

Examining the Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

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This research was directed by the genesis of the Freedom Learning Concept which was initiated by the Indonesian government with the aim of providing freedom and flexibility in the learning process, so that students can learn according to their potential and interests. From an Islamic perspective, the concept of freedom in learning has strong relevance, because Islam emphasizes the importance of knowledge and education which frees people from ignorance. The aim of this research is to describe the concept of freedom to learn in Islam and try to examine how the concept of freedom to learn can be integrated with educational principles in Islam. The method used is the library research method using a descriptive qualitative approach. The conclusions of this research produce that the concept of freedom learning established by the Ministry of Education and Culture is in accordance with the Islamic concept stated in the Koran QS. Al-Alaq verses 1-5, where in the practice of teaching and learning activities between teachers and students there are no boundaries in learning, it is not just a process of transferring knowledge but greater than that, students can freely gain knowledge from any source.



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Introduction

Indonesia has been independent for 80 years after the colonial era, so education should not only be seen as an obligation, but as a necessity for every human being. Furthermore, education should also be able to bring about change. It should not be merely a meaningless activity, but also have a purpose that can motivate our enthusiasm to continue learning. In essence, education is to make humans intelligent, both intellectually, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and kinesthetically. Education should also be able to humanize humans because education can create noble humans whose status and dignity are elevated. However, in practice, education in Indonesia, from elementary school, secondary school, to higher education, tends to view students as objects of education, loyal listeners of teachers, recipients of knowledge from teachers, even though educational policies continue to develop and encourage students to become subjects of education (Ramayulis, 2012).

Education makes students a vessel for receiving information and knowledge provided by educators (Tafsir, 2008). Therefore, the concept of independent learning is needed by students because the concept of independent learning will greatly foster the potential for creativity and innovation. This is in line with the mission of the society 5.0 revolution which demands the presence of various innovations. With this condition, students will become individuals who are adept at solving problems and formulating solutions. The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 states that "education is a vehicle for developing students' abilities to have responsibility for their own lives, be creative, critical, and reason well, and be able to develop their moral potential." (Suyata, 2022)

In Indonesia itself, it has actually given special attention to the educational aspect, which is proven by revising policies in the educational realm so that education in Indonesia is getting better, one example is

the existence of a 12-year compulsory education program, (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia., 2013) educational scholarships, KIP / Smart Indonesia card (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia., 2020) until the existence of a new policy like now, namely the independent learning program (Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Indonesia., 2023).

Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim delivered a speech coinciding with National Teachers' Day. In his speech, he outlined new breakthroughs in learning, emphasizing that the success of education in Indonesia depends on freedom of learning. The concept of freedom of learning here implies that every educator and student is free to innovate, be creative, and learn independently, with the hope that all students in Indonesia can choose their own learning styles (Kemdikbudristek, 2022).

Through the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 12 of 2024, the independent curriculum officially serves as the basic framework and curriculum structure for all educational units in Indonesia. The Regulation also regulates the implementation of a flexible, competency-based curriculum that supports character development, 21st-century skills, and literacy and numeracy. The emphasis on flexibility and empowerment of schools in managing learning can produce students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess good life skills and are ready to face future challenges (Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah Republik Indonesia., 2025).

According to Harold Rugg, quoted (Erfiyana, 2026), the curriculum is a series of experiences that have maximum benefits for students in developing their abilities so they can adapt and face various life situations. Meanwhile, according to Cow, quoted (Supriatna, 2026), the curriculum is a teaching plan consisting of several subjects that have been structured with the aim of completing a program to obtain a degree or diploma.

According to Arifin, as quoted by (Supriatna, 2025), the curriculum is all the learning materials that must be completed in the educational process within an educational institution system. Meanwhile, according to Mac Donald, as quoted by (Mayasari, 2026), the curriculum is a plan that serves as a reference in implementing the teaching and learning process.

From this definition, it's clear that a curriculum is a program or learning plan. It's not just about the subjects to be studied and completed, but also how educators prepare and implement learning, including learning experiences and student activities, both inside and outside the classroom.

The learning process contains two meanings: first, activities that maximally involve students' mental processes in thinking, and second, guiding students to improve and enhance their thinking skills during the learning process. Ultimately, these thinking activities can help students gain knowledge that they can construct themselves. These two main points can be achieved through interaction between educators, students, and learning resources or environments (Parnawi, 2019).

