

# The concept of education according to Ibn Khaldun and its implementation in children's education in Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura

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**Abstract** Ibn Khaldun's thoughts can be used to criticize Islamic educational institutions, which tend not to emphasize independent thinking and broaden the subject of study. Only a little development can be expected from established educational institutions such as schools, madrasas, and Islamic boarding schools (*Pesantren*). *Kuttab*, as a reborn classical educational institution, has the potential to implement Ibn Khaldun's educational thinking more flexibly because it does not yet have a standardized learning system. This research is qualitative field research in Kuttab Permata Qur'an. Data related to the implementation of learning in Kuttab Permata Qur'an is examined from the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's educational concept with a phenomenological approach. The results of this study indicate that education at Kuttab Permata Qur'an is compatible with Ibn Khaldun's thought in curriculum aspects relevant to the needs of life in society and dignified relations between teachers and students. However, teachers still need to demonstrate a convincