

## IMPROVING LEARNING QUALITY THROUGH IMPLEMENTING THE CONCEPT BY IBN ABDIL BARR

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**Abstract :** The weak quality of learning in Islamic education has resulted in the low quality of graduates. Furthermore, most Islamic education experts agreed to say that the Islamic education given to public school has failed in its purpose. It is due to the learning process itself which does not include the heart, or the inaccuracy of learning method applied. Therefore, to improve Islamic education and character education quality, the researcher sought the importance to adopt the learning concept stated by Al-Hafizh Abu Umar Ibn Abd al-Barr in Islamic education. Hence the research question lingers around how is the concept of learning by Ibn Abd al-Barr defined? Why the concept should be chosen as alternative to improve learning quality? This article is aimed to describe the concept by Ibn Abdil Barr to offer the improvement on Islamic education quality in Indonesia. Qualitative method through literature review and descriptive document analysis is used in this research. Research findings show that the learning concept suggested by Ibn Abd al-Barr consists of 14 methods and learning techniques apply to both individuals and groups. In addition to that are 8 teaching methods and techniques. Learning concept by Ibn Abdil Barr is highly relevant as an alternative to improve learning quality as it has been tested during the golden age of Andalusian kingdom once and it was maintained until today yielding abundant experts in Islamic education.

**Keywords:** Learning, Education, Islamic Education, Characer, Abdil Barr

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Various means have been applied to improve the learning quality within Indonesian education system, particularly in the field of Islamic education. Different kinds of learning method have gone through trials and errors. However an experiment has never been done on learning method suggested by Hadith Experts, though it has been proved along the time yielding great *ulama* and Islam intellectuals. A great amount of learning methods referred to western science or intellectuals of the recent times, while in fact the knowledge has existed since the early ages and within Islamic countries.

Therefore we would like to offer one learning method from a Hadith Expert who participated in improving Islamic Education quality in Indonesia, namely the learning method of Abu Umar Ibnu Abd al-Barr al-Andalusi (368-463 H). Based on the background, the research question proposed are as followings: How is the learning concept by Ibnu Abdil Barr? And how it can be the alternative in improving learning quality?

These questions are importance since according the Law No.20 Year 2003 and regarding National Education System Section 1 Article 20, it is mentioned that learning is a process of interaction between students and teachers and learning resources occurring in a learning environment.” The interaction process between students and teacher here consists of learning method and teaching method. Carefully examining the book by Ibn Abd al-Barr entitled Jami’ Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadhlih, he explained learning method and teaching method as two essential variables to improve learning quality.

Ibn Abd al-Barr wrote in detail—although not systematically—the materials regarding learning methods and techniques. He classified two different learning methods which are individual learning method and group learning method. Therefore, the aims of this article is to describe the learning concept by Ibn Abdil Barr as an alternative to improving Islamic education learning quality in Indonesia.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions of this paper, qualitative method is used in this research through literature review and descriptive document analysis. As mentioned above, intensive study on book of Ibn Abd al-Barr entitled *Jami' Bayan al-Ilm wa Fadhliah* has been done. The finding of conceptual notions of Ibn Abd al Barr have been used to analyse various prominent and substantial issues on Indonesian education.

## 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on this research process, it was found the at least there are there important point which Ibn Abd al Barr discussed in his book in order to improve the quality of learning process either regarding the methods of study and teaching. Regarding the methods of study, he divided in two groups, individual and group learning methods. Moreover, those finding can be explained as following:

### Individual Learning Method

In his book, Ibn Abd al Barr explained that there are several effective ways to optimize individual learning methods are as follows:

First, repeating and memorizing. This method applies to *Ushul* materials such as Al-Qur'an and hadiths, it is essential for those expecting to be *ulama* and for the illiterates. Abu Umar Ibn Abd al-Barr pointed out that memorizing *ushul* (basics of knowledge) is the key of knowledge itself, since one's knowledge refers to what he masters not what is contained in his book. Ibn Abd al-Barr stated that: "Considered as part of the *ulama*, when they aren't, are those who answer "Oh, it is written in my book in my bookcase."

