

The Concept of Learning in the Qur'an: A Study of Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus

Wibawati Bermi, Fatimatul Asroriah, Imam Shodiq
STIT Muhammadiyah Tempurrejo Ngawi, Indonesia
wibawatibermi@stitmuhngawi.ac.id, fatimatulasroriah@stitmuhngawi.ac.id,
imamshodiq@stitmuhngawi.ac.id

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Abstract

The concept of learning in the Qur'an holds significant relevance in shaping a holistic educational system that focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on spiritual and moral dimensions. This study aims to analyze the concept of learning embedded in the Qur'an based on Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus. Utilizing a library research method, this research delves deeply into the tafsir to identify the learning principles proposed by Mahmud Yunus. The findings reveal that Mahmud Yunus emphasizes three main principles in learning: dialogical, gradual (*tadarruj*), and exemplary-based (*uswah hasanah*). These methods align with modern educational approaches, such as competency-based and interactive learning. Furthermore, this study identifies the relevance of these concepts to contemporary education, particularly in the context of character and moral development for students. The implications of this research include the necessity of integrating Qur'anic values into formal and non-formal education systems. However, its limitation lies in its focus on a single tafsir work, opening opportunities for comparative studies with other tafsir in future research. The originality of this research lies in its in-depth exploration of Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus within the educational context, a topic rarely discussed comprehensively. This study adds value to the development of Qur'an-based learning systems relevant to the challenges of globalization.

Keywords: *Learning, Qur'an, Tafsir Quran Karim, Mahmud Yunus, Contemporary Education.*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an serves as the primary source of Islamic teachings, encompassing various aspects of life, including learning and education. In the educational context, the Qur'an not only provides moral guidance but also contains fundamental principles of learning that remain relevant across eras. Verses such as Iqra' in QS. Al-'Alaq: 1-5 and QS. Az-Zumar: 9 emphasize the importance of knowledge and education in building human civilization (Yunus, 2006; Zuhdi, 2003).

Within the Islamic tradition, mufasssirs (exegetes) have made significant contributions in explaining the concepts of learning embedded in the Qur'an. One prominent figure from Indonesia is Mahmud Yunus, who, through his Tafsir Quran Karim, presents interpretations grounded in Islamic pedagogy that are both simple and deeply meaningful. This work not only interprets the verses of the Qur'an but also offers educational insights that can be applied to modern learning practices (Syarifah, 2020; Ibrahim, 2011).

In Indonesia, Tafsir Quran Karim has become one of the key references for understanding educational values in the Qur'an. However, studies that specifically analyze the concept of learning within this work remain limited. Therefore, this research aims to explore more deeply the concept of learning in the Qur'an from Mahmud Yunus's perspective and its relevance to contemporary education.

The main questions addressed in this study include: How does Mahmud Yunus understand and interpret the concept of learning in the Qur'an? What learning methods are proposed in Tafsir Quran Karim? How relevant are these interpretations to modern education? The objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the concept of learning in the Qur'an according to Mahmud Yunus, to uncover the learning methods formulated in Tafsir Quran Karim, and to evaluate the relevance of these interpretations to contemporary educational challenges.

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the body of tafsir literature, particularly in the field of education, and enriches the discourse on educational values in the Qur'an. Practically, it serves as a reference for educators in designing learning experiences rooted in Qur'anic values and provides insights for developing curricula based on Islamic traditions.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Concept of Learning

In modern educational literature, learning is often understood as a process of interaction between learners and learning resources aimed at developing intellectual, emotional, and social potential. According to Gagne (1985), learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior resulting from experience. This approach emphasizes that learning is an active and learner-centered process. Meanwhile, Freire (1970) described learning as a dialogical process involving the exchange of ideas between teachers and students. In the context of Islamic education, learning is not only intended to acquire knowledge but also to shape personalities in harmony with the values of tauhid (monotheism), as explained by Al-Attas (1993) in his concept of ta'dib.

Various educational experts have identified fundamental principles of learning applicable in diverse contexts. The first is the principle of holistic learning. Bloom (1956), in his *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, emphasizes that learning encompasses three main domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. This principle aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which simultaneously addresses intellectual, spiritual, and physical development (Nasr, 2005; Hanafi, 1994). The second is contextual learning. John Dewey (1938) highlighted the importance of real-life experiences in the learning process. This aligns with the Qur'anic approach, which often uses concrete examples to explain abstract concepts, such as the stories of the prophets (QS. Yusuf: 111).

