contexts, and interpretations derived from Qur'anic texts as the primary source of data (Moleong, 2014)(Haq, 2025).

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources (Mirza & Siroj, 2025). The primary data consist of Qur'anic verses concerning knowledge acquisition, observation, and reasoning, particularly Surah Al-An'am (6): 74–79, which describes the intellectual and spiritual journey of Prophet Ibrahim. These verses were analyzed using classical and contemporary commentaries, especially *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari and *Tafsir Al-Misbah* by M. Quraish Shihab, supplemented by other relevant Tafsir Tarbawi literature. Secondary data include books and scholarly studies on discovery learning, instructional models, Tafsir Tarbawi, and Islamic character education.

Data were analyzed using the thematic (maudhu'i) method by identifying and examining Qur'anic verses related to the theme of knowledge discovery to construct coherent conceptual patterns (Rokim & Triana, 2021). Specifically, the application of the *mawḍū'ī* (thematic) method in this study follows the operational framework proposed by Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawi. The analysis begins by identifying and compiling all Qur'anic verses relevant to the concepts of inquiry, reflection, knowledge acquisition, and discovery. These verses are subsequently organized according to the chronology of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), where applicable, and examined in relation to their textual and thematic coherence (*munāsabah*) within their respective sūrahs. The interpretive process is further enriched through a critical engagement with both classical and contemporary tafsīr literature, enabling a comparative understanding of the educational meanings embedded in the selected passages. By synthesizing these interpretive perspectives, the study reconstructs a comprehensive Qur'anic paradigm of discovery learning that integrates cognitive inquiry, reflective reasoning, spiritual consciousness, and ethical character formation, thereby demonstrating the enduring pedagogical relevance of the Qur'an for contemporary Islamic education. (Al-Farmawi, 2001). A comparative analysis was also employed to explore the relationship between the stages of Bruner's discovery learning model and the learning processes reflected in Qur'anic narratives. The analysis proceeded through three stages: data reduction, data display, and

conclusion drawing and verification, following the qualitative procedures outlined by Haq (2025).

Results

Analysis of the Qur'an through the Tafsir Tarbawi approach reveals that the principles of discovery learning are inherently embedded within various Qur'anic verses and narratives, particularly those describing the journeys of the prophets in seeking and conveying the truth. The Qur'an consistently encourages human beings not merely to receive information passively, but to observe, think critically, reflect, and ultimately discover the truth for themselves. The narrative of Prophet Ibrahim in Surah Al-An'am (6): 74–79 serves as one of the most representative examples of a discovery-oriented learning model that integrates both cognitive and spiritual dimensions. Systematic research on Qur'anic education indicates that pedagogical models emphasizing active learner engagement, including discovery learning, are more effective in promoting meaningful and in-depth understanding than conventional teacher-centered approaches based on one-way knowledge transmission (Fadlillah et al., 2025).

Analysis of the Story of Prophet Ibrahim (Surah Al-An'am 6: 74–79) within the Framework of Discovery Learning

This narrative portrays the intellectual and spiritual journey of Prophet Ibrahim in his search for the true nature of the One God. Quraish Shihab explains that Surah Al-An'am (6): 74–79 describes a portion of Prophet Ibrahim's experience in "discovering" Allah, the One and Only God, while simultaneously presenting his refutation of the polytheistic beliefs of his people, who worshipped celestial bodies and constructed idols to represent the objects of their devotion (Shihab, 2016).

The process undergone by Prophet Ibrahim can be analyzed through the stages of discovery learning formulated by Bruner.

1. Stimulation and Problem Identification

The initial stage begins when Prophet Ibrahim observed the social and religious environment surrounding him. He was confronted with a fundamental problem: his people, including his father Azar, worshipped idols that they themselves had fashioned.

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرَأْتَتَتَخِذُ أَصْنَأَمَأَأَ الْهَأَمَةُ إِنِّي أَرَأَكُ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي صَلَلِ مُبِينِ ﴾

And [remember] when Abraham said to his father, Azar, 'Do you take idols as gods? Indeed, I see you and your people in manifest error.' (Qur'an 6:74)

In his commentary on this verse, Ibn Jarir al-Tabari explains:

This is an account from Allah, the Exalted, concerning what Ibrahim said to his father Azar: 'Do you take idols as deities, worshipping them and regarding them as lords besides Allah, who created you, fashioned you in due proportion, and provided for you?' (Al-Tabari, 2001).

