

**HABIBIA ISLAMICUS** (The International Journal of Arabic & Islamic Research) (Bi-Annual) Trilingual (Arabic, English, Urdu)  
ISSN:2664-4916 (P) 2664-4924 (E)

Home Page: <http://habibiaislamicus.com>

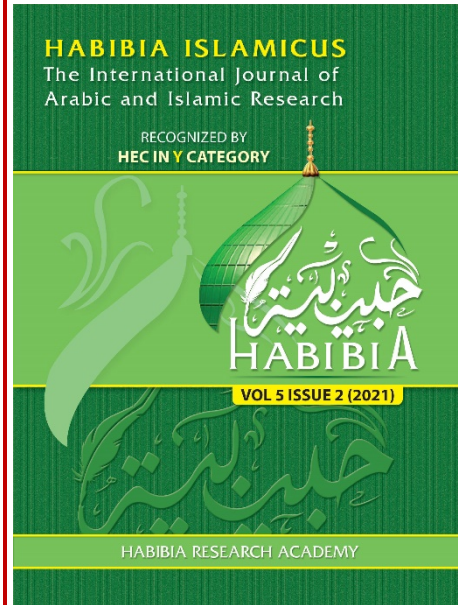
Approved by HEC in Y Category

Indexing: IRI (AIU), Australian Islamic Library, ARI, ISI, SIS, Euro pub.

PUBLISHER HABIBIA RESEARCH ACADEMY  
Project of JAMIA HABIBIA INTERNATIONAL,  
Reg. No: KAR No. 2287 Societies Registration  
Act XXI of 1860 Govt. of Sindh, Pakistan.

Website: [www.habibia.edu.pk](http://www.habibia.edu.pk),

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**TOPIC:**

**IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY OF KHUDI: MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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**How to Cite:** Murad, A., Fatima, S., Abid Ali, M., & Anwar, S. (2021). ENGLISH I Iqbal's Philosophy of Khudi: Maintenance and Development through Experiential Learning in Early Childhood Education. *Habibia Islamicus (The International Journal of Arabic and Islamic Research)*, 5(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.47720/hi.2021.0502e01>.

URL: <http://habibiaislamicus.com/index.php/hirj/article/view/180>

Vol. 5, No.2 || April –June 2021 || P. 1-13

Published online: 2021-11-18

QR. Code



**IQBAL'S PHILOSOPHY OF KHUDI:  
MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study probes the relationship between Iqbal's concept of khudi and experiential learning during early childhood. This qualitative and exploratory study employs Colaizzi's method for content analysis to extract hermeneutical interpretations and exegetically decipher the allegorical connotations from Iqbal's Persian anthology of poems, Asrar-i-Khudi. The thematic deduction draws Iqbal's ideas of the development of khudi in an environment of experiential learning. Iqbal's ideas have also been extracted from his other works. Historical and contemporary literature related to child learning psychology and education is also reviewed. The study concludes that the creative and curious mind of every child continuously develops hypotheses and tests them through experiences. The main aim of education is the realization of a strong 'Khudi' through experiential learning to create self-awareness, and self-realization to unleash an individual's potentials. It is recommended that early childhood education in Pakistan ensures individuality development through experiential learning by applying Iqbal's educational thoughts. It is also recommended that further research is undertaken to explore the functional aspects of Iqbal's concept of experiential learning approach to bring the desired change in the early childhood education system.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Individuality, Khudi, Early Childhood, Experiential Learning, Iqbal.*

**INTRODUCTION:** Early childhood is a fascinating period of development, as children are born learners, developing and learning at a phenomenal speed. The fast-developing mind is amazingly gifted, active, and perceptive providing them a critically vital foundation for lifelong progress. Consequently, their education is a great responsibility in terms of their health, development, and learning. Iqbal's<sup>1</sup> concept of personality is not an illusion, but the realization of a strong self through education that ultimately makes the child aware of himself as a valuable individual and useful member of the community. Iqbal asserts that nurturing and maintenance of this individuality is only possible when education provides opportunities for interaction with the material world. Without this continuous interaction, the child will be unable to realize his true potential and define his creative individuality<sup>2</sup>. Dissatisfied with the contemporary education system and caretakers of educational institutes, Iqbal<sup>3</sup> complains that instead of providing high ideals and purposes, they keep little falcons busy in mundane affairs.