The third principle is the application of dialogical methods. Paulo Freire (1970), in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, explained that effective learning occurs through dialogue between teachers and students. This method resonates with the Islamic education system, which emphasizes discussion and questioning, as exemplified by the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The fourth principle is achieving balance between reason and heart. Howard Gardner (1983), in his theory of *Multiple Intelligences*, highlighted the importance of recognizing various types of human intelligence, including spiritual intelligence. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's perspective, which underscores the role of reason as a tool for understanding revelation and the heart as the center of spiritual wisdom.

Kitab Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus

Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus is a monumental work in the field of Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia. Written in the mid-20th century, this book was designed to meet the need of Indonesian Muslims for a Qur'anic interpretation that is simple, practical, and relevant to the local context (Yunus, 2006). Mahmud Yunus emphasized the importance of presenting a tafsir that could be accessed by ordinary Muslims without losing the essence of the Qur'an's message.

The background to the composition of this work lies in the condition of Indonesian Muslims at the time, who faced limited access to easily comprehensible Qur'anic interpretations. As a scholar and educator, Mahmud Yunus recognized the urgency of providing a tafsir that was straightforward yet scholarly, thus serving as a guide for Muslims in understanding and practicing the teachings of the Qur'an (Hamka, 1982; Hanafi, 1994).

Tafsir Quran Karim employs a thematic and analytical interpretation method, written in a clear and accessible style. The book is arranged verse by verse, with each verse translated into Indonesian, followed by a concise explanation of its meaning. Some prominent methodological features include the use of simple translations and a focus on practical and contextual values. Mahmud Yunus chose words that are simple and commonly used in daily life, making the tafsir accessible to a broad audience. This reflects his dedication to the inclusive mission of Islamic education (Hanafi, 1994). The tafsir not only elucidates the literal meaning of the verses but also connects them to practical applications in daily life, such as in the fields of education, social issues, and economics. In his writing, Mahmud Yunus drew extensively from classical tafsir works such as Tafsir Al-Jalalain and Tafsir Al-Baghawi. However, he also incorporated contextual perspectives to address the challenges of modern life.

This tafsir possesses several unique features that distinguish it from other Qur'anic exegeses. First, its simplicity in language and format: Mahmud Yunus deliberately structured the tafsir to be more practical compared to those written in classical Arabic. This format makes it easier for beginner readers to understand the Qur'an's messages without requiring intensive guidance from experts (Syarifah, 2020). Second, its focus on Islamic education: As an educator, Mahmud Yunus emphasized the importance of Qur'an-based education in his tafsir. It often highlights moral, spiritual, and intellectual values in verses relevant to learning. Third, its relevance to the Indonesian context: The tafsir was crafted with consideration for the culture and needs

of Indonesian Muslims. This demonstrates Mahmud Yunus's ability to integrate the universal values of the Qur'an with local conditions.

Biography of Mahmud Yunus

Mahmud Yunus was a prominent scholar, educator, and prolific writer in Indonesia, born in 1899 in Sungayang, West Sumatra. He came from a modest family that placed a strong emphasis on Islamic education. The religious environment of his Minangkabau community played a significant role in shaping Mahmud Yunus's character and intellectual development from an early age (Hamka, 1982). His formal education began at a local Islamic school and continued at Sumatera Thawalib in Padang Panjang. There, he received comprehensive Islamic education alongside modern insights, which became the foundation for his future ideas. The reformist spirit he encountered at Thawalib was combined with a strong foundation in classical Islamic traditions.

In 1924, Mahmud Yunus pursued further studies in Egypt, earning a degree in education from Al-Azhar University. His experiences in Egypt provided him with a broad understanding of the dynamics of Islamic education and modernization. These experiences motivated him to adapt a more systematic method of Qur'anic education upon his return to Indonesia. After returning, Mahmud Yunus became actively engaged as an educator and thinker.

As an educator, Mahmud Yunus strongly emphasized the importance of Qur'an-based education. He believed that studying the Qur'an served not only as an act of worship but also as a means of developing individual character, intellect, and morality (Nasution, 1983). His thoughts focused on synthesizing traditional Islamic values with modern educational approaches. He proposed a contextualized method of teaching Islamic religion, designing Qur'anic learning to address the challenges of the era. This was reflected in his works, which emphasized the integration of religious and general sciences.