The concept of independent learning is the initial phase in the world of education in Indonesia, which aims to transform and create superior human resources. Meanwhile, from an Islamic perspective, the concept of independent learning does not mean humans are free from learning, but rather humans are free from the pressures of various aspects of learning, such as avoiding laziness in seeking knowledge, or avoiding feelings of pride in their knowledge. To realize the concept of independent learning, we need to first examine the concept of learning from an Islamic perspective, understanding the relationship between humans as learners and Allah SWT as their creator, as explained that humans are essentially created to learn and seek knowledge, as stated in QS al-Alaq verses 1-5.

Islam places great emphasis on the importance of learning as an obligation for every individual, as affirmed in the first revelation, Surah Al-'Alaq, verses 1–5. This verse contains an explicit command to read, study, and seek knowledge. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate that the values of Freedom to Learn are not foreign to Islam but have been an integral part of Islamic teachings from the very beginning.

Method

According to Rahardjo, as quoted by (Arifudin, 2025), a research method is a way to obtain and seek tentative truth, not absolute truth. The result is scientific truth. Scientific truth is open to continuous testing, criticism, and even revision. Therefore, there is no best method for seeking truth; there is only the right method for a specific purpose, according to the existing phenomenon. Budiharto, as quoted by (Nurazizah, 2026), states that the choice of research method must be tailored to the research being conducted to achieve optimal results.

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a literature review method. Nazir, as quoted by (Safar, 2026), explains that literature review is a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading, recording, and processing research materials. Zed, as quoted by (Arifudin, 2026), explains that this approach was chosen because the focus of the research was to examine the concept of independent learning from an Islamic perspective. The literature review approach allows for in-depth textual, conceptual, and comparative analysis.

Engineering can be seen as a means of carefully performing technical work using the mind to achieve a goal. Although research is essentially a scientific endeavor, it is conducted to systematically collect realistic data to establish the truth. Research methodology is a means of finding solutions to any problem. In this case, the author gathered information on "Examining the Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective," and others (Hoerudin, 2026).

Because it requires library materials for its data sources, this research utilizes library research. Researchers require books, scientific articles, and other literature related to the topics and issues they are exploring, both printed and online (Hoerudin, 2025).

Seeking information from data sources requires the use of data collection techniques. Amir Hamzah in (Daryaman, 2024) claims that data collection is an effort to gather information related to the topic being studied. The author used library research methods to collect data. Specifically, the author began with the library to gather information from books, dictionaries, journals, encyclopedias, papers, periodicals, and other sources that shared the views of Examining the Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective.

Furthermore, Amir Hamzah in (Hoerudin, 2024) states that data collection is defined as various efforts to gather facts related to a topic of discussion being or will be explored. These details can be found in scientific literature, research, scientific writings, dissertations, theses, and other written sources. According to (Indiati, 2023), data collection can be conducted in various situations, using different sources, and employing different techniques.

The data collection technique in this study was documentation. The researcher conducted a review of documents related to "Examining the Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective."

Documentation is a data collection technique using existing written documents or records (Hoerudin, 2023). Documentation comes from the word document, which means written objects. In implementing the documentation method, researchers investigate written objects, such as books, magazines, meeting minutes, and diaries. According to Moleong in (Simbolon, 2023), the documentation method is a way of collecting information or data through examining archives and documents. Furthermore, according to (Aminulloh, 2023), the documentation strategy is also a data collection technique proposed to research subjects. This data collection method using the documentation method is carried out to obtain data on the condition of the institution (research object), namely Examining the Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective.

Moleong, quoted by (Pikri, 2022), explains that the collected data was analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Syarifah et al. (Hoerudin, 2022) explain that data reduction is carried out by filtering relevant information, presenting data in a systematic narrative form, and drawing conclusions based on research findings. To ensure data validity, this study used source triangulation, namely comparing information from sources. According to Moleong (Heryati, 2022), source triangulation helps increase the validity of research results by comparing various perspectives on the phenomenon being studied.

Muhadjir in (Yuliani, 2022) stated that data analysis is an activity of conducting, searching and compiling records of findings systematically through observations and interviews so that the researcher focuses on the research being studied. After that, making a finding material for others, editing, classifying, and presenting it. Data validity techniques using triangulation techniques include techniques and sources. Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model in (Puspita, 2020) consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Suryana, quoted by (Hoerudin, 2020), explains that data analysis is the activity of focusing, abstracting, and organizing data systematically and rationally to provide answers to research questions. In this study, after data collection, it was analyzed to draw conclusions. The data analysis techniques are as follows:

- 1) Moleong, as quoted by (Hoerudin, 2021), explains that the descriptive analysis method uses words and images rather than numbers to collect data. This is due to the application of qualitative methods. Furthermore, everything collected may be key to the research. Therefore, a research report will contain data citations to illustrate the presentation of the report.
- 2) Content Analysis. According to Hostli in (Hoerudin, 2019), content analysis is any technique used to draw conclusions through an attempt to discover the characteristics of a message and is carried out objectively and systematically. This study is also conducted through content analysis to compare one book with another in the same field, both based on differences in the time of writing and regarding the books' ability to achieve their goals as material presented to the public or a specific group of people. Then, the obtained qualitative textual data is categorized by sorting the data objectively, systematically, and generally.
- 3) Eriyanto, quoted (Engkus, 2019), explains that critical analysis is a perspective that states that researchers are not value-free subjects when viewing research. Critical analysis generally stems from certain perspectives or values held by the researcher. Therefore, the researcher's bias and position on a problem significantly determine how the text/data is interpreted. The critical paradigm focuses more on interpretation because through interpretation, we gain broad insight, delve deeper into the text, and address its underlying meaning.

Results and Discussion

The Philosophy of Independent Learning

In fact, the term "independent learning" is not new in the world of education. This idea was first proposed by Brazilian expert Paulo Freire with the term "Liberating Education." The origins of this idea are related to humanization and dehumanization, which are inherent problems inherent in a person. Humanization is natural for humans, but, dehumanization or denial occurs, which kills students' critical thinking and is anti-dialogue (Freire, 2020). This educational style, in which the teacher acts as a subject who continuously tells stories to the object (student), who must always obey and listen. A teacher only conveys material without providing an explanation of the reality that occurs, and students are like empty glasses ready to be filled with water (Iswan & Wicaksono, 2020).

Freire's efforts to break free from dehumanization included using a problem-based educational style, where teachers and students learn together by confronting problems. One requirement for implementing problem-based education is the use of dialogue. Through this dialogue, there are no boundaries between teachers and students (Freire, 2007).

The concept of "Freedom to Learn" in Indonesia is a policy initiative promoted by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, since late 2019. However, "Freedom to Learn" itself is not the name of a specific law, but rather a series of educational policies. The concept of "Freedom to Learn" here is a demand for quality learning standards in the classroom to produce quality output for graduates. The freedom to learn that is promoted is the freedom to think and express opinions, so that both educators and students must be able to understand and apply this essence in the classroom during learning activities (Zulaiha & Rosita, 2022). Essentially, education must be able to adapt to the demands and developments of the times, so that during the learning process, students must be able to work together to develop attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Shihab & Setiawan, 2021).

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology launching the concept of learning in schools with a "happy" or enjoyable atmosphere which aims to ensure that educators, students, and parents can have a happy atmosphere because there are quite a few complaints regarding the education system which focuses on certain values which make students focus on pursuing numbers, not skills (Shihab, 2017).

If we examine the meaning of the concept of independent learning itself, we need to understand the meaning of both terms. The term "independence" means standing alone (free from colonialism, servitude), independent of demands, not dependent on anyone. Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid defines three meanings of the term independence: freedom of will (the courage to order, give advice, advocate, and create something so that it can be accepted by other people). Abdul Hamid further defines independence as freedom of thought, namely freedom to express one's thoughts such as prohibiting, restraining, and criticizing, freedom of the soul, freedom from fear (Leu, 2022).

Learning is defined as a change in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of an individual's personality. Meanwhile, B.F. Skinner defined learning as the process of adapting a person's behavior. According to psychologists, a person's life experiences in any form of daily activity are also referred to as learning because, to a certain extent, a person's life experiences significantly influence the formation of a person's attitudes (Syah, 2000).

Learning is a process in which a person acquires, changes, or improves knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitudes through experience, practice, or instruction. This process can occur formally in an educational setting, such as a school or university, or informally through everyday experiences, social interactions, or observation. Learning involves relatively permanent changes in a person's behavior or abilities, which are the result of interactions between the individual and their environment. This process can take various forms, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning, and can be influenced by internal factors such as motivation, interest, and readiness to learn, as well as external factors such as the learning environment and teaching methods (Nugroho & Setiawan, 2020).

Based on the definitions of the terms "independence" and "learning" mentioned above, it can be concluded that the concept of "independent learning" is an approach to education that aims to provide freedom and flexibility to students, teachers, and educational institutions in carrying out the learning process. This allows students to learn according to their own interests, talents, and pace, while teachers are given the freedom to implement teaching methods that best suit their needs and the local context (Shihab & Setiawan, 2021).

The Concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic Perspective

Allah SWT created and bestowed upon us various potentials, both divine and human, that need to be explored, nurtured, and developed to be beneficial. Education is ideal, and its implementation takes the form of teaching, now refined into learning. This concept empowers students to be active, dynamic, and critical, appropriate to their age and thinking abilities. The essence of learning is learning." (Erfan & Billah, 2021).

In Islam, education is not only aimed at intellectual development, but also at the formation of morals and spirituality. The Qur'an and Hadith frequently emphasize the importance of seeking knowledge as an obligation for every Muslim, and freedom to learn can be seen as an effort to fulfill this obligation in a more adaptive and personal way (Muhaimin, 2013).

From an Islamic perspective, the term "learning" emphasizes the fulfillment of both physical and spiritual human needs. This concept of learning involves integrating various aspects to develop humans as social, individual, and spiritual individuals. Islam places great emphasis on the continuous use of reason and the five senses to acquire knowledge, ultimately enabling humans to develop their potential through this knowledge (Tafsir, 2008).

The definition of learning is a human obligation as a form of gratitude to God for the various gifts that have been given, especially for all the potential that is given. Through learning activities, humans will experience a process and change for the better, namely in the form of changes in attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. According to the theory of learning psychology, one of the characteristics of learning is the presence of change (Syah, 2000). Through learning activities, humans will also gain knowledge, experience and skills that will be useful in their lives. The predicate of noble creatures that is attached to humans will be maintained thanks to the knowledge and ethics that humans have because of the learning process itself.

Freedom to Learn in Islam can also be interpreted as the freedom to seek truth and develop oneself if it remains within the framework of Islamic values. Islamic education encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and academic freedom, if these do not conflict with fundamental religious principles.

The concept of "independent learning" from an Islamic perspective is a spirit that fulfills curiosity and the desire to know God. The spirit of independent learning is essentially about mastering broader competencies and skills, and it must also be multidisciplinary. In the Quran, this concept of independent learning can be embodied by understanding the philosophy of "iqra" (intelligence) found in Surah Al-Alaq (Burhanuddin & Anwar, 2014).

The Quran commands humans to learn as expressed in various redactions of the sentence QS. Al-'Alaq 1-5: "Read in the name of your Lord who created, 2. He created man from a clot of blood, 3. Read, and your Lord is the Most Gracious, 4. Who teaches (mankind) by means of the pen, 5. He teaches man what he has known." (Shihab, 2008).

This verse "is the first revelation revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which contains information for all mankind about the urgency of reading and conducting research in the fields of divinity, human creation, education, teaching, humanity, nature, and science. The concept of learning presented in this verse explains that humans are required to actualize themselves so they can become whole and complete human beings. However, we need to emphasize that the learning process here does not only involve mental processes, but the main point is solely to get closer to Allah (taqarrub ilallah) so that the goal of learning in Islam is oriented towards insan kamil (perfect human beings)."

Verses 1-5 in QS "al-'Alaq" begin with the word "iqra" which is repeated twice. The word "Iqra" comes from the word qara-a which means to read and more broadly to collect, research, analyze, and so on. Reading is one of the largest parts of learning activities. When associated with the existence of the verses (signs of greatness)

of Allah, this reading activity is carried out on the verses of Allah. "Iqra which contains the command to read is the first word of the first revelation that the Prophet Muhammad SAW received. Without realizing it, this command to read is not solely given to the Prophet Muhammad alone, but to humanity who will live until the end of time." (Shihab, 2008).

Allah revealed a verse commanding human to read without being limited by the object of their reading. This verse is also the first verse revealed by Allah SWT to the Prophet Muhammad, and it contains a command to read that must be read, also the first verse. The term "iqra bi ismi rabbika" apparently does not specify the object of reading. This means that humans are given the freedom and independence by Allah SWT to read and learn anything because the most important thing in the learning process is to begin with intention and hope for Allah's pleasure, namely "bi ismi rabbik."

If we analyze again, "the object of reading in verses that use the word qara-a, it is found that sometimes it concerns a reading that originates from God (the Quran) and sometimes the object is also a book that is a collection of human works. So here is the difference between reading that uses the word "tala-yatlu-tilawatan", where the latter word is used to read readings that are sacred and certainly true. On the other hand, we can say that a word in the editorial composition that does not mention the object, then the object can be reached by the word. Thus, the word qara-a is used in the sense of reading, studying, conveying, and because the object is not mentioned because it is general, then the object of the word is everything that can be reached, both sacred readings that originate from God, or not, both written so that it includes studies of the universe, society, oneself, magazines, newspapers, "and so on.

