The Application of Discovery Learning Theory by Jerome Bruner in Qur'anic Tafsir Learning

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Abstract
Learning Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir) in Islamic educational institutions is still dominated by lecture and memorization methods, which often position students as passive recipients of knowledge. This learning pattern limits students' critical, exploratory, and contextual understanding of the Qur'an. This article examines the application of Jerome Bruner's Discovery Learning model as an alternative pedagogical approach in Tafsir instruction. Using a qualitative literature-based study, it analyzes classical and contemporary sources from both learning theory and Qur'anic exegesis perspectives. The study finds that Discovery Learning is epistemologically, pedagogically, and psychologically relevant, as it engages students actively in discovering the meanings of verses through contextual exploration, linguistic analysis, comparison of mufassir opinions, and critical reflection. Effective implementation requires guided discovery, mastery of prerequisite knowledge, authentic problem-solving, collaboration, reflection, and validation using authoritative Tafsir sources. Applying this model enhances deep comprehension, critical thinking, and the relevance of Qur'anic understanding to contemporary life. Discovery Learning thus represents a strategic and transformative approach for active, meaningful, and contextual Tafsir education.
Keywords: Discovery, Learning, Jerome Bruner, Tafsir, Islamic Education.

INTRODUCTION

The study of Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviors in both religious and social life. Tafsir serves not only to comprehend the literal meanings of the Qur'an but also as a medium to explore moral messages, spiritual values, and life principles relevant to evolving social realities (Barlas, 2002). Ideally, Tafsir learning should cultivate critical, reflective, and contextual thinking skills, enabling students to internalize and apply Qur'anic values meaningfully in their daily lives (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964).

However, in many Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Tafsir learning still faces methodological challenges. Lecture- and memorization-based approaches dominate, rendering students passive recipients of knowledge, which often leads to superficial, textual, and decontextualized understanding (Zuhdi, 2014). This learning pattern also limits students' ability to interpret independently and responsibly, making it difficult to connect Qur'anic

guidance with complex contemporary social issues (Nurrohim & Amatullah, 2025).

Addressing these challenges requires pedagogical innovation that transforms Tafsir learning from knowledge transmission to participatory, reflective, and transformative processes (Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2015). One promising approach is Jerome Bruner's Discovery Learning model, which emphasizes active inquiry, allowing students to construct knowledge through exploration, analysis, and problem-solving rather than passive reception (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In the context of Tafsir, this approach engages students directly in interpretation while remaining grounded in scholarly principles and Islamic intellectual traditions (Barlas, 2002).

Moreover, Discovery Learning aligns with 21st-century education demands, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and the ability to relate knowledge to real-world contexts (Graham, 2006). Thus, implementing this model not only enhances the quality of Tafsir understanding but also nurtures students with holistic religious, intellectual, and social awareness. Based on this background, this study aims to explore the conceptual and practical application of Discovery Learning in Qur'anic exegesis, providing an active, meaningful, and contextual learning model for Islamic education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. This method was selected to conduct an in-depth examination of the concepts, principles, and relevance of Jerome Bruner's Discovery Learning model in Qur'anic exegesis (Tafsir) instruction through theoretical and conceptual analysis. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Bruner's seminal works on Discovery Learning, core literature on Tafsir instruction, and Qur'anic interpretation methodologies. Secondary sources consist of books, journal articles, previous research, and other academic publications related to Islamic education, constructivist learning theory, and contemporary pedagogical approaches.

Data collection was conducted through document studies, involving the identification, review, and examination of relevant and credible academic materials. Collected data were then analyzed using content analysis, following stages of data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was applied by comparing insights from classical and contemporary literature. Through these procedures, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and well-substantiated understanding of the application of Discovery Learning in Tafsir instruction and its implications for developing a more active, meaningful, and contextualized learning process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Problematics of Qur'anic Exegesis (Tafsīr) Learning in Contemporary Islamic Education

The learning of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr) occupies a strategic position in Islamic education, as it functions as a primary means of bridging the revealed text with the lived realities of the Muslim community. Tafsīr is not merely aimed at explaining the linguistic meanings of Qur'anic verses, but also at uncovering ethical values, moral messages, and principles of life that are relevant to continuously evolving social dynamics. Nevertheless, the practice of tafsīr instruction in many Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia continues to face serious methodological challenges. The dominance of lecture-based methods and rote memorization renders learning largely unidirectional and positions students as passive recipients of knowledge (Zuhdi, 2014).