According to Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, this verse records Ibrahim's rejection of idol worship by questioning how objects created by human hands could be regarded as deities worthy of worship, while ignoring Allah, the sole Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of all creation. Al-Tabari emphasizes that Ibrahim's argument was directed not merely against the physical existence of idols but against the irrationality of attributing divinity to powerless objects incapable of creating, sustaining, or benefiting their worshippers.

From the perspective of discovery learning, this verse illustrates both the stimulation and problem identification stages. Ibrahim recognized a fundamental inconsistency within his society's theological worldview and transformed his observations into a critical research question concerning the legitimacy of idol worship. Instead of relying solely on inherited authority, he initiated an independent process of inquiry grounded in observation, reflection, and rational reasoning. His response exemplifies the characteristics of an active learner who identifies problems, challenges established assumptions, and seeks knowledge through systematic investigation. Consequently, this passage demonstrates that the Qur'an encourages an educational process based on intellectual curiosity, critical reflection, and evidence-based reasoning, all of which constitute essential principles of contemporary discovery learning.

2. Data Collection and Data Processing

After identifying the problem, Prophet Ibrahim entered the stage of data collection by directly observing natural phenomena. He regarded the universe as his laboratory, a principle that closely aligns with nature-based learning and reflects the

Qur'anic encouragement to engage in *tafakkur* (contemplation) upon the signs of Allah's creation.

a. Observation of the Star

When the night grew dark over him, he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord.'(Qur'an 6:76)

According to Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the expression *janna 'alayhi al-layl* signifies that the darkness of the night covered or concealed everything from sight. The root *janna* conveys the meaning of concealment and is linguistically related to the term *jinn*, referring to beings hidden from human perception. (Al-Thabari, 2001) This description establishes the setting in which Ibrahim observed the star, not as an affirmation of its divinity, but as the beginning of a reflective and argumentative process designed to demonstrate the inadequacy of celestial bodies as objects of worship.

From the perspective of discovery learning, this verse represents the stages of observation and preliminary hypothesis formation. Ibrahim formulated an initial proposition based on the observable evidence available to him, thereby illustrating a fundamental characteristic of inquiry-based learning. Rather than accepting conclusions without examination, he employed a provisional hypothesis that would subsequently be tested against further empirical observations. His approach reflects an inductive learning process in which knowledge develops through systematic observation, critical reasoning, and continuous evaluation of evidence. Consequently, this passage demonstrates that the Qur'an promotes an educational methodology grounded in empirical investigation, reflective thinking, and rational inquiry, all of which constitute essential components of contemporary discovery learning.

This statement represents an initial hypothesis formulated on the basis of Ibrahim's first observation. Al-Tabari explains that the Arabic expression *janna* refers to something that becomes concealed from human sight. The term is related to the word *jinn*, which denotes beings hidden from human perception (Al-Thabari, 2001). From the perspective of discovery learning, this stage demonstrates the learner's attempt to formulate a preliminary explanation based on available evidence.

b. Observation of the Moon

The second phase of Prophet Ibrahim's inquiry is represented by his observation of the moon, which provided new empirical evidence and prompted him to reassess his initial hypothesis. This stage illustrates that the process of discovering truth is neither static nor based on a single observation; rather, it involves continuous reflection and the willingness to modify one's assumptions in light of new evidence. Such an approach reflects the essence of inquiry-based learning, in which learners progressively construct knowledge through observation, comparison, and critical evaluation.

Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, 'This is my Lord.' (Qur'an 6:77)

The emergence of the moon led Ibrahim to formulate a new and seemingly more convincing hypothesis, as the moon appeared larger, brighter, and more magnificent than the star. According to Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, the term *bāzighan* denotes the rising or visible appearance of a celestial body above the horizon, marking its transition from concealment to visibility (Al-Thabari, 2001). I-Ṭabarī interprets this event not as an expression of Ibrahim's genuine belief in the divinity of the moon, but as part of a rational and pedagogical argument intended to demonstrate the inadequacy of celestial bodies as objects of worship. Ibrahim deliberately examined each observable phenomenon before arriving at a definitive conclusion regarding the true nature of divinity.

c. Observation of the Sun

The final stage of Prophet Ibrahim's empirical inquiry is illustrated through his observation of the sun, the most magnificent celestial body visible to human perception. This episode represents the culmination of his systematic investigation, in which each successive observation was used to evaluate and refine previous assumptions. Rather than reaching an immediate conclusion, Ibrahim continued to examine increasingly significant natural phenomena, demonstrating that the pursuit of truth requires careful observation, logical comparison, and critical reflection.

Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater.' (Qur'an 6:78)

The appearance of the sun prompted Ibrahim to formulate another provisional hypothesis based on what seemed to be the strongest observable evidence. Among the celestial bodies he had examined, the sun possessed the greatest brightness, size, and apparent power, making it the most plausible candidate according to empirical

observation alone. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī explains that Ibrahim's statement should not be understood as an affirmation of the sun's divinity; rather, it formed part of a rational demonstration intended to expose the inconsistency of worshipping created beings whose existence and movement remain subject to change (Al-Thabari, 2001). Through this method, Ibrahim gradually guided his audience toward recognizing the limitations of all created objects and the necessity of acknowledging the One Creator who transcends the natural world.

3. Verification

The verification stage constitutes a pivotal phase in Prophet Ibrahim's discovery process, during which each provisional hypothesis was critically examined against empirical evidence and rational criteria. Rather than accepting his initial observations as definitive conclusions, Ibrahim systematically evaluated whether the celestial bodies he had observed possessed the essential attributes of divinity. This process demonstrates that genuine knowledge is attained not through unquestioned acceptance but through critical examination, logical reasoning, and the continuous testing of assumptions.

After observing the star, the moon, and the sun, Ibrahim found that each celestial body eventually disappeared from sight, revealing their transient and dependent nature. Their inability to remain constant or exercise absolute control over existence invalidated the hypothesis that they could be regarded as true deities. According to classical exegetes, this sequence was not intended to express Ibrahim's uncertainty about God's existence but to construct a rational argument that exposed the inconsistency of idolaters' beliefs through observable evidence and logical analysis.

From the perspective of discovery learning, this episode exemplifies the verification stage, in which learners critically assess the validity of hypotheses by comparing them with empirical observations and established criteria. Ibrahim's reasoning reflects a scientific mode of inquiry characterized by evidence-based evaluation, analytical thinking, and the willingness to reject hypotheses that fail to withstand critical examination. The Qur'anic narrative therefore demonstrates that the pursuit of truth requires not only observation and hypothesis formation but also rigorous verification through rational reflection. This pedagogical model encourages learners to cultivate

intellectual honesty, critical judgment, and reflective reasoning as indispensable components of meaningful learning and authentic knowledge construction.

a. Verification of the Star

But when it set, he said, 'I do not like those that disappear.'" (Qur'an 6:76)

The star's disappearance invalidated its claim to divinity. Al-Tabari explains that the term *afala* means "to disappear," "to set," or "to vanish" (Al-Tabari, 2001). Ibrahim formulated a critical standard of truth and systematically eliminated false hypotheses.

b. Verification of the Moon

Then when it set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I will surely be among the people who have gone astray.'" (Qur'an 6:77)

The second hypothesis was likewise rejected. Al-Tabari explains that this verse emphasizes that the correct attitude is to acknowledge and affirm what Allah has revealed, while refraining from unfounded speculation beyond the divine message (Al-Tabari, 2001).

c. Verification of the Sun

But when it set, he said, 'O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah.'" (Qur'an 6:78)

The verification process demonstrated that all the celestial objects observed shared the same characteristic: they were impermanent and subject to a greater order beyond themselves. The verse also indicates Ibrahim's rejection of the practices of his people, who worshipped idols and statues alongside Allah (Al-Tabari, 2001).

4. Generalization

After passing through a series of observations and verifications, Prophet Ibrahim reached the stage of generalization. He concluded that God is the Supreme Creator who exists beyond and governs all observable phenomena.

Indeed, I have turned my face toward the One who created the heavens and the earth, inclining toward truth, and I am not among those who associate partners with Him.'" (Qur'an 6:79)

This declaration represents the culmination of the discovery process. The conclusion emerged from a profound process of personal reasoning, observation, and reflection. This outcome is fully consistent with the ultimate objective of discovery learning, namely enabling learners to construct their own understanding through meaningful engagement with evidence and experience (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024).

Al-Tabari further explains in his commentary:

This is an account from Allah, the Exalted, concerning His close friend (khalīl), Ibrahim, peace be upon him. When the truth became clear to him and he came to recognize it, he bore witness to that truth and openly dissociated himself from his people...” (Al-Tabari, 2001).

