

The Fitrah-Activation Concept in Modern Early Childhood Curriculum

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Abstract

Purposes— This article proposes a fundamental paradigmatic shift in Early Childhood Education (ECE) curricula by challenging the dominance of John Locke's *Tabula Rasa* theory through the Islamic concept of Fitrah. It contends that modern secular pedagogy's empiricist assumption—critiqued by Freire as the "banking concept"—is at odds with both scientific findings on innate cognitive structures and the Islamic view of the child's inherent spiritual disposition.

Design/methods— The study employs a philosophical and theoretical analysis to synthesize Islamic educational philosophy, notably the works of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Al-Ghazali, with modern nativist psychology, including the concepts of Universal Grammar and moral nativism. From this synthesis, the research develops a comprehensive pedagogical framework, moving toward a "*Fitrah-activation*" model, and subsequently designs specific classroom activities for children aged 3-5, such as *Tadabbur Alam* (nature contemplation) and *Asmaul Husna*-based cognitive games.

Findings— The analysis reveals that the Islamic construct of *Fitrah* aligns more closely with contemporary scientific evidence of innate human endowments than Lockean empiricism does. The resulting pedagogical framework successfully integrates spiritual development, aimed at activating the child's "dormant potential" for Ma'rifatullah (spiritual cognition), with cognitive growth. This "*Fitrah-activation*" model presents a viable curriculum alternative aimed at nurturing a generation that is intellectually competent and spiritually aligned, thereby transcending the limitations of the "banking" educational model.

Keywords: Fitrah-Based Curriculum, Spiritual Development, educational Philosophy, Childhood Pedagogy

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1. Introduction

The foundational philosophy of Early Childhood Education (ECE) dictates the methodology, curriculum, and teacher-student relationship within the classroom. For centuries, the Western educational paradigm has been heavily influenced by the empiricist tradition, most notably articulated by John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke's assertion that the human mind at birth is a *tabula rasa*—a blank slate, void of all characters and ideas—suggests that all knowledge, moral predilections, and cognitive structures are derived exclusively from experience and sensory perception (Muhamad, 2025). This epistemological stance has profound pedagogical implications: if the child is blank, the role of the educator is to inscribe knowledge upon them, and the role of the curriculum is to provide the data that forms the child's personality and intellect (Muttakhidah, 2016, p. 3).

However, this empiricist dominance has led to what Paulo Freire termed the "banking concept" of education, where students are reduced to receptacles for information deposited by the teacher. In this model, "education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not a re-creator. In this view, the person is not a conscious being (*corpo-consciente*); he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty "mind" passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside (Freire, 1970, p. 247).

In contrast, the Islamic worldview posits that the human being is created with *Fitrah*, a primordial nature that predisposes the individual toward truth, monotheism (*Tawhid*), and moral goodness. *Fitrah* is not a blank slate; it is a "divinely installed" operating system containing the seeds of spiritual cognition and ethical discernment (Arifin, 2025, p. 2). Islam as a religion that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all worlds) pays close attention to the preservation of life and human life from an early age, emphasizing that education must be given to humans from an early age because education starting from an early age has a high success rate in determining the growth and development of a person's life subsequently (Arifin, 2025, p. 1).

Recent advancements in cognitive science and developmental psychology have begun to challenge the strict empiricist view, offering empirical support for the existence

of innate structures. Noam Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar demonstrates that children are born with a Language Acquisition Device (LAD), an innate template for syntax that allows them to generate infinite sentences from finite exposure (Chomsky, 1965, p. 25). Similarly, Paul Bloom's research at the Yale Infant Cognition Center reveals that babies as young as three months exhibit a "moral sense," preferring helpful agents over hindering ones, suggesting that morality is "bred in the bone" rather than solely socialized (Bloom, 2013, p. 6).

This report argues that the convergence of *Fitrah*-based Islamic philosophy and modern nativist psychology offers a robust alternative to the *tabula rasa* model. By recognizing the child's innate spiritual and cognitive endowments, ECE curricula can be redesigned to "awaken" dormant potential rather than merely "filling" the mind. The objective is to operationalize *Fitrah* into concrete pedagogical strategies for children aged 3-5, a critical period for both "Golden Age" brain development and spiritual imprinting (Santosa, 2015, p. 158). This involves a transition from *Ta'lim* (mere instruction) to *Ta'dib* (the instillation of proper place and discipline), as advocated by Al-Attas (Wan Daud, 2019, p. 46).

2. Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative approach characterized by a comparative literature review and conceptual framework development. The study employs a library research method to analyze primary and secondary texts from Islamic philosophy, Western educational theory, and modern cognitive psychology. The comparative analysis focuses on juxtapositioning the *Tabula Rasa* hypothesis against the concept of *Fitrah*, evaluating their respective compatibilities with contemporary nativist psychological findings (Mohamed, 1996, p. 5).

The primary data sources include the Qur'an and Hadith (specifically narrations regarding *Fitrah*), classical Islamic texts by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun, and modern educational treatises by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Harry Santosa. These are contrasted with the works of John Locke, Paulo Freire, Noam Chomsky, and Paul Bloom. The analysis follows a thematic approach, identifying core pedagogical axioms—such as "innateness," "moral agency," and "role of the teacher"—and tracing their practical implications for curriculum design (Bloom, 2013; Chomsky, 1965; Santosa, 2015). Specifically, the research integrates the narrative provided by Zaenal Arifin (2025) regarding the definition of education in Islam as *Tarbiyah*, derived from the roots *raba*,

rabiya, and *rabba*, which imply growing, developing, and nurturing towards perfection (Arifin, 2025, p. 2). This philological analysis is crucial for establishing the "gardener" metaphor of the teacher, which stands in direct opposition to Freire's "banker" metaphor. Furthermore, the analysis incorporates findings on "Fitrah Based Education" (FBE) to provide operational examples of how abstract theological concepts are translated into daily classroom routines for early childhood (Santosa, 2015; Nuranisa, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

The Legacy of Locke and the Banking Model

John Locke's empiricism emerged as a counter-narrative to the concept of innate ideas, arguing that the mind derives all materials of thinking from "external, sensible objects" (Locke, 1690, Book II, Ch. 1, Sec. 2). In the context of education, this implies that the child is formless and plastic, entirely shaped by the environment. While Locke emphasized the importance of habit formation and environmental control, his theory inadvertently stripped the child of inherent agency or moral intuition (Muttakhidah, 2016, p. 4). This philosophical root fed into 20th-century behaviourism, which viewed learning strictly as a stimulus-response mechanism, ignoring the internal cognitive architecture of the learner.

Paulo Freire's critique of the "banking concept" highlights the dehumanizing aspect of this approach. In the banking model, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider knowing nothing. "The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students" (Freire, 1970, p. 71). This creates a dichotomy between the teacher (subject) and the student (object), hindering the development of critical consciousness (*conscientização*) and suppressing the child's creative power. In Islamic educational terms, this resembles a superficial *Ta'lim* that ignores the spiritual state of the learner, focusing on information transfer rather than transformation (Al-Attas, 1991, p. 46).

The empiricist stronghold was significantly breached by the "cognitive revolution" led by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky argued against the behaviourist view (specifically B.F. Skinner's) that language is learned solely through reinforcement and imitation. He proposed the "Poverty of the Stimulus" argument: the linguistic input children receive is

too fragmented, error-prone, and sparse to account for the complex, rule-governed grammar they acquire so rapidly (Chomsky, 1965, p. 58). Therefore, humans must possess an innate "Universal Grammar" (UG)—a biological endowment that acts as a blueprint for language acquisition. "It must be that a child is born with the essential principles of language in his mind. The details of any language are then learned based on the data to which he is exposed" (Chomsky, 1975, p. 12).

This theory posits that the child is not a blank slate but a "pre-wired" entity. The environment acts as a trigger, not the sole creator, of linguistic competence. This aligns conceptually with the Islamic view that the potential for knowledge and recognition of the Divine is pre-installed. Just as the LAD allows a child to recognize grammatical structures without explicit teaching, *Fitrah* allows the human soul to recognize moral and spiritual truths. As Arifin (2025) notes, citing Surah An-Nahl 16:78, while humans are born without explicit knowledge, they are equipped with hearing, sight, and *hearts* (intellect/intuition) to process and develop knowledge, implying latent faculties waiting for activation (Arifin, 2025, p. 3).

Extending nativism from linguistics to morality, psychologist Paul Bloom argues that humans are born with a rudimentary moral sense. His experiments with infants (ages 3-10 months) utilized puppet shows involving "helpers" and "hinderers." The results showed a statistically significant preference among infants for the helping puppets, suggesting an innate ability to distinguish benevolent acts from malevolent ones (Bloom, 2013, p. 28). Bloom asserts, "The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm" (Bloom, 2013, p. 8).