Such instructional models have significant implications for students' cognitive and affective engagement. Learners tend to memorize interpretive outcomes without understanding the epistemological processes through which Qur'anic meanings are discovered and constructed. As a result, comprehension of the Qur'an becomes textual and ahistorical, and difficult to apply in addressing the complex challenges of contemporary life. A number of studies indicate that Qur'anic learning still dominated by one-way instructional methods potentially diminishes students' learning interest, active participation, and critical capacity (Nurrohim et al., 2025a; Nurrohim et al., 2025b). This situation becomes increasingly problematic in the context of twenty-first-century challenges characterized by globalization, technological disruption, and the growing complexity of socio-religious issues. Students are not sufficiently equipped if they are provided only with normative knowledge; rather, they must also develop critical, reflective, and contextual thinking skills. Therefore, transforming pedagogical approaches in tafsīr learning has become an urgent necessity so that the Qur'an may be understood as a living and relevant source of values.

Discovery Learning as a Pedagogical Alternative in Tafsīr Instruction

The Discovery Learning model developed by Jerome Bruner offers a pedagogical approach that is highly relevant to addressing these challenges. Discovery Learning emphasizes that learning becomes more meaningful when students are actively involved in discovering concepts and principles of knowledge through exploration and inquiry, rather than merely receiving ready-made information (Bruner, 1961). Knowledge that is discovered independently is considered more enduring, more easily transferable to new situations, and more capable of fostering deep understanding. In the context of Qur'anic tafsīr learning, Discovery Learning enables students to engage directly in the interpretive process by exploring historical contexts, analyzing linguistic structures, comparing the views of exegetes (mufassirūn), and reflecting on the

relevance of Qur'anic meanings to contemporary realities. This approach aligns with the objectives of tafsīr instruction, which are not only oriented toward mastering interpretive outcomes, but also toward understanding the methodological foundations and scientific modes of thinking involved in interpreting the Qur'an (Ramadan, 2009).

The application of Discovery Learning also reinforces participatory and transformative tafsīr instruction. Students no longer merely memorize interpretations, but learn how Qur'anic meanings are constructed in a responsible manner. This is consistent with the findings of Nurrohim and Amatullah (2025), which demonstrate that the use of innovative instructional approaches and media in Qur'anic tafsīr learning can enhance student engagement, critical capacity, and depth of understanding.

Discovery Learning and the Islamic Scholarly Tradition
Historically, the principles of Discovery Learning are not foreign to the Islamic scholarly tradition. Educational practices in classical ḥalaqah settings emphasized scholarly dialogue, debate (munāẓarah), and in-depth exploration of texts. Prominent scholars in Islamic history emerged from educational environments that encouraged inquiry and critical thinking rather than rote memorization alone. In this sense, Discovery Learning can be understood as a revitalization of the Islamic intellectual tradition that has long been marginalized by overly transmissive modern pedagogical practices.
The Qur'an itself employs pedagogical approaches that encourage the discovery of meaning. Verses containing rhetorical questions, parables, and historical narratives function as forms of cognitive stimulation that invite readers to think and reflect. This perspective resonates with Barlas's (2002) argument emphasizing the importance of critical and reflective readings of the Qur'an in order to avoid rigid and hegemonic interpretations.

Principles for Implementing Discovery Learning in Tafsīr
Despite its many advantages, the implementation of Discovery Learning in tafsīr instruction must be conducted in a directed and responsible manner. The primary principle that must be observed is guided discovery, rather than pure discovery. Teachers continue to play a crucial role as facilitators who provide scaffolding, guidance, and clarification to ensure that the discovery process does not deviate from sound exegetical principles (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Mastery of prerequisite knowledge is also a critical factor. Students need to possess adequate Qur'anic reading skills, a basic understanding of the Arabic language, and preliminary knowledge of exegetical principles. Ismail and Nurrohim (2023) emphasize that strengthening taḥsīn (correct Qur'anic recitation) skills constitutes a fundamental foundation before students are guided toward deeper processes of comprehension and interpretation. Furthermore, the use of authentic problems that are relevant to students' lives is

key to the success of Discovery Learning. Tafsīr instruction should begin with real-life issues that require a Qur'anic perspective, enabling students to directly experience the relevance of Qur'anic verses to their own lives (Williams, 1992).