شکایت ہے مجھے یارب خداوندان مکتب سے      سبق شاہیں بچوں کو دے رہے ہیں خاکبازی کا

Subsequently, the conscious development of individuality transforms the child into a truly independent self who relies only upon his potential in congruence with the aim of education from the Islamic perspective<sup>4</sup>. Criticizing the current model of early childhood education,

Elkind<sup>5</sup> observes that it prematurely exposes young children to experiences above their developmental stage. Resultantly, children get demotivated and suffer from life-long damage to their personality. Such ignorance of a child's nature makes education a barrier to his intellectual emancipation<sup>6</sup>. Iqbal's conception of an individual is dynamic and ever interacting with the material world around him. Endowed with a unique position in the universe, nature has gifted every individual with the ability to create and shape his fate<sup>7</sup>. Every individual is therefore an active agent who participates in the affairs of life to bring a substantial change to his khudi<sup>8</sup>. Being inherently curious, a small child accepts challenges in an urge order to come out as a winner and nurture his ego<sup>9</sup>. Iqbal and Montessori assert the importance of experiential learning for the development of every child's potential for creativity, initiative, and independence to their fullest<sup>10</sup>. Iqbal is considered the ideologue of Pakistan. However, his educational philosophy which is highly based on the growth of individuality with an active approach to life has not been given due recognition for its implementation. His ideas of personality development through experiential learning need further exploration for practical application as a part of the teaching and learning process<sup>11</sup>.

**Purpose of Study:** This study aims to explore Iqbal's philosophy of education to determine his concept of the development of khudi through experiential learning during early childhood years. The study also investigates the factors Iqbal considers important in providing experiential learning opportunities.

**Rationale:** Iqbal's approach to individuality development through experiential learning is one of the ways to bring reform to early childhood education. The current study executes a clear-headed examination of Iqbal's philosophy in the contemporary early childhood education environment by understanding his ideas of individuality development through experiential learning. The study holds significance for future researchers as it will identify the gaps in the understanding of the dynamics of growth of individuality and experiential learning and invite them to build upon the findings. The early childhood education institutions would benefit by redesigning curriculum, staff training, and learning activities based on the findings proposed by Iqbal. The study is significant for parents and early childhood facilitators in acknowledging the individuality of every child to facilitate his learning. The policymakers will be able to redefine policy outlines in consonance with Iqbal's ideology and develop action plans for the provision of experiential learning in early childhood learning centers.

**Methodology:** This study is qualitative and exploratory and aims to investigate and extract Iqbal's ideas of individuality and experiential learning mainly through his Persian anthology of sixteen poems, *Asrar-i-Khudi* first published in 1915. The study employed Hermeneutics to interpret the verses and exegetically decipher their allegorical connotations. Colaizzi's method was used for content analysis extracting Iqbal's concepts of experiential learning. Themes were derived to identify the factors facilitating the growth

of khudi through experiential learning. The final analysis was then shared with an eminent expert on Iqbal's philosophy of education for verification of rigor. The study of other works of Iqbal along with historical and contemporary literature related to child learning psychology was undertaken to substantiate and triangulate the findings.