Bloom concludes that "some sense of good and evil seems to be bred in the bone" (Bloom, 2013, p. 5). This contradicts the Freud-Kohlberg consensus that children begin as amoral beings who must be civilized by society. While Bloom acknowledges that this innate morality is limited (it is often parochial and biased toward the in-group), its existence refutes the *tabula rasa* hypothesis. This scientific validation of innate moral intuition resonates profoundly with the Prophetic tradition that "every child is born on *Fitrah*," and it is the environment that subsequently corrupts or shapes specific religious identities (Arifin, 2025, p. 4; Mohamed, 1996, p. 3).

The Islamic Concept of *Fitrah* Beyond Neutrality

The term *Fitrah* is derived from the root *f-t-r*, meaning to split or create for the first time. In the Qur'anic context (Surah Ar-Rum 30:30), it refers to the natural disposition

upon which God created mankind—an inclination toward *Tawhid* (monotheism) and virtue. "So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith—the *fitrah* of God with which He created humankind. There is no changing the creation of God" (Qur'an 30:30, cited in Mohamed, 1995, p. 3). Unlike the Western concept of "conscience," which can be seen as a social construct, *Fitrah* is ontological; it is the state of the soul that testified to God's Lordship in the primordial covenant (*Alastu biRabbikum*).

Scholar Yasien Mohamed categorizes interpretations of *Fitrah* into dual, neutral, and positive views. The positive view, championed by Ibn Taymiyyah and supported by modern scholars like Al-Attas, asserts that humans are inherently good and predisposed to Islam, not merely neutral vessels waiting to be filled (Mohamed, 1995, p. 6). This distinguishes *Fitrah* from the Christian doctrine of Original Sin (inherent guilt) and the Lockean *Tabula Rasa* (inherent emptiness). As Ibn Taymiyyah argues, *Fitrah* is not merely a passive capacity to accept Islam but an active drive towards it, which will manifest unless impeded (Ibn Taymiyyah, Vol. 4, p. 245).

However, *Fitrah* is dynamic. It can be buried or corrupted by environmental factors (parents, society, education). Thus, the role of Islamic education is not to "install" religion into a blank child, but to nurture and protect the pre-existing seed of faith, keeping the "mirror" of the heart polished so it can reflect the Divine light (Al-Ghazali, cited in Wahab, 2021, p. 33). This necessitates a pedagogy of "awakening" or "recollection" (*Dhikr*) rather than banking. Education should be a process of *Tazkiyah* (purification) and *Ta'dib* (discipline), ensuring the child remains aligned with their original nature (Wan Daud, 2019, p. 49).

Conceptual Framework from Banking to Awakening

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas argues that the crisis in modern education stems from the "loss of *Adab*." *Adab* is not merely manners; it is the discipline of body, mind, and soul that assures the recognition of the proper place of things in the order of creation. Modern secular education, focusing on *Ta'lim* (instruction) and neglecting *Ta'dib* (education of the whole being), produces individuals who possess information but lack the wisdom to use it ethically. This leads to the "secularization" of knowledge, where facts are divorced from their spiritual reality (Al-Attas, 1991, p. 46; Wan Daud, 2019, p. 50).

Al-Attas posits that the proper term for education in Islam is *Ta'dib*, which includes knowledge (*ilm*) and action (*amal*) guided by wisdom (*hikmah*). This framework rejects

the banking model because *Ta'dib* requires the active participation of the student's soul in recognizing truth, not just the passive reception of data. "Adab is recognition and acknowledgement of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various grades and degrees of rank, and of one's proper place in relation to that reality" (Al-Attas, 1980, p. 22).

Harry Santosa's "*Fitrah* Based Education" (FBE) provides a contemporary operational framework for these concepts. FBE identifies eight dimensions of *Fitrah* that must be nurtured simultaneously: (1) Faith, (2) Learning/Reasoning, (3) Sexuality/Love, (4) Aesthetics/Language, (5) Individuality/Sociality, (6) Talent/Leadership, (7) Physicality, and (8) Development (Santosa, 2015, p. 156).

For the 3-5 age group (the "Golden Age"), FBE emphasizes:

- Fitrah of Faith: Immersing the child in an atmosphere of piety and love for God, rather than rigorous dogmatic instruction. The goal is to build a positive image of God (*Rabb*) and religion before introducing obligations (Santosa, 2015, p. 158).
- Fitrah of Learning: Encouraging curiosity and exploration of nature (*Tadabbur*) rather than academic drilling. This aligns with the Quranic instruction to "travel through the earth and observe how Allah began creation" (Qur'an 29:20).
- Fitrah of Aesthetics: Exposure to beauty, harmony, and rhythm (e.g., Quranic recitation) to stimulate the soul. Every child has a sense of aesthetics and a tendency to like harmony (Santosa, 2015, p. 156).