Abu Umar then said in the prelude of his long text:

يَا مَنْ يَرَى الْعِلْمَ جَمْعَ الْمَالِ وَالْكَتُبِ      خُذْتُ وَاللَّهِ لَيْسَ الْجَدُّ كَالْعَبِ  
الْعِلْمُ وَيُحَكِّمُ مَا فِي الصَّدْرِ جَمْعُهُ      جَفْظًا وَفَهْمًا وَإِقْنَانًا فَذَلِكَ أَبِي  
لَا مَا تَوَهَّمُهُ الْعَبْدِيُّ مِنْ سَفْهِ      إِذَا قَالَ مَا تَبْتَغِي عِنْدِي وَفِي كُتُبِي

"Oh, you who think of knowledge as stacking wealth and collecting books, you were fooled, In Allah's Name, sincerity is never equal to frolic around", "and True knowledge is what you would collect within your chest, with memorizing, understanding and mastery. This is my resource. Unlike what is said by the foolish men, when they argue "What you're looking for is contained in my books."

Second, writing and taking notes. Memorizing is the main method used by Arabians during Prophet's era. They tend to have strong memory but only few know how to write. Ibn Abd al-Barr stated that Arabians are famous for their strong memory, of whom some of them even had to select which matters to listen to, as once they hear something, it will stay in their memory. Ibn Syihab al-Zuhri (w.124) said: "For the sake of Allah, nothing comes to my ear that will slip from my memory," similar to that of Ibn Abbas r.a." Therefore, for those with weaker memory, Rasulullah PBUH suggests them to write, according to his saying:

((قيد العلم بالكتاب)) "Bind the knowledge within your writing."

Ibn Abd al-Barr then argued: "Today nobody memorizes as those people before (Ibn Syihab, et.al), had there weren't books to record everything, most knowledge must have been lost...". In writing and taking notes, one should take into account of these things: a) Writing should be based on the experts. b) Writing should be done right at the time when one listens or thinks of any thought on any kinds of media available, then it can be moved to a book. c) Applying selection method, which means writing only the right and correct materials. d) Categorization, to divide the *shahih* and *dha'if* in separated books.

Yet, to obtain expected results in memorizing and writing, he also suggested to seek guidance from experts. Memories and notes taken should be submitted to a teacher to seek guidance and correction for mistakes. Ibn Abd al-Barr said: "Those who write but not seeking for correction from *ulama* equals to

those who take leave to the rest room but come out without cleaning up". He also explained further related to instruction on correcting grammatical errors, errors within hadiths, examining the pronunciation and the interpretation.

Motivation is also necessary for students read more and muthala'ah. Last chapter of Ibn Abd al-Barr's is entitled "The advantage of reading books and advices to observe note books". Then he quoted Imam al-Bukhari to answer how to prevent forgetfulness. Imam al-Bukhari suggested: "Always read books."

Yet in the process when much is forgotten, then one should think more and ask to the experts. Ibn Abd al-Barr wrote the Chapter Compliments towards questions, highly motivated in seeking knowledge, and exhortation towards obstacles to knowledge. Citing Abd Allah Ibn Mas'ud r.a. "Knowledge increased in regards to research, obtaining knowledge is due to questioning, therefore learn what you don't know about and portray what you've learned in your deeds." In addition to that, quoting from Daghfal When he was asked: "How did you manage to memorize all this?", he answered: "Mind to keep thinking and mouth to keep asking."

Besides, education will benefited more to the application of Mulazamah method (Islamic Boarding School). Mulazamah means living with an alim to absorb his good deeds and knowledge within a long period of time. In Bahasa Indonesia it's called "nyantri".

This method was once introduced by Abu Hurairah r.a when he practiced mulazamah to the Prophet PBUH. Ibn Abd al-Barr commented on Abu Hurairah's hadith No. 593: This hadith contains many directions such as: (1) Hadith from Rasulullah of which the law is as binding as Al-Qur'an, (2) to portray knowledge, to spread and to teach it, (3) Mulazamah to ulama and the willingness to live modestly to obtain knowledge. In addition to that, Ibn Abd al-Barr wrote a chapter on Luqman al-Hakim's story and his will to his son to approach ulama and be serious in seeking knowledge.