**Development of Individuality:** Every nation derives its philosophy of education based on its philosophy of life<sup>12</sup>. Iqbal drew his philosophical ideas of khudi from Qur'an<sup>13</sup>. Quoting Qur'anic verses, he clearly states that the Creator has ascertained the individuality of every human being and assigned the responsibility as Vicegerent on earth, for which he shall be held accountable. This has been mentioned in various verses of the Qur'an (95:4, 2:30, 7:172). Iqbal further asserts the fundamental aim of education should be to develop this individuality or khudi as every individual has been endowed with the desire to seek knowledge<sup>14</sup>. Iqbal<sup>15</sup> propounds that the process of gaining knowledge must begin with the concrete. Once an individual's intellect overcomes the concrete, he can use this intelligence to look beyond it. McDougall<sup>16</sup> philosophizes that by ignoring the true nature of man, the advancement of all the social sciences has been thwarted. Lack of this understanding may lead to the collapse of our civilization. Apprehensive of Muslims ignoring the phenomenon of cause and effect, Iqbal warns that when an individual is negligent of activity, passivity and lethargy take over and weakens his individuality<sup>17</sup>. Iqbal's views are being reaffirmed by many contemporary educationists. Kolb & Kolb<sup>18</sup> define the experiential learning approach as constructive where those involved in experiential learning construct knowledge continuously. The goal of education for young children must allow them to draw their conclusions from their personal experiences in their own time as this is nature's intent<sup>19</sup>. Associating God with nature, Rousseau<sup>20</sup> also supports the view that children should develop according to nature, enjoy freedom with a non-interventionist teaching and learning process. The good nature of a child comes directly from the Creator as nature supports his learning acumen. Holt<sup>21</sup> suggests providing young children with a rich and stimulating learning environment that allows them to learn what they are ready to learn and when they are ready to learn it. A human being is organic and as such education must create the conditions under which human learning will begin to flourish. Comparing the role of education with that of a farmer, Robinson<sup>22</sup> asserts that human growth is an organic process against the current practices of treating it as mechanical. Iqbal does not separate education from experience considering education as a creative activity, an endless struggle, or active participation of every individual for the development of khudi<sup>23</sup>. Kolb & Kolb<sup>24</sup> underscore designing meaningful experiences instead of experience for their own sake. They also reject the teaching that is designed for testing. Go & Fourcade<sup>25</sup> stipulate the complex experiential approach should consider the four questions; the conditions that led to the materialization of experience; whether they are multiple; are children genuinely involved in the authentic educational activity and finally that the experience is distinct from the training and not an attempt to train. Conclusively, khudi is an entity that is proactively

engaged in development by continuously creating activities to explore its innate potential. It thrives on searching for enemies to interact with, struggle, achieve the purpose, succeed and elevate itself to the next level. In a state of inactivity, khudi, therefore, manifests itself as a nonproductive individual<sup>26</sup>.

**Education as a Social Function:** Since education stems from the societal structure and its intricacies, Iqbal<sup>27</sup> maintains that the individual and society are coordinated and human personality depends upon a suitable environment within this structure for its growth. Education should then prepare an individual to consciously become a part of the development of society. According to Dewey<sup>28</sup>, due to this interconnectedness of education and society, the functions of education cannot be defined without defining the kind of society one perceives. Consequently, Iqbal advocates education being a social function, schools should provide a dynamically social environment where children mutually interact and explore the material world along with developing a sound character<sup>29</sup>. Iqbal<sup>30</sup> considers the world with its concrete as a holy ground for human interaction to acquire knowledge, strengthen his khudi and come closer to the Creator. He encourages Muslims to think differently to resolve their challenges posed by the modern world in all areas of life. Individuals need society to reach their ultimate potential while the society fortifies the khudi of its members. Go and Fourcade<sup>31</sup> have endorsed this view as they highlight the importance of experiential learning for generating solutions for societal problems. Accordingly, when children work in groups, they are exposed to their historical culture with an attitude of investigation. This also allows them to work on projects, search for data, learn to problematize the process, and gradually learn to connect various dimensions of the problem such as economic, technological, historical, social, and geographical. Resultantly, research-based projects expose them to experiential learning to generate knowledge without losing control of the project and resources<sup>32</sup>. It is important that children are involved in the community, involve in experiences that encourage problem-solving, helpfulness, and a desire to bring change in society. Iqbal views society as an indispensable need of an individual to develop his full potential. To achieve his individuality, the individual must contribute to the larger objectives of the community to which he belongs<sup>33</sup>.