This model aligns with the "awakening dormant potential" objective. The educator is a "gardener" who ensures the soil (environment) is fertile and the sunlight (love/guidance) is sufficient, trusting the seed (*Fitrah*) to grow according to its divine design (Santosa, 2015, p. 91). By synthesizing Chomsky's linguistic nativism, Bloom's moral nativism, and the Islamic concept of *Fitrah*, we can construct a pedagogical matrix that opposes the banking concept.

Table 1 The Nativist-Fitrah Pedagogical Matrix

Dimension	Secular View	Islamic View (Fitrah)	Pedagogical Implication
Cognition	Mind is a blank slate; intelligence comes from external input.	Mind has innated structures (UG/Aql); intelligence is a potential waiting to be triggered.	From Filling to Triggering: Use rich, complex input (e.g., classical Arabic, nature patterns) to stimulate innate faculties (Chomsky, 1965).
Morality	Child is amoral or neutral; morality is socialized rules.	Child has innated moral sense (Bloom); Fitrah inclines to good.	From Policing to Nurturing: Use dilemmas and role-play to let children "discover" justice and empathy rather than preaching rules (Bloom, 2013).
Spirituality	Religion is a cultural construct imposed on the child.	Soul has a primordial covenant (<i>Alastu</i>); knowledge of God is innate (<i>Ma'rifatullah</i>).	From Indoctrination to Remembrance: Use <i>Tadabbur Alam</i> to reconnect the child with the signs of God they inherently recognize (Arifin, 2025).
Method	Banking (Depositing facts).	<i>Ta'dib</i> (Instilling discipline/Adab).	Experiential Learning: Active engagement with the Creator's work (nature) and attributes (<i>Asmaul Husna</i>) (Al-Attas, 1980).

Operationalizing the Curriculum for Ages 3-5

The proposed curriculum shifts the focus from academic drills (reading/writing readiness) to "Spiritual-Cognitive Activation." At ages 3-5, the goal is to preserve the purity of *Fitrah* while stimulating the *Aql* (intellect) through observation and reflection. This aligns with Arifin's (2025) assertion that education must optimize the function of reason (*Aql*) to distinguish between right and wrong and prepare cadres of *Khalifah* (vicegerents) on earth (Arifin, 2025, p. 4).

1. Activity Cluster 1: Tadabbur Alam (Nature Contemplation)

Objective: To stimulate the *Fitrah* of Faith and Learning by connecting the child's innate curiosity with the signs (*Ayat*) of Allah in nature.

Activity 1.1: "The Signatures of Al-Khaliq" (The Creator)

- **Concept:** Based on the teleological argument suitable for children, derived from the Quranic command to observe creation.
- **Materials:** Magnifying glasses, small buckets, a garden or park setting.
- **Procedure:**

Step 1 (Observation): Take children to a garden/outdoor area. Give them

magnifying glasses to "activate" their scientific mind (Fitrah of Learning). The teacher encourages them to find the "smallest creature" they can see (e.g., an ant, a bug) (Fitrah Nature Education, 2025).

Step 2 (Inquiry): Ask open-ended questions (Freirean dialogue): "Who painted the colors on this butterfly?" "How does the ant know where to go to find food?" Avoid giving immediate answers. Let their innate logic work to deduce a Designer (Arifin, 2025, p. 3).

Step 3 (Connection): Introduce the name *Al-Khaliq* (The Creator). Explain that just as a painting has a painter, the butterfly has a Creator. This connects the seen (*Alam*) to the unseen (*Allah*).

Step 4 (Activity): Children collect leaves and perform leaf rubbings. While doing so, they chant "Subhanallah" (Glory be to God) rhythmically, integrating linguistic rhythm with motor skills to anchor the concept spiritually (Santosa, 2015, p. 156).

- **Rationale:** This moves from sensory experience to spiritual acknowledgment (*Ma'rifatullah*). It treats the child as a thinker who can deduce the existence of the Creator, supporting the view that *Fitrah* includes cognitive readiness for theology.