Mahmud Yunus is regarded as one of the reformists in Islamic education in Indonesia. His ideas have had a broad impact, influencing the development of religious curricula in schools and Islamic literature in Indonesia. He was a pioneer in structuring Islamic education curricula. He incorporated elements of character education into religious learning to strengthen the moral foundation of students (Hamka, 1982).

Through his Tafsir Quran Karim, Yunus made significant contributions to the development of a method of exegesis that meets the needs of Indonesian society, highlighting moral and practical values applicable to daily life (Syarifah, 2020). As an educator, Mahmud Yunus mentored many students who later became prominent scholars and preachers in Indonesia. His dedication to education created a lasting impact on the intellectual development of Islam.

The thoughts of Mahmud Yunus remain relevant today, especially in the context of developing Islamic education that adapts to the challenges of the times. His ideas on contextual Qur'anic learning based on practical values can inspire curriculum reforms in Islamic schools. Mahmud Yunus represents an Islamic education figure who successfully integrated tradition and modernity in his thoughts and works. His inclusive and practical approach has made his works, especially Tafsir Quran Karim, a valuable intellectual legacy for advancing Islamic education in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research as the primary method. This approach was chosen because the object of the study is written text, specifically Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus, which is analyzed to uncover the learning concepts it contains. Library research focuses on the collection, categorization, and analysis of relevant written sources (Zed, 2004).

The data sources in this study are divided into two types: primary data, which consists of Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus as the main object of analysis, and secondary data, which includes supporting literature such as books, journals, and articles relevant to the research theme.

Data collection was conducted through documentary research. This technique involves identifying and selecting sources, classifying data, and systematically recording findings. Data analysis was carried out using a content analysis approach, which interprets the meaning of the text in both its historical context and its relevance to modern educational contexts. The analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, the study uses source triangulation. Various secondary literature sources were compared with Tafsir Quran Karim to confirm the consistency of the concepts and interpretations identified. This approach helps to minimize bias in the analysis (Moleong, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Learning in the Qur'an According to Mahmud Yunus

The concept of learning in the Qur'an remains a relevant topic of study, particularly in its connection to contemporary interpretations that aim to integrate religious values with the needs of modern education. In Tafsir Quran Karim, Mahmud Yunus presents a practical, straightforward, and applicable perspective on Qur'anic learning. This study examines how Mahmud Yunus's interpretation addresses the educational needs of Muslims through a Qur'an-based framework.

Mahmud Yunus views learning as an integral process, focusing not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on the development of character and morality. Based on his analysis of various verses, Yunus identifies three key principles in Tafsir Quran Karim: Tawhid (Oneness of God) as the Foundation of Learning, Character Development Through Education, and Learning Based on Observation and Experience.

In interpreting verses such as QS. Al-Ikhlâs [112]:1-4, Mahmud Yunus emphasizes the importance of tawhid as the foundation of education. He argues that strengthening the concept of God's oneness is essential for shaping pious individuals. According to him, teaching tawhid should begin early to ensure a generation that understands its relationship with God, nature, and society (Yunus, 2006).

When discussing QS. Luqman [31]:13-19, Yunus highlights the importance of moral values in education. He stresses that moral education, as exemplified by Luqman's advice to his son, is central to Islamic learning. This includes teaching manners, honesty, and a sense of responsibility. Such values are crucial for developing individuals who are not only intelligent but also morally upright.

In his interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:164, Yunus invites readers to utilize natural phenomena as a means of learning. He appreciates the Qur'an's approach, which encourages humans to reflect on God's creations as signs (*wahyu kauniyah*). This process of observation, according to him, fosters a deeper understanding of God's greatness and strengthens the faith of learners.

Mahmud Yunus paid significant attention to teaching methods aligned with the social and cultural context of Indonesian society. In his Tafsir, he emphasized several methods, including the Dialogical Method, the Gradual Teaching Method, and the Exemplary Method. QS. Al-Kahfi [18]:66-82 serves as an example of a verse analyzed by Yunus regarding the importance of dialogue in the learning process. In the story of

Prophet Musa and Khidr, Yunus explained how open dialogue between a teacher and a student can be an effective tool for transferring knowledge and life values.

Mahmud Yunus highlighted the importance of gradual stages in education, as reflected in QS. Al-‘Alaq [96]:1-5, which narrates the initial stages of revelation. He explained that education should be conducted progressively so that learners can fully comprehend and internalize the knowledge. In interpreting QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:21, Yunus emphasized the significance of providing concrete examples in education, pointing out that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the best role model for educators to emulate in the teaching process.