**Curriculum:** The world and its entities being the Signs of the Creator must form the basis for curriculum and investigation<sup>34</sup>. According to Iqbal, the Qur'an and Sunnah became intellectual motivators for earlier Muslims while observation of nature became an act of worship. This led the Muslims to explore the fields of social and physical sciences making great strides and inventions<sup>35</sup>. The inner self once connected to its Creator begins to appreciate the wonders and joys of the Qur'an as it experiences the Signs of its Creators spread out in the universe. The center of this connection is the heart or qalb<sup>36</sup>, which is the seat of learning (Al-Hajj:46), the center of all feelings, emotions, intentions, motivation, drives, aspirations, remembrance, and attention<sup>37</sup>. When the faculty of qalb is educated in its intuitive powers, it guides the self to understand the reality of things that are beyond the



domain of physical sense perceptions<sup>38</sup>. Iqbal's approach to scientific development is to reconcile it with God-consciousness, as an active search for God is better than a passive belief in Him<sup>39</sup>. The universe is formed of indivisible living, fluid, and dynamic egos in a perpetual state of unrest, mutually invading within their environment and expanding at the command of their Creator<sup>40</sup>. Like Iqbal, Go & Fourcade<sup>41</sup> endorse the concept of a dynamic curriculum while comparing an in-vitro approach to learning with an in-vivo approach. The in-vitro approach has a pre-planned curriculum like a study conducted in a laboratory, whereas the in- Vivo approach is, a form of experiential learning where a child is in a real-life situation, interacting with the world around him. Such learning, assert Go and Fourcade<sup>42</sup> develops a genuine relationship with knowledge created from a genuine epistemological mode versus a static pedagogy which is like fiction and no ingenuity can result from it for the child. Iqbal rejects a readymade curriculum and recommends an environment that facilitates learning by stimulating curiosity and thinking<sup>43</sup>. In his poem 'The childhood era' Iqbal admires the curiosity of the infant whose eyes, lips, and hearts had a deep yearning to understand the world around him<sup>44</sup>.

آنکھ وقف دید تھی، لب مائل گفتار تھا دل نہ تھا میرا، سراپا ذوق استفسار تھا

Frank Smith<sup>45</sup> voices his frustration at the standardized curriculum, teaching, and learning that causes damage to the individual and society. Such a system restricts the unlimited potential of the human brain for learning and thinking.

**Teaching Methods:** According to Kaiser<sup>46</sup>, Iqbal considers freedom as the basic condition for personality development. Freedom allows the growth of khudi by providing opportunities to the young child who then actively interacts with the environment. Comparing Iqbal's educational philosophy with Montessori's approach, Kaiser<sup>47</sup> concludes that all teaching methods must cater to child psychology allowing the freedom that enables the young child to create original solutions to the challenges. An action is only purposeful when the individual is allowed to experience it through personal struggle. Iqbal contends that struggle is inevitable to fortify personality<sup>48</sup>, whereas Montessori<sup>49</sup> equates liberty with the activity which is the most authentic expression of a child's intelligence. A child from birth to age six has a unique ability to learn and assimilate anything from the environment and absorb the impressions not only with mind but with life itself, as personality develops upon self-discovery<sup>50</sup>. Both Iqbal and Montessori do not believe in unlimited freedom which becomes meaningless if the child's energies are not channeled towards a certain task. Alternatively, organization and discipline without the freedom to choose activities are worthless<sup>51</sup>. Effective teaching cannot take place without allowing the child to interact with the magnanimous world of material as interactive learning is a means to self-actualization<sup>52</sup>. Prophet Muhammad SAW proclaimed the entire earth as a place of worship for the believers. Active teaching methods involve the child in experiential learning to unleash his creative intelligence as Iqbal<sup>53</sup> expresses:

You (God) created the night, I the lamp;  
 You created the clay, I the vase.  
 You created the jungle, mountains, and deserts  
 I created gardens, orchards, and flower-plots.  
 It is I who make glass out of stone  
 It is I who extract elixir out of poison

Holt<sup>54</sup> rejects pre-planned activities and any adult intervention that disregards age-appropriate activities. Holt suggests the best way to help young children learn is to make the world accessible, allow them to explore things of their interest to satisfy their inquisitiveness. Criticizing adults who don't trust children, Holt<sup>55</sup> concludes it is because adults don't trust themselves and carry the same belief about children. Tufail<sup>56</sup> suggests that following Iqbal's educational philosophy, teaching methods must be child-centered, with a focus on their interest and participation. Iqbal appreciates the spirit of intellectual adventure, trial, and error, and fearless exploration into new realms of thought, without which one cannot contribute original and meaningful experiences to enrich nations with new knowledge, culture, and ideas.

