

**PARADIGM OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION:
A STUDY OF NATIVISM, EMPIRICISM, CONVERGENCE, AND THE
CONCEPT OF FITRAH**

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Abstract

Students are a central element in Islamic education, which is aimed at the comprehensive development of the whole person. In educational studies, student development is understood through various paradigms, including nativism, which emphasises innate factors; empiricism, which emphasises the influence of the environment and experience; and convergence, which combines these two factors. On the other hand, Islamic education has a unique concept of human nature, namely fitrah as a sacred basic potential bestowed by Allah SWT since birth. This article aims to examine the paradigm of student development based on the perspectives of nativism, empiricism, and convergence, as well as to analyse its relevance to the concept of fitrah in Islamic education. This study uses a qualitative approach through library research by analysing relevant books, journal articles, and scientific sources. The results show that each paradigm makes an important contribution to understanding student development, but has limitations when viewed in isolation. The concept of fitrah in Islamic education complements these three paradigms by emphasising that student development is the result of the interaction between innate potential, environment, and guidance from divine values. These findings confirm that Islamic education should ideally integrate all these aspects in a balanced manner so that the development of students' fitrah can take place optimally, in intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions.

Keywords: Students; Islamic Education; Nativism; Empiricism; Convergence; Fitrah.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping human personality and character. From an Islamic perspective, education is not only understood as a process of transferring knowledge, but as a systematic effort to develop the full potential of human beings. This concept is in line with the holistic view of education that emphasises the balance of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Nata, 2016) ; The ultimate goal of Islamic education is the formation of *insan kamil*, or humans who are balanced in their spiritual, intellectual, and moral dimensions. Therefore, students are positioned as both subjects and objects of education who must be understood comprehensively based on their human nature (Muhaimin, 2012) .

In contemporary educational practice, students are often treated primarily as objects of learning who are measured solely by their academic achievements. This approach is in line with criticism of the modern educational paradigm, which tends to be technocratic and places students as recipients of information (Freire, 2005) . As a result, the dimensions of students' personalities, values, and spirituality receive insufficient

attention. This phenomenon has the potential to shift the essence of Islamic education, which should place the development of morals and character at the core of the educational process.

Islam views humans as beings created with fitrah, which is a sacred basic potential that tends towards truth. This concept of fitrah has a strong normative basis in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah Ar-Rūm [30]:30, which emphasises that humans are created in accordance with Allah's fitrah (RI, 2019) . In Islamic education studies, fitrah is understood as an innate potential that is dynamic and requires an educational process to develop optimally (Al-Attas, 1996; Langgulong, 1988) . Thus, Islamic education has a responsibility to maintain, nurture, and direct the fitrah of students so that they remain within the corridor of divine values.

In modern educational theory, student development is explained through various paradigms, including nativism, empiricism, and convergence. The theory of nativism, as proposed by Schopenhauer, emphasises that individual development is primarily determined by innate factors from birth. Conversely, empiricism, pioneered by John Locke, views the environment and experience as the main factors shaping human personality. Meanwhile, the convergence theory developed by William Stern attempts to integrate these two views by asserting that individual development is the result of the interaction between innate potential and the environment (Stern, 1914) . These three paradigms make an important contribution to understanding student development from a psychological and pedagogical perspective.

Nevertheless, the theories of nativism, empiricism, and convergence generally depart from a secular paradigm that does not fully accommodate the spiritual and moral dimensions of human beings. On the other hand, the concept of fitrah in Islamic education is often discussed in normative-theological terms without being systematically linked to theories of learner development in the modern educational tradition. The gap between Western theoretical approaches and Islamic educational concepts highlights a *research gap*, namely the lack of an integrative conceptual framework that explains learner development based on a dialogue between educational theory and the concept of fitrah.

This research has theoretical and practical urgency. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the body of Islamic educational thought by presenting a conceptual synthesis between the paradigms of nativism, empiricism, and convergence with the concept of fitrah. This synthetic approach is in line with the need to develop a contextual Islamic education theory that is responsive to the development of knowledge (Azra, 2012) . Practically, this research is expected to provide a philosophical basis for educators and Islamic educational institutions in designing a more humanistic, holistic learning process that is oriented towards the comprehensive development of students' potential.