Activity 1.2: "The Ant Colony & The Justice of Solomon"

- **Concept:** Integrating *Fitrah* of Leadership and Sociality with Quranic narrative.
- **Procedure:**

Step 1: Observe an ant trail. Discuss how they work together without fighting, sharing food.

Step 2: Tell the story of Prophet Sulayman (Solomon) and the Ant (Surah An-Naml 27:18-19). Focus on his ability to hear them and his mercy in changing his army's path to avoid hurting them (Arifin, 2025, p. 3).

Role Play: Children pretend to be ants and soldiers. The "soldiers" must be careful not to step on the "ants." This physical enactment reinforces the concept of mercy (*Rahmah*) and justice (*Adl*).

- **Rationale:** This stimulates Bloom's innate "moral sense" of preventing harm and preferring helpful agents (Bloom, 2013, p. 28). It connects innate empathy to Islamic history, teaching justice through movement rather than lecture.

2. Activity Cluster 2: Cognitive-Spiritual Integration through Asmaul Husna

- **Objective:** To use the 99 Names of Allah as cognitive anchors for memory, pattern recognition, and emotional regulation.

Activity 2.1: "Asmaul Husna Memory Match"

- **Concept:** Utilizing Gamification to reinforce theological concepts and train working memory.
- **Materials:** Cards with Arabic calligraphy of a Name (e.g., *Ar-Rahman*), a picture representing it (e.g., a mother hugging a child), and the English meaning.
- **Procedure:**
 - Children play a classic memory matching game.
 - When a match is found, the child must say the name and perform a physical action representing it (e.g., for *Al-Basir* / The All-Seeing, they make binoculars with their hands; for *Al-Wadud* / The Loving, they hug themselves).
- **Rationale:** This engages the "Asmaul Husna" cognitive processing. It moves abstract theological concepts into concrete, manipulatable symbols, aiding the "Fitrah of Aesthetics and Language" (Wulandari, 2017, p. 2; Santosa, 2015). It leverages the child's pattern-seeking brain (Chomsky's UG principle applied to semantics) to build a vocabulary of the Divine.

Activity 2.2: "The Provider (Ar-Razzaq) Sorting Game"

- **Concept:** Classification skills (Cognitive) + Gratitude (Spiritual).
- **Procedure:**
 - Provide a mix of items: stones, plastic toys, fruits, vegetables, water, leaves.
 - Ask children to sort them into categories: "Made by People" vs. "Given by Ar-Razzaq" (Allah).
 - **Discussion:** Challenge their sorting by asking, "What is the plastic toy made of?" Guide them to trace it back to oil/earth, which Allah created. This stimulates critical thinking about origins (causality).
 - **Culmination:** Create a "Gratitude Jar." Children draw one thing *Ar-Razzaq* gave them today and put it in the jar. This acts as a daily ritual of *Shukr* (gratitude) (Arifin, 2025, p. 6; TeachersPayTeachers, 2024).
- **Rationale:** This challenges the "banking" model by asking children to categorize reality themselves. It reinforces *Tawhid Rububiyah* (Lordship) through logic and categorization, operationalizing the *Fitrah* of reasoning.

3. Activity Cluster 3: Stimulating Moral Intuition (The Bloom Approach)

- **Objective:** To validate and refine the child's innate moral compass, moving from "instinct" to "conscious ethics."

Activity 3.1: "Helper vs. Hinderer" Puppet Show (Islamic Adaptation)

- **Concept:** Replicating Paul Bloom's experiments to reinforce Islamic ethics.
- **Procedure:**
 - Use puppets. One puppet is trying to lift a heavy "rock" (representing a burden or Sunnah of helping).
 - Puppet A helps lift it. Puppet B pushes it down or laughs.
 - **Inquiry:** Ask the children: "Who is the *Muhsin* (Good doer)? Who is the *Dhalim* (Wrongdoer)?" "Who do you want to play with?"
 - Ask the children to give a "reward" (a sticker or date) to the one they like.
- **Rationale:** This confirms the child's internal moral judgment, as Bloom (2013) demonstrated infants prefer helpers. The teacher then layers the Islamic terminology (*Ihsan*, *Dhulm*) onto the innate feeling, bridging the gap between biological intuition and religious law (*Shari'ah*) (Bloom, 2013, p. 45).