Thematic Coherence (Munāsabah) and Linguistic Precision in the Discovery Process

Viewed through the holistic framework of tafsīr mawḍū‘ī, the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim in Qur'an 6:74–79 should not be understood merely as a chronological account of historical events, but as a coherent pedagogical discourse that systematically portrays the stages of knowledge construction. The thematic coherence (munāsabah) among these verses demonstrates a carefully structured progression from empirical observation to rational analysis, hypothesis testing, verification, and ultimately theological certainty. Each verse functions as an integral component of a unified educational framework, illustrating that the Qur'an presents learning as a gradual process of inquiry rather than an instantaneous acquisition of knowledge. The thematic correlation (*munāsabah*) between these verses demonstrates a deliberate instructional progression from concrete visual evidence to abstract theological generalization. M. Quraish Shihab, in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, emphasizes the precise linguistic choices employed by the Qur'an to depict this cognitive journey. The repeated use of the verb *ra'ā* (he saw/observed) across verses 76, 77, and 78 establishes empirical observation as the absolute prerequisite for the discovery process.

Furthermore, the thematic progression reveals that Ibrahim's sequential declarations—from the star, to the moon, to the sun—were not indications of theological

confusion, but rather a sophisticated pedagogical strategy designed to induce cognitive dissonance among his polytheistic people. By actively engaging with their framework and systematically eliminating false deities through the empirical criterion of transience (*afala*), Ibrahim guided his people to critically evaluate their own beliefs (Shihab, 2016). Through this *maudhu'i* analysis, it becomes evident that the verses collectively construct a unified epistemological model where intellectual inquiry and systematic verification are inherently designed to culminate in the spiritual recognition of the Supreme Creator.

Discussion

The narrative of Prophet Ibrahim illustrates a complete cycle of discovery learning, encompassing stimulation, problem identification, data collection, data processing, verification, and generalization. However, the interpretation of these results reveals that the Qur'anic model extends significantly beyond the cognitive dimensions emphasized in modern educational theories.

Epistemological Synthesis: Beyond Bruner's Constructivism

While Bruner's discovery learning effectively outlines the cognitive development of learners through enactive, iconic, and symbolic stages (Binti & Murniyati, 2021), a profound analysis of the Tafsir Tarbawi reveals that the Qur'anic model transcends purely cognitive domains. The narrative of Prophet Ibrahim establishes an epistemological synthesis that integrates the Intellectual Quotient (IQ), Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Physical Intelligence (PI), and Spiritual Intelligence (SI) holistically.

Firstly, the Qur'an redefines the role of the educator. In modern theory, a teacher shifts from an instructor to a facilitator (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024). However, in Surah Al-An'am verse 75, Allah uses the word '*nurī*' (Thus did We show) (Shihab, 2016). Here, the Divine acts as the Supreme Murabbi (Educator/Facilitator). This signifies that an ideal Islamic educator must construct learning environments that stimulate active exploration while providing subtle, continuous guidance.

Secondly, the ultimate objective of discovery in the Qur'an differs fundamentally from secular models. Where Bruner's model aims for cognitive independence and knowledge retention (Wardani et al., 2013), the Qur'anic model targets the formation of

'*ulū al-albāb*'—individuals who harmonize critical empirical observation with spiritual devotion (Katsir, 1999). Therefore, the discovery learning model in Islamic education does not merely produce scientifically literate individuals, but rather an *insān kāmil* (perfect human being) who translates cognitive discoveries into profound moral and spiritual responsibilities.

Pedagogical Implications of the Story of Prophet Ibrahim

This monumental narrative serves not only as a theological account but also as a pedagogical model with significant implications for contemporary Islamic education.

1. The Role of Nature as a Learning Medium

The Qur'an explicitly encourages human beings to regard the universe as an object of *tafakkur* (reflection and contemplation). The universe points to the existence of a Supreme Creator (Alfarisi, 2013). This perspective supports both nature-based learning and Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approaches. Nature-based learning contributes to intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual development by engaging learners in observation, experimentation, and reflection (Suhendi, 2007). In practical terms, this framework can be directly integrated into Lesson Plans (RPP) in Madrasahs. For instance, in teaching Aqidah, educators can assign project-based tasks observing biological or ecological systems, moving from scientific data collection to a theological discussion mirroring Ibrahim's methodology.

2. The Importance of Questioning and Curiosity

Islamic education should foster critical reasoning rather than demanding unquestioning acceptance. Throughout the Qur'an, knowledgeable individuals are repeatedly praised.

Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who have been given knowledge by degrees.” (Qur'an 58:11)

This Qur'anic imperative for critical inquiry has been examined through *tafsir maudhu'i* by Fikri, M. & Elya M. (2023), reinforcing that fostering intellectual curiosity is practice deeply embedded in Qur'anic guidance (Fikri & Munfarida, 2023).