Based on the above description, the objectives of this study are to analyse the paradigms of student development according to nativism, empiricism, and convergence; to examine the concept of fitrah as the basic potential of students in the perspective of Islamic education; and to formulate an integrative understanding of the nature of students that can be used as a basis for the development of Islamic education practices oriented towards the formation of *insan kamil* (perfect human beings).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilises a qualitative approach with *library research*. This approach was chosen because the study aims to examine and analyse concepts, paradigms, and theoretical thinking regarding student development in Islamic education, particularly in relation to nativism, empiricism, convergence, and the concept of fitrah.

The research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data includes classical and contemporary works that serve as the main references in the discussion of nativism, empiricism, convergence, and the concept of fitrah in Islamic education. Secondary data consists of books, scientific journal articles, and other relevant academic works that support the analysis of the subject matter. Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic literature searches by reading, noting, and classifying relevant sources in accordance with the research focus. The classification process was carried out based on the main themes, namely the paradigm of student development, the characteristics of each school of thought, and its relevance to the concept of fitrah in the perspective of Islamic education.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive-analytical techniques, namely comprehensively describing the main concepts and characteristics of each school of thought, then analysing them through a comparative and interpretative approach within the framework of Islamic education. This approach was used to obtain a deep, systematic, and integrative understanding of the nature of students and its implications for the development of Islamic education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Nativist View of Learners

The nativist school of thought believes that individual development is entirely determined by innate factors from birth. Education and environment are considered to have very limited influence. This view places talent and heredity as the main factors in a person's success or failure (Mardatilah et al., 2025) . In the context of education, nativism is often referred to as pedagogical pessimism because it views education as incapable of changing the basic nature of students. From an Islamic educational perspective, the nativist view is not entirely acceptable. Islam acknowledges the existence of innate potential, but does not deny the role of education and environment. Humans are given the ability to learn and change through effort and proper guidance.

This view does not deviate from reality. For example, children resemble their parents physically and will inherit their parents' traits and talents. The principle of Nativism is the recognition of the existence of innate abilities that have been formed since humans were born into the world, namely psychological and physiological abilities that are hereditary and other basic abilities whose certainty differs in each human being (Triwiyanto, 2021) . Some grow and develop to the maximum point of their abilities , while others only reach a certain point. For example, a child born to parents who are skilled in music may develop into a musician who surpasses their parents' abilities, or may only reach half of their parents' abilities.

The Empirical View of Students

Empiricism argues that learners are born with a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) and their development is entirely determined by experience and environment. Education is seen as having a very large role in shaping the personality and behaviour of learners. This view gives rise to pedagogical optimism, namely the belief that every child can be educated to become anything. However, in Islamic education, the empiricist view is considered incomplete because it ignores the innate potential that Allah SWT has bestowed upon humans. Islam views experience and environment as important, but they must be in harmony with basic potential and divine values (Makbul et al., 2022) .

In this view, child development is largely determined by education, social interaction, culture, and the surrounding environment, rather than by innate or hereditary factors. Therefore, educators play an important role as providers of learning experiences (Rohyana, 2024) . This school of thought underpins the concept of pedagogical optimism, which is the belief that all children can be educated to become anything according to the influence of their environment. However, a limitation of this approach is its disregard for innate factors or natural talents, despite real-world examples demonstrating the importance of talent in achieving success, even when the environment is not supportive.

Convergence View of Learners

The convergence approach seeks to combine nativist and empiricist perspectives. Student development is influenced by both innate factors and the environment. Education plays an important role, but its success is also determined by the talents and readiness of learners (Musdalifah, 2019) . This view is more in line with the concept of Islamic education, as it recognises both basic potential and the importance of education and environment. With a convergence approach, educators are required to understand the characteristics of learners and create a conducive learning environment.