Mahmud Yunus's perspectives in Tafsir Quran Karim remain relevant in modern Islamic education. The principles he articulated—such as strengthening tawhid, character building, and dialogical methods—can be adopted in the development of contemporary Islamic education curricula. For instance, dialog- and observation-based methods align well with active learning approaches, widely applied in modern education to foster student engagement and critical thinking.

Learning Methods Proposed by Mahmud Yunus

Learning methods play a vital role in achieving effective educational objectives. Through Tafsir Quran Karim and his other works, Mahmud Yunus offers several learning methods rooted in Qur'anic values yet highly relevant in the context of modern education. This study explores these methods, identifies their Qur'anic foundations, and evaluates their applicability in contemporary educational practices.

Based on Mahmud Yunus's works, three primary learning methods stand out. First, the Dialogical Method (Hiwar): In QS. Al-Kahfi [18]:66-82, Yunus highlights the story of Prophet Musa and Khidr as a model of dialogue-based learning. He interprets that learning should not be unidirectional but involve active interaction between teachers and students. Dialogue encourages deeper exploration of knowledge and creates a dynamic learning environment. Yunus asserts that this method is highly effective in fostering critical thinking skills among learners (Yunus, 2006). This dialogical approach aligns with inquiry-based learning, widely practiced in modern education systems. Teachers can adopt this approach by facilitating discussions that include critical questions and in-depth analysis of the subject matter.

Second, the Gradual Teaching Method (Tadarruj): Mahmud Yunus interprets QS. Al-‘Alaq [96]:1-5 as the basis for the gradual teaching method. He notes that the first verses revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) embody principles of progressive and structured education. Teaching should be organized incrementally to ensure that each concept taught is digestible and comprehensible. Yunus emphasizes the importance of aligning the complexity of learning materials with the learners’ capacity. In the context of Qur’anic learning, this method can be applied by teaching short verses first before progressing to more complex ones.

Third, the Exemplary Method (Uswah Hasanah): QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:21, which describes Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the best role model, serves as the foundation for this method. Yunus stresses that educators must embody the values they teach. Learning through example creates a strong emotional and moral impact on students. Yunus reminds that the character of an educator greatly influences the success of the learning process. Teachers should not only teach theory but also demonstrate behaviors that reflect Islamic values such as honesty, patience, and discipline.

The learning methods formulated by Mahmud Yunus provide strategic guidance for developing modern Islamic education curricula. The exemplary and gradual methods can be integrated into character-based education curricula, which is currently a priority in national education systems. The dialogical approach allows for innovation in teaching methods, such as the use of educational technology to facilitate more dynamic interactions between teachers and students. By implementing these learning methods, Islamic education can produce a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also spiritually and morally strong.

The Relevance of Learning Concepts in Tafsir Quran Karim to Contemporary Education

The learning concepts in Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus offer a unique perspective on how Qur’anic values can be applied in educational processes. This study seeks to explain the relevance of these concepts to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary education, which is characterized by technological advancements, the need for character-based learning, and holistic educational approaches.

Mahmud Yunus emphasizes several learning principles derived from Qur’anic verses, such as the importance of dialogue, gradual progression, and exemplary

behavior in education. These principles are not only normative but also have practical dimensions for implementation in modern educational systems.

Mahmud Yunus underscores the importance of interaction in learning, as illustrated in QS. Al-Kahfi [18]:66-82 through the story of Prophet Musa and Khidr. This type of interaction is highly relevant to active learning approaches, which are now central to technology-based education, such as collaborative online learning. In the context of contemporary education, the dialogical method supports the development of critical thinking and communication skills, which are two essential competencies in the 21st century (Binkley et al., 2012).

Education should progress gradually in accordance with the learner's capacity. This approach aligns with constructivist learning models, where knowledge is built upon prior understanding (Bruner, 1966). In modern learning practices, the gradual approach is used to design curricula based on levels of difficulty, such as Bloom's taxonomy, which allows for incremental development from foundational understanding to complex analysis.

The principle of exemplarity highlights the importance of educators as role models, as described in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:21. In modern education, this principle is applied through the strengthening of character-based education, where educators not only impart knowledge but also foster the morality of their students.

The learning concepts in Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus hold significant relevance for modern education. Contemporary education prioritizes character development as one of its main goals. The principle of *uswah hasanah* (good example) in Yunus's tafsir emphasizes the necessity of educators as moral role models for students. Islamic value-based schools, such as modern *pesantren*, have effectively implemented this concept, making character development the central focus of learning.