Besides, getting more teachers is essential in learning process. He quoted Ayyub al-Sukhtiyani (w.131): "Indeed, you would never find any of your teacher's lacking until you sit close to other teacher. Then he also cited Mathar al-Warraq (w.129): "A person who has only one teacher be like one with a wife, when she is in period, he will just sit powerlessly". Yet to seek for more teachers, according to Ibn Abd al-Barr, one should be willing to sacrifice in living modestly and travel a long journey."

Nevertheless, the whole learning process aforementioned should be gone through gradual process or *Tadriji*(gradually). Knowledge should be obtained through different stages of sciences and education, starting from *ushul* (the core of knowledge) and concluded with *furu'* (the branches of knowledge). He also explained that knowledge itself is widely defined so that one who learns should consider specialization. After mastering basic knowledge, a learner should consider to focus on one discipline as his expertise, since one's value is measured by his expertise. Indubitably, any discipline one wishes to take should be the most beneficial for himself and the *ummat*.

Furthermore he explained the importance of Wetonan (Bandongan) Method and coming inside very early. Ibn Abd al-Barr wrote: "It is said to Bazar Jamihru: "How did you manage to get this abundant knowledge?" he answered:

بِبُكُورِ كَبُكُورِ الْغُرَابِ وَصَبْرِ كَصَبْرِ الْحِمَارِ وَجَرَصِ كَجَرَصِ الْخَنَزِيرِ

"By coming very early like a sparrow, with the patience like that of himar and the ambition like that of pig."

Hence, when being faced to boredom, a learner should find refreshment. Ibn Abd al-Barr and the ulamas acknowledge that human's hearing might experience boredom, an human's soul is reluctant to saturation, heart can be attacked by laziness and mind might be obstructed by fatigue. When a learner senses this, it is suggested for him to seek for halal refreshment and entertainment like stories and tales, poems and poetries with wisdom, or just to have a rest.

### Group Learning Method

Besides learning individually, learners can choose to study in group. In this case, Ibn Abd al-Barr explained that there are various methods to use, such as:

First, mudzakah method (Mudarasah, Muraja'a), which mean answer and question method among learners. He narrated from Ali, who told Abd Allah Ibn Buraidh:

تَرَاوَرُوا وَتَذَاكَرُوا هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ فَإِنَّكُمْ إِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا يَذْرُسْ عِلْمُكُمْ

“Visit each other among you and practice mudzakah with each other about this hadith, unless you wish for your knowledge to vanish”

Second, munazharah method (Mujadalah) or group discussion. This applies to all disciplines unless when it creates unsupportive *mira'* or *jidal* (debates), moreover when it relates to akidah and al-Qur'an. Ibn Abd al-Barr wrote a chapter about “Detested debates within discussion” in which he stated that: “All Prophet's hadiths here forbid debates on al-Qur'an”

Third, mutharahah method (class discussion), this method is practiced by teacher delivering a problem and give opportunities for learners to brainstorm and answer, after deliberating arguments the teacher will explain the correct answer. This method refers to when Rasulullah PBUH mentioned a question: “There was one tree of which its leaves would never fall, the tree is an example of a Muslim. Could you please tell me what tree is that?”, This Shahih Hadith is included by Ibn Abd al-Barr in a chapter entitled “Teacher to Launch Problem Question to Learners.”

### Teaching Method

Along with explaining learning method for the sake of learners, Ibn Abd al-Barr also explained that education highly depends on the method used by teacher. When a teacher masters education both theoretically and practically, it is undeniable that the students will grow to be great ulama. Referring to his knowledge and experience, Ibn Abd al-Barr outlined the methods and techniques of teaching, such as:

First, setting correct and appropriate goals based on each capacity. Ibn Abd al-Barr made an analogy of a doctor whose duty is to treat different patients suffering different kinds of illness. He cited Abu Farwah who said that Prophet Isa a.s once said: “Don't you ever obstruct knowledge from its expert of which you're a sinner, and don't you ever hand anything to those who are not experts in it from which you'll be fooled. Be a gentle doctor who would prescribe a medicine knowing that the medicine will help.”

Ikrimah (w. 107) said: “Indeed knowledge contains values”. Then he was asked? “What values?” He answered: “You have to hand it to those who can keep it and not wasting it.” When it is handed to the wrong person, it is similar to draping gold and jewelries on pig's neck. This definition was taken by Ibn Abd al-Barr from Prophet Isa a.s., Prophet Muhammad PBUH and al-A'masy.