The convergence theory is a combination of the above theories. It combines the importance of heredity and environment as factors that influence human development, not only focusing on heredity, but also on equally important factors that play a greater role in determining a person's future. The convergence school of thought states that "human growth and development depend on two factors": talent/heredity and environment, experience/education. This is called convergence theory. (Convergence is the unification of results, cooperation to achieve a single result (Kholifatun, 2024) . Convergence is moving towards or gathering at a single meeting point). This school of thought argues that children are born into this world with both good and bad talents, while their subsequent development is influenced by the environment. Thus, both innate factors and the environment play equally important roles.

Fitrah as a Fundamental Potential in Islamic Education

The concept of fitrah is the main foundation of Islamic education. Fitrah is understood as a sacred basic potential that tends towards truth. Every human being is born in a state of fitrah, but the development of fitrah is greatly influenced by education and the environment. Islamic education has the task of maintaining, developing, and directing fitrah so that it remains on the right path (Fathorrahman, 2019) . Thus, fitrah becomes the

basic potential for human existence and development. Fitrah affirms that every human being is created in a state of purity, has an innate potential to recognise the truth, distinguish between good and evil, and relate to God naturally. In the context of education, fitrah becomes the basis that determines the direction and purpose of the learning process itself. Education is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but a conscious effort to nurture, maintain, and develop human fitrah in order to achieve perfection in life in accordance with the will of Allah SWT.

Fitrah as a basic potential also indicates that humans are created with the ability to develop, both physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. However, this development will not proceed well without a proper educational process. (. Education plays an important role in maintaining the purity of fitrah and guiding it so that it does not deviate from divine values. If education fails to understand and manage fitrah, humans can lose their direction and even misuse their potential. In Islam, fitrah is not static, but dynamic. It is a basic pattern that still requires refinement through human guidance and effort. Allah SWT gives humans the freedom and responsibility to develop their fitrah in accordance with the guidance of revelation. Thus, fitrah becomes both the starting point and the ultimate goal of education. A properly educated human being is one who is able to return to their fitrah, which is a state of balance between reason, heart, and action.

Therefore, Islamic education must be built upon this innate potential. All forms of curriculum, methods, and educational objectives should be directed towards nurturing and developing human values, not suppressing or violating human nature. Through an approach based on human nature, education will produce individuals who possess spiritual awareness, intellectual intelligence, and social sensitivity in harmony. It is hoped that such individuals will be able to fulfil their dual roles as obedient servants of Allah and responsible leaders on earth, so that their existence will bring benefits to all creatures.

4. CONCLUSION

Students are not only understood as recipients of knowledge, but also as active subjects with the potential to develop optimally. Therefore, a proper understanding of the nature and characteristics of students is an important basis for designing and implementing Islamic education oriented towards the formation of perfect human beings.

The nativist view asserts that the development of learners is largely determined by innate factors from birth. This school of thought believes that inherited talents, traits, and basic abilities have a dominant influence, while the role of education and environment is considered very limited. In the context of Islamic education, this view highlights the importance of recognising the innate potential of learners, although it is not entirely in line with Islamic principles that acknowledge the role of effort, guidance, and education. The empiricist view emphasises the role of the environment, experience, and education as the main factors in shaping learners. Learners are seen as being born in a neutral state, then developing according to the influence of the education they receive. Although this view gives rise to pedagogical optimism, from an Islamic educational perspective, empiricism is considered incomplete because it ignores the basic potential that Allah SWT has bestowed upon humans since birth. The convergence view emerged as a synthesis of nativism and empiricism, emphasising that student development is

influenced by both innate factors and the environment. This school of thought places education as an important process that serves to develop students' basic potential through a conducive environment. The convergence view is considered more relevant to Islamic education because it accommodates both innate potential and the role of education in guiding student development.

The concept of fitrah in Islamic education is the main foundation for understanding the nature of students. Fitrah is understood as a sacred and dynamic basic potential that requires educational guidance in order to develop optimally. Thus, Islamic education should ideally be oriented towards the balanced development of students' fitrah, covering intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social aspects, so as to produce individuals who are faithful, virtuous, and responsible as servants of Allah and caliphs on earth.

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