The command to "read, study, research, and compile" must be linked to "bi ismi rabbika," meaning "in the name of your Lord." This link is a prerequisite for readers not only to read sincerely but also to choose readings that do not lead to anything contrary to Islamic law. Thus, the Quran emphasizes the urgency of reading and the necessity of sincerity and discernment in selecting appropriate reading materials.

Al-Maraghi, quoted (Abdillah, 2026), states that this Quranic verse serves as evidence for the virtues of knowledge, reading, and writing. These three are essential components of every learning activity. Knowledge will not be preserved without the pen, and it will be lost, and future generations will not be familiar with the knowledge of previous generations. Freedom to learn becomes highly urgent when correlated with human existence as a creature entrusted with the noble task of building life and civilization. With the freedom to learn, humans can produce and gather a wide variety of information from various sources, both written and unwritten.

The word "iqra" is often used as the primary parameter for the obligation to learn, but that doesn't mean there's no obligation to teach within the verse. The urgency of teaching is also implied by the word "allama." Although in the verse, God is the theological teacher of humanity, sociologically, the one who teaches humans is another human being, known as an educator.

From an Islamic perspective, the concept of independent learning does not conflict with the concept of independent learning promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In fact, it aligns with what Allah SWT commands through Surah Al-'Alaq. Therefore, from an Islamic perspective, verses 1-5 of Surah Al-'Alaq have profound meaning and can be linked to the concept of independent learning, particularly regarding the freedom to seek knowledge and self-development. Correlations between these verses and the concept of independent learning include:

1. Freedom to Seek Knowledge: The first verse, "Iqra" (read), demonstrates the importance of reading and seeking knowledge. This reflects the fundamental principle of Freedom to Learn: the freedom and encouragement to continuously learn, explore, and seek knowledge without limitations.
2. The Importance of Education and Self-Development: This verse in QS. Al-Alaq indicates that Allah created humans with the potential to learn and develop. This aligns with the principle of Freedom to Learn, which encourages individuals to develop their potential according to their individual abilities and interests.
3. Teaching Through Various Means: The fourth verse mentions the "pen" as a teaching tool, which can be interpreted as a symbol of the importance of educational tools, whether books, technology, or other media. Merdeka Belajar also emphasizes flexibility in the use of various learning methods and tools.
4. Spreading Knowledge: The fifth verse states that God taught humans what they did not know, indicating that knowledge is something to be learned and shared. This aligns with the principle of Freedom to Learn, which aims to promote broad and inclusive access to education.
5. Education as a Continuous Process: The learning process that begins with the command "Iqra" is a continuous process. This implies that learning is a lifelong process, which is also at the heart of the concept of Freedom to Learn.

Thus, in the context of Freedom to Learn, these verses inspire the freedom to learn and develop according to the potential that has been given by God and encourage the pursuit of knowledge as a noble and sustainable activity.

Conclusion

The concept of Freedom to Learn from an Islamic perspective in Indonesia can be seen as an effort to integrate religious values with the freedom to learn. In Islam, education is a process that develops not only intellectuality but also morality and spirituality. Therefore, the concept of Freedom to Learn can be seen to facilitate holistic learning, which includes the development of morals, manners, and faith. The concept of Freedom to Learn in Indonesia from an Islamic perspective includes: First, freedom and responsibility because in Islam, freedom is always accompanied by responsibility. The concept of Freedom to Learn provides freedom to students and teachers, but must still be based on Islamic values, such as honesty, hard work, and concern for others. Second, Holistic Education: Education in Islam does not only focus on worldly aspects, but also the ukhrawi (afterlife). Freedom to Learn can be implemented by encouraging balanced learning between science and religious knowledge, as well as developing emotional and spiritual intelligence. Third, Contextualization of Learning: Islam encourages the application of relevant and useful knowledge in everyday life. The concept of Independent Learning supports teachers and students in adapting the curriculum to local contexts and individual needs, in line with Islamic principles to maximize the benefits of knowledge. Fourth, Strengthening Islamic Character: The concept of Independent Learning provides an opportunity to integrate Islamic character values into every aspect of learning. For example, teaching the importance of amanah (trust), ihsan (doing good deeds), and tawakal (surrender to God) can be part of the curriculum. Fifth, Creativity and Innovation in Religious Education: The concept of Independent Learning also opens opportunities to update Islamic religious teaching methods with more creative and relevant approaches, such as through project-based or technology-based learning. Thus, the concept of Independent Learning from an Islamic perspective can support the creation of a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also strong in faith and morals.

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