Activity 3.2: "The Circle of Sulh" (Reconciliation)

- **Concept:** Conflict resolution based on *Ukhuwah* (Brotherhood) and emotional regulation.
- **Procedure:**
 - When conflicts arise (e.g., fighting over a toy), do not simply force an apology (which is often empty).
 - Create a "Peace Corner" with soft cushions.
 - Use the "talking stick" method. Ask: "How did that make your friend feel?" (appealing to innate empathy).
 - Guide them to a solution that restores balance (*Adl*), such as taking turns or playing together.
- **Rationale:** This avoids the authoritarian/banking discipline style. It appeals to the *Fitrah* of sociality and love, teaching emotional intelligence (Santosa, 2015, p. 160). It operationalizes the Prophetic advice on suppressing anger and making peace.

4. Activity Cluster 4: Language and Sound (The Chomsky Link)

- **Objective:** To utilize the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) for spiritual linguistic

development.

Activity 4.1: "Rhythm of the Quran"

- **Concept:** Exposure to complex linguistic patterns to stimulate the LAD.
- **Procedure:**
 - Play recitations of short Surahs (e.g., Al-Fatiha, Al-Ikhlās) with clear, melodic *Tajweed*.
 - Ask children to clap or sway to the rhythm.
 - Focus on the sound and phonetics, not just the meaning (initially).
 - Use "Sandpaper Letters" (Montessori style) for Arabic alphabets to connect tactile sensation with sound (DCA Montessori, 2024).
- **Rationale:** Chomsky (1965) argues the brain seeks patterns. The rhythmic structure of the Quran resonates with the innate linguistic faculty. This prepares the brain for memorization (*Hifz*) not as rote drudgery, but as linguistic absorption, respecting the *Fitrah* of language (Chomsky, 1965, p. 25; Santosa, 2015, p. 156).

Challenges and Implementation

The most significant barrier to implementing this framework is the teacher's mindset. Teachers trained in conventional systems often view themselves as the sole source of knowledge (the "Banker") (Freire, 1970). To operationalize *Fitrah*, teachers must transition to the role of a *Murabbi* (nurturer). This requires observational skills akin to a Montessori director, where the teacher observes the child to identify which aspect of *Fitrah* is emerging and needs support (DCA Montessori, 2024). It requires trust in the child—believing that the child already knows God intuitively, and the teacher's job is merely to facilitate that connection (Wan Daud, 2019, p. 55).

In the Reggio Emilia approach, the environment is the "third teacher." In a *Fitrah*-based curriculum, the environment must be "Prepared" (Montessori concept) to stimulate spiritual reflection. This includes using natural elements (wood, water, plants) to facilitate *Tadabbur* and avoiding over-stimulation with bright plastics. Arabic letters and Quranic verses should be accessible tactilely to ground the spiritual in the physical (DCA Montessori, 2024).

A potential critique is that emphasizing "innate" religion might lead to complacency in religious instruction. However, the *Fitrah* hadith explicitly states that the environment (parents) shapes the specific religious identity (Mohamed, 1996, p. 3). Nativism (Chomsky/Bloom) does not claim children are born knowing specific rituals (like *Salah*

or *Wudu*); it claims they are born with the *capacity* and *predisposition* for structure and morality. Therefore, the curriculum must balance "awakening" (belief/Tawhid) with "training" (rituals/Fiqh) using age-appropriate methods, such as modeling prayer (*Uswah Hasanah*) rather than enforcing it (Arifin, 2025, p. 6).

4. Conclusion

This research report contends that the Lockean *tabula rasa* model is scientifically outdated and theologically incompatible with Islamic education. The convergence of Prophetic tradition (*Fitrah*) and modern nativist psychology (Universal Grammar, Moral Nativism) provides a compelling basis for a new pedagogical paradigm. By viewing the child as a being with innate spiritual, moral, and linguistic potential, educators can move away from the oppressive "banking concept" toward a liberating model of "awakening."

The proposed activities for ages 3-5—ranging from *Tadabbur Alam* to *Asmaul Husna* gamification—demonstrate that it is possible to stimulate spiritual intuition alongside cognitive skills. This holistic approach, grounded in the philosophies of Al-Attas and Al-Ghazali and structured through frameworks like Harry Santosa's FBE, aims to produce a "Perfect Man" (*Insan Kamil*) who is not only knowledgeable but civilized (*Ta'dib*). Future research should focus on longitudinal studies measuring the impact of *Fitrah*-based curricula on long-term moral behaviour and spiritual resilience in Muslim youth. By reclaiming the definition of the child from the "empty vessel" to the "dormant seed," Islamic education can restore its transformative power, nurturing generations who are grounded in their creation and capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world with an intact moral compass.

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