3. The Teacher as a Facilitator

In the narrative, Allah serves as the ultimate facilitator by “showing” (*nurī Ibrāhīm*) His signs.

Thus did We show Abraham the dominion of the heavens and the earth so that he might be among those who possess certainty.” (Qur’an 6:75)

Al-Tabari (2001) explains that Allah granted him insight and made known His ownership. Shihab (2016) interprets this as a continuous process of divine guidance leading toward certainty (*yaqīn*). This mirrors the ideal teacher in the discovery learning framework: a facilitator and guide rather than the sole source of knowledge (Paulinus Kanisius Ndoa, Sergius Lay, 2024).

4. The Integration of Cognitive and Spiritual Development

The discovery process did not culminate merely in an intellectual conclusion; it led to spiritual submission. The Qur’an highlights this integration through its description of *ulū al-albāb*:

He grants wisdom to whom He wills... Yet none take heed except those endowed with understanding.” (Qur’an 2:269)

Ibn Kathir defines *ulū al-albāb* as those who possess sound intellects and conscious hearts (Katsir, 1999). Authentic learning should contribute to the formation of character and the strengthening of faith, uniting intellectual inquiry with ethical formation.

Other Qur’anic Verses Supporting the Concept of Discovery Learning

Beyond the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim, the Qur’an contains numerous verses demonstrating an educational methodology grounded in observation, inquiry, and independent reasoning:

- a. The Command to Think and Reflect (*Tafakkur*): Expressions such as *afalā ta‘qilūn* and *afalā tatafakkarūn* encourage believers to contemplate natural phenomena (Ramadhani, 2018). Surah Yunus (10):3 positions observation of the cosmos as a stimulus for understanding divine sovereignty.

- b. Learning Through Parables (*Amtsāl*): Surah Yunus (10):24 compares worldly life to vegetation that flourishes and withers, inviting learners to interpret observable phenomena and discover abstract truths.
- c. The Command to Travel Through the Earth (*Sīrū fī al-Ard*): Surah Al-‘Ankabut (29):20 encourages empirical investigation of the origins of creation, resembling inquiry-based learning (Budi Santoso, 2023).

Collectively, these verses and the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim demonstrate that discovery learning in the Qur’anic perspective successfully integrates intellectual, spiritual, and moral development within a holistic educational framework.

Thematic Synthesis (Maudhu’i) of Qur’anic Discovery: Integrating Ayat Kawniyyah and Ayat Qawliyyah

The application of *tafsir maudhu’i* across the previously discussed verses—ranging from Ibrahim’s astronomical observations in Surah Al-An‘am, the cosmological reflections in Surah Yunus, to the empirical explorations mandated in Surah Al-‘Ankabut—reveals a profoundly unified pedagogical framework. Rather than viewing these verses as isolated injunctions, a thematic synthesis demonstrates that the Qur’an treats *ayat kawniyyah* (the observable signs in the natural universe) and *ayat qawliyyah* (the textual revelation) as complementary laboratories for human discovery.

Through the lens of *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, this thematic coherence exposes a deliberate educational methodology. The recurring Qur’anic imperatives to observe (*ra’ā*), travel (*sīrū*), and reflect (*tafakkur*) collectively establish clear, measurable pedagogical indicators. The *maudhu’i* reading proves that discovery learning in the Islamic perspective is not merely an instructional tactic for the classroom, but a comprehensive curriculum for cognitive and spiritual maturation. It demands that active exploration of the physical world seamlessly transitions into metacognitive and theological realization.

Consequently, the synthesis of these verses dictates that contemporary Islamic educational methodology must evolve. Instructional designs and assessment indicators can no longer be limited to testing the cognitive retention of religious dogmas. Instead, educators are tasked with developing interactive learning models that evaluate a learner’s

ability to synthesize empirical data with spiritual truth, actively mirroring the interconnected epistemological journey mapped out across the Qur'an.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that discovery learning has a strong Qur'anic foundation, particularly in the narrative of Prophet Ibrahim (Qur'an 6:74–79). Through observation, hypothesis formation, verification, and reflection, Ibrahim reached certainty regarding tawhid. The analysis indicates that the Qur'anic model of discovery learning extends beyond cognitive inquiry by integrating intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions. These findings suggest that contemporary Islamic education should adopt learner-centered approaches that encourage inquiry, critical thinking, and reflection while nurturing faith and character development.

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