Stages of Discovery Learning and Their Impact on Tafsīr Understanding

The stages of Discovery Learning—ranging from stimulation, problem formulation, data collection, data processing, verification, generalization, to reflection—provide a systematic structure for active and in-depth tafsīr learning. The stimulation stage functions to arouse curiosity and intrinsic motivation, while the stages of data collection and processing train students' Islamic literacy and analytical thinking skills. The verification stage is particularly crucial in tafsīr instruction, as it ensures that the interpretations produced are grounded in strong textual and methodological foundations. This process underscores that Qur'anic interpretation is not merely a subjective activity, but a responsible scholarly practice. Subsequently, the reflection stage helps students internalize learning outcomes cognitively, affectively, and spiritually, in line with the affective domain of educational taxonomy (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964).

The Contribution of Discovery Learning to Twenty-First-Century Skills

The application of Discovery Learning in tafsīr instruction also contributes to the development of twenty-first-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication. Inquiry-based learning encourages students to actively engage in discussions, articulate arguments, and appreciate diverse perspectives. This aligns with the view of Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun (2015) that effective instructional models should foster higher-order thinking skills and learner autonomy. The integration of technology in discovery-based tafsīr learning further opens opportunities for more flexible and contextualized learning. The incorporation of technology and blended learning allows students to access digital tafsīr resources and engage in collaborative discussions beyond the classroom (Graham, 2006). The findings of Mawarni and Nurrohim (2025) indicate that aligning Qur'anic learning materials with students' digital literacy needs is a crucial factor in enhancing instructional effectiveness.

Implementation Challenges and Practical Implications

Despite its potential, the implementation of Discovery Learning in tafsīr instruction faces several challenges, particularly regarding teacher readiness and curricular limitations. Teachers are required to possess deep mastery of tafsīr content as well as adequate pedagogical competence in order to design inquiry-based learning experiences. Without careful planning, Discovery Learning risks becoming unfocused and ineffective. Therefore, institutional support, teacher training, and curricular flexibility are necessary to enable the optimal application of this approach. The use of digital media, such as tafsīr

learning podcasts, may also serve as an innovative solution to enrich the discovery process and enhance students' learning interest (Nurrohim & Amatullah, 2025).

Synthesis of the Discussion

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that Jerome Bruner's Discovery Learning model possesses epistemological, pedagogical, and practical relevance for the learning of Qur'anic tafsīr. This model is not only capable of addressing the problems of passive and textual tafsīr instruction, but is also consistent with the Islamic scholarly tradition and the demands of contemporary education. Through the planned and responsible application of guided discovery, Discovery Learning has the potential to transform tafsīr instruction into an active, meaningful, and contextualized process, while contributing to the formation of a Muslim generation that is critical, reflective, and characterized by Qur'anic values.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Discovery Learning model in Qur'anic Tafsīr instruction has proven effective in enhancing students' comprehensive understanding. This model encourages learners to actively discover the meanings of Qur'anic verses through processes of exploration, analysis, and reflection, thereby making learning more interactive, critical, and contextual. Beyond the cognitive domain, the application of this model also has a positive impact on the development of critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills, as students are encouraged to engage in discussion, compare different interpretations, and independently formulate conclusions.

Learning through this approach further increases students' motivation and active participation, making them more interested and engaged in the learning process. Moreover, the Discovery Learning model contributes to the formation of reflective and applicative attitudes, ensuring that the knowledge acquired is not merely theoretical but can also be applied in everyday life in accordance with Qur'anic values. Therefore, the use of this instructional model represents a relevant strategy for improving the quality of Islamic education, particularly in the teaching of Tafsīr, while supporting the development of learners who not only understand the text, but are also able to internalize and practice the teachings of the Qur'an in a critical and creative manner.

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