Second, beginning the lesson with interesting materials to attract and to motivate learners as well as warming their readiness to accept lesson. In the chapter “Teacher Should Start the Lesson with Attractive Materials and Motivate Students”. Rasulullah PBUH mostly applied this method to teach his companions.

Third, simplifying materials, avoid complicating the lesson, and be patient. In the chapter regarding the courtesy of *alim* and *santri* (student), Ibn Abd al-Barr quoted a hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas, Muhammad PBUH said: “Teach and simplify it, don't you ever complicate things -3 times.” A teacher should then be patient and not emotional. Rasulullah PBUH said “teach and don't you scold them, since teacher is much better than a scolder.”

Fourth, a teacher should use clear language and repetition when necessary to make the lesson understandable. Ibn Abd al-Barr said: “the duty of a teacher when the lesson is not understandable is to repeat it in times.” Some ulama even suggested repetition more than three times, based on Muhammad PBUH when he said things, he repeated three times. It is meant to deliver the message both for learners who are close or far. Repetition is obligatory when materials are not understandable enough. Nevertheless, when the materials are well understood then repetition is not necessary.

Fifth, understanding the soul, traits, and potential of each students. This is important to influence students, particularly when a teacher wishes to build a character. In the chapter “The Courtesy of Alim and Santri”, Ibn Abd al-Barr quoted al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad (w. 167/170): “When you face a person making mistakes, and you know that he will certainly reject your suggestion, don't you reprimand him at the

moment, because with that you'll be in a hurry to deliver a knowledge and to obtain his hatred." Teacher should also grant special attention to those who are smart (*nujaba*) as what have done by the preceding ulama.

Lastly, dictation toward students. Dictating knowledge mostly done by ulama, which is now developed in the form of hard copy materials distribution to students. Ibn Abd al-Barr mentioned various examples, such as: "Hasan Bashri (w. 110) dictated his interpretation to his students. Then Abd al-Rahman Ibn Mahdi (w. 198) told a story about Zaidah (al-Hafizh al-Kuhfi died 161) who came out to meet his students and said : "write this before I forget it." Later on, Imam Syafi'i (d. 204) also did imla' to his students in a Masjid hall till the sun shines on them.

### **Analysis / Discussion**

Ahmad Tafsir claimed that the problem occurred in Indonesian Islamic education, especially in of public school, is still overwhelming. One of many challenges is the education method. Islamic education, especially in public school, could almost be said as a failure. It is due to the fact that teachers only conduct Islamic education from psychomotor and cognitive aspect; affective aspect (piety and faith) is lacking of attention. While on the contrary, the core of religion is the faith itself.

In his other book, Ahmad Tafsir emphasized: "What we found is the education which only emphasizes on physical and logical aspects. Spiritual aspect is not highly maintained. Therefore our graduates are still frail and easily influenced to conduct disgraceful deeds, and not constructive within the society." In other words, "students have knowledge about religion, but not how to be religious." The framework itself should be constructed in line with Islam.

Finally, some issues complained by education experts have been responded by the government through the design of character education integrated in 2013 Curriculum which has been revised in 2015. The Minister of Education and Culture, Mohammad Nuh, stated that "2013 Curriculum has been designed for the development of whole competence between knowledge, skill, and attitude." In addition, 2013 Curriculum has been built on scientific approach where the learning adopts the steps implemented by scientists in knowledge building through scientific method which is focused on the skills for knowledge search process instead of just knowledge transfer.

Therefore, referring to the above explanation, it can be highlighted that poor learning process and poor graduates' quality are caused by several factors, particularly:

1. Islamic Education is not managed seriously as it is not built upon the concept of Islamic knowledge itself, teaching time allocation for Islamic and Character education is considered low, and this subject is not a part of graduation requirement.
2. Teachers, educators, or lecturers, who teach religious materials or related to Islamic education, often follow liberalism, or the like, so that they teach tafseer (interpretation), hadith, or Islamic history using incorrect approach and method.
3. It seems that the scientific approach in Islamic Education is implemented in a forced manner, it is not appropriate with the comprehensive teaching of Islam, where it should include the approaches of talaqqi, imani, or tauhidi, or syar'i, as well as rational and empirical scientific approaches, like the Islamic concept stated by Ibn Abdil Barr.