ندرت فکر و عمل کیا شے ہے ذوق انقلاب ندرت فکر و عمل کیا شے ہے ملت کا شباب<sup>57</sup>

Conclusively, Iqbal<sup>58</sup> condemns inactivity and alerts of its threats in form of chaos and falsehood. He highly recommends helping young children to formulate high ideals, which create a desire in self to achieve them. This desire engages them in a series of activities until they achieve their goal. Every new ideal leads to new actions, new learning, and a stronger self.

**Role of Mother:** Iqbal<sup>59</sup> views the mother as the provider of positive experiences to the child, who then through his mother's love and interaction puts in efforts and gains articulateness. Iqbal likens motherhood to prophet hood as she shapes the way that humans shall mature. Maintenance of her role and honor should therefore not be disturbed<sup>60</sup>. Iqbal motivates parents and teachers to facilitate learning by showing trust in every child's uniqueness, courage, and creativity and facilitate his experiential learning through interaction with the environment and the freedom to choose and discriminate in the methods and material<sup>61</sup>. This helps young children to express themselves expand their khudi. Holt<sup>62</sup> endorses home as a natural institution where a child's earliest experiences take place, whereas school is an artificial setup. Smith<sup>63</sup> warns parents and teachers against throwing education in the hands of those who provide passive educational activities such as drills, tests, and grades as these are artificial ways to make babies and children learn. Concluding, Iqbal asserts only an educator with high moral values and character can respect and nurture the hidden potential of the child, and ultimately his khudi, whereas righteousness and pedagogical competence are crucial to developing a child's age-related abilities<sup>64</sup>.

**Role of Teacher:** The teacher, according to Iqbal, is responsible to give direction to the educative process and provide opportunities to children for their learning and growth without instilling fear<sup>65</sup>. Iqbal<sup>66</sup> complains of the teacher who restricts the experiences and growth of khudi due to the obsolete teaching methods which can be compared to lighting an electric bulb with a matchstick<sup>67</sup>, Tufail<sup>68</sup> concludes that an effective teacher as envisioned by Iqbal develops objectives and facilitates young children by arranging the curriculum and environment for the right experiences according to their age and needs. Elkind<sup>69</sup> suggests that mutual respect and trust between the child and the teacher is the basis of all effective learning. This is not possible in the current system as classroom activities are controlled by those who are not in the classroom. Rogers<sup>70</sup> favors an open and friendly environment as the structure and organization of the self becomes rigid when a threat looms over the individual. Furthermore, Roger asserts that the young child opens up to the learning process when he has no fear of retribution in case he disagrees with concepts that threaten his own identity. Appreciating the influential role of teacher, Iqbal<sup>71</sup> writes that the head teacher is an architect whose material is the human soul.

**Creative Activity:** Iqbal<sup>72</sup> states that human beings are disquieting and unsatisfied rivals for the Creator as their creative powers are not inclusive in the beautifully carved world by the Creator. God left the world incomplete as He wants humans to be co-partner in creation. Describing the nature of khudi, Iqbal<sup>73</sup> says once awakened, it yearns for challenges to bring its creative powers to life by the active invasion of entities in the environment. This self or khudi is original, dynamic, creative, and challenging in its essence and actively pursues activities to find its ways towards growth. Such a constant struggle develops khudi as well as brings changes in the environment. This dynamic self can be observed in early childhood when the child continuously searches for new opportunities to interact with his environment. Repetition, when compared to creativity, denotes mechanical action; as such the creative activity of life cannot be defined in terms of mechanism<sup>74</sup>. Young children perceive themselves as being highly creative and full of new ideas, whereas the majority of adults do not see themselves as creative. Young children actively engage themselves to materialize their creative ideas into their best forms using critical judgments during the series of experiments they do and ultimately find out what works and why<sup>75</sup>. However, due to different external interventions, most dominant being the prevalent education system, this dynamic aspect of the child slows down over time<sup>76</sup>. Iqbal<sup>77</sup> ponders, “reflective observation of Nature is to awaken in man the consciousness of that of which Nature is regarded as a symbol”<sup>78</sup>. Appreciating this ‘empirical attitude’<sup>79</sup> of the Qur’an, Iqbal notes that it wants to develop a feeling of love and awe of the ultimate Reality of the Creator in its followers.

And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darkness's of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know. And it is He who produced you from one soul and [gave you] a place of



dwelling and storage. We have detailed the signs for a people who understand. And it is He who sends down rain from the sky, and we produce thereby the growth of all things. We produce from it greenery from which we produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees – of its emerging fruit are clusters hanging low. And [We produce] gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] it's ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe.” (Al-Qur'an 6:97-99)

Concluding that the essence of man is a creative activity, Iqbal (1930, p. 11) ascertains that man must continue to change from one stage to another, as only this creative self is entitled to the universe which comes into existence due to its creative activity<sup>80</sup>:

وہی جہاں ہے ترا جسکو تو کرے پیدا  
یہ سنگ و خشت نہیں جو تری نگاہ میں ہے

**Conclusion and Discussion:** A child during his early childhood is in a marvelous period of life with huge mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical capacities destined for the phenomenal growth of khudi. These potentialities manifest themselves in the natural learning faculty and curiosity of every individual<sup>81</sup>. Learning is a concrete phenomenon that requires a favorable environment with ample opportunities for the child to experience the marvels of the mysterious universe around. Historically the education system of Muslims was based on experiential learning. Once they abandoned exploration, considered God-consciousness as a static phenomenon, not only they declined in knowledge, they ensured their downfall as well<sup>82</sup>.

“They were your ancestors, but who are you? Inactive, waiting for tomorrow!<sup>83</sup>

Iqbal's concept of personality is positive, profound, and dynamic. It is through experiential learning that this personality can be successfully developed and equated with the universe at a micro level that strives to be nearer to the Ultimate Ego of God<sup>84</sup>. The ideal environment enables khudi to tap its immense potential for transformation into a good and God-conscious individual<sup>85</sup>. Many prominent Western educationists and philosophers support Iqbal's concept of individuality and its development through experiential learning. They not only challenge the prevalent factory model of schooling but voice its damaging capacity. Educationists such as Elkind<sup>86</sup>, Holt<sup>87</sup>, and Robinson<sup>88</sup> consider the modern early childhood learning model as harmful for children leading to their miseducation and decline of creative powers. Iqbal's concept of “khudi” and its development requires the reawakening of self through active participation in the educative process. When the ultimate goal of an individual and his education lies in the exploration, utilization, and maximization of those inexhaustible possibilities within, without, and before him, the child does not need too many artificial resources nor do teachers' need exhaustive training since learning is natural<sup>89</sup>. The role of mothers and teachers cannot be overemphasized in Iqbal's educational ideas. Iqbal believes mothers are natural educators, the child being a natural learner, while both the mother and teachers prepare him for the ever-changing world. Thus

the education system should have the capacity to transform itself according to its new demands without ignoring the parental role<sup>90</sup>. Conclusively, the development of khudi is a natural and highly experiential learning process. Iqbal's concept of individuality development cannot be isolated from experiential learning. An education system based on Iqbal's philosophy can develop the khudi of every child during his early years.

**Recommendation:** The researcher recommends further research in the process of experiential learning from Iqbal's educational ideas of learning, human nature, and khudi. The researcher further recommends training for parents, particularly the mothers and early childhood educators in understanding the process of development of khudi through experiential learning.

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