The dialogical principle in learning facilitates the integration of technology to create online discussion spaces that support interaction between teachers and students. Platforms such as learning management systems can adapt this approach for interactive Qur'anic learning. Yunus's gradual and value-based concepts support holistic education that integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. This is particularly crucial in the modern era, where education often focuses solely on intellectual development.

Discussion

Through Tafsir Quran Karim, Mahmud Yunus emphasizes the importance of Qur'anic values such as dialogue, gradual progression (*tadarruj*), and exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) in learning. This emphasis aligns with Al-Attas's perspective, which views Islamic education as a holistic process of human development, focusing on moral and spiritual perfection (Al-Attas, 1979).

Comparisons with previous studies reveal that Yunus's approach highlights the integration of intellectual and spiritual dimensions. This resonates with Yusuf Al-Qaradawi's assertion about the importance of revelation-based education in balancing worldly and spiritual knowledge (Al-Qaradawi, 1999). Yunus adds a contextual dimension to this by addressing the challenges of modern education. In contemporary educational settings, Yunus's dialogical principle demonstrates high relevance to active learning methods, emphasizing interaction and critical discussion between teachers and students, akin to Freire's critical pedagogy model, which focuses on equality in dialogue (Freire, 1970).

Mahmud Yunus proposed the concept of gradual learning based on QS. Al-'Alaq [96]:1-5, where the Qur'an teaches humans incrementally, starting with the basics. This concept aligns with Piaget's cognitive development theory, which states that children learn according to their developmental stages (Piaget, 1977). Studies such as those by Zayid and Hidayat (2022) also underscore the effectiveness of a gradual approach in Islamic education, enhancing student engagement and facilitating understanding of material. Yunus implicitly applied this principle by recommending Qur'anic teaching to begin with shorter chapters, which is highly relevant for early childhood education. This principle supports modern curricula that prioritize competency-based learning levels. By adopting the concept of *tadarruj*, education ensures that students grasp foundational knowledge before advancing to more complex topics.

Yunus viewed exemplarity as the core of learning, consistent with QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:21, which positions the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the ideal educational figure. This concept is highly relevant to character-based education, which is a primary focus of modern educational systems worldwide. Emphasizing exemplarity is supported by Al-Faruqi (1992), who argued that the success of Islamic education relies on educators' ability to serve as moral role models for students. This aligns with Bandura's social

learning theory, which posits that individuals learn by observing others who act as models (Bandura, 1977). This concept underscores the urgency of training educators in modern education not only to master content but also to possess high moral integrity. It affirms that Qur'anic-based education offers solutions to the moral crises often encountered in contemporary times.

Compared to modern learning theories such as constructivism or experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), Mahmud Yunus's concepts complement Western perspectives by adding a spiritual dimension. Yunus's approach integrates religious values into universally applicable teaching methods, such as dialogue and gradual progression. However, challenges arise in integrating these values into secular education systems. Yunus provides a religion-based framework that can serve as a solution, but its application requires contextual approaches to meet the needs of learners from diverse cultural and belief backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand the concept of learning in the Qur'an through an analysis of Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus. After examining the learning concepts within this tafsir, several key points were identified. According to Mahmud Yunus, the concept of learning in the Qur'an is based on the principles of dialogue, gradual progression (tadarruj), and exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah). These principles affirm that learning is not solely about the transfer of knowledge but also about holistic character development. The learning methods proposed by Mahmud Yunus align with modern educational approaches. For instance, the dialogical principle corresponds to interactive methods in contemporary education, while tadarruj supports progressive competency-based learning. The relevance of Yunus's concepts to contemporary education is evident in the alignment of Qur'anic values with modern educational approaches that prioritize personalization and moral integration in the curriculum.

This study reveals that Tafsir Quran Karim by Mahmud Yunus not only provides an easily comprehensible interpretation of the Qur'an but also offers practical guidance for developing education methods grounded in Qur'anic values. These findings underscore the significance of modern classical tafsir in making tangible contributions to contemporary education.

The application of Qur'anic learning concepts requires a contextual approach to address the challenges of the times. Therefore, collaboration among academics, education practitioners, and religious institutions is essential to ensure that Qur'anic values are translated into effective, relevant, and inclusive educational practices. This study also opens opportunities for further research to implement Mahmud Yunus's learning methods in various educational contexts, both formal and non-formal. Such efforts are expected to provide solutions to the crisis of values and character in the era of globalization.

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