We are of the opinion that this less appropriate methodology is the source of the problem. Therefore, the concept offered by Ibn Abdil Barr who lived in the golden age of Andalusia, namely 14 Learning Methods and Techniques as well as 8 teaching methods and techniques can be used as alternative solution to increase the learning quality nowadays. This concept is suitable to enhance today's learning process. For example, to memorize and to repeat the material that must be memorized is a very important thing to do until the end of time.

To write and to record by paying attention to 4 rules: To write something directly from the expert, to write something as soon as someone hears it or to write something immediately after it arises in someone's mind, and then transfer the writing to a book, to implement selection method, i.e. someone only writes good and correct material, and to implement categorization where the authentic materials are

compiled in one book, and the weak materials are compiled in another book. This method is relevant until today. Therefore, the materials recorded by the learners must be correct and qualified, they do not need to write all information or opinion, and they must not be confused between the correct and the incorrect materials.

After the students record the material, they must then submit their writing to their teacher in order to get guidance, correction, and direction. This method has been practiced until now in the writing of scientific papers and books where they must be edited by senior editor or professional reviewer.

The next methods are reading a lot and muthala'ah, thinking a lot, and asking directly to the expert, those methods are highly relevant and commonly practiced in the classroom.

The next method is Mulazamah or mentoring, this method is highly relevant in religious field and in other areas of expertise, including in the research field. Comparative study is a method commonly practiced by the researches nowadays.

Other method is *Tadriji* (step-by-step), from the *ushul* (basic and foundation) to its branches, and then select a particular field to master it, this method is also commonly practiced today.

The next methods are Sorogan and Wetonan methods, these methods are still widely practiced in Islamic boarding schools, while always coming early to an Islamic class must always be encouraged.

While group learning method like: Mudzakarah (Mudrasah, Muraja'a), Munazharah (Mujadalah), and Mutharahah (class discussion) are still relevant to be implemented but must adhere the Islamic rulings.

If we those learning methods offered by Ibn Abd al-Barr are applied, we believe that the quality of the students will increase significantly.

Ibn Abd al-Barr also added other teaching methods as follows: To determine proper target according to their respective capacity, to start the learning with interesting things which will induce students' learning interest and encourage their preparedness to receive the lesson (there are 4 things that can be practiced: persuasive questions, encourage students to ask question, calling their names repeatedly, throwing a question or problem at them), to make the lesson easy for the students (by means of adequate explanation and media), to become patient by not easily angered toward the learners, to use words that are easily understood, to teach in a serious manner by avoiding joke, to understand the personality, character, and potential of every student, as well as to put optimal efforts in order to dictate knowledge to the learners, making the abovementioned methods and techniques are highly relevant.

If the learning process (studying and teaching) which involves 3 factors, namely Raw Inputs, Instruments (teacher, school management, curriculum, facilities, and infrastructures), and Environments, works properly then it is believed that successful education and quality graduates will be obtained. Finally, learning objective which is basically an effort to transform or to increase someone's potential, i.e. prospective student (raw input) turns into new personal (raw output) with certain quality, will be achieved.

Related to that, various learning and teaching methods proposed by Ibn Abdil Barr could be applied to improve current learning quality. It is suitable with the current learning condition. For instance, memorizing and repeating materials is always important regardless of time. When these learning methods were applied, we are certain that the quality of students will drastically improve.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

After conducting research and discussion, we came to conclusion as follows: Firstly, learning concept suggested by Ibn Abd al-Barr consists of learning methods and techniques, both individual and group, as well as teaching methods and techniques. The last, learning Concept by Ibn Abd al-Barr is highly relevant to be alternative in improving learning quality, since it has been proven during the Andalusian golden age and it keeps on applied until now and it successfully yield the experts of Islamic education.

Looking up to the golden age of Islam in the past, the treasure of Islamic science and the richness of knowledge belonged to the ulama, hence I suggest to dig further on the core of knowledge

within Islam. Then, the knowledge should be actualized in today's Islamic education, when Islam suffered a setback of its age. This article is expected to be inspiration and valuable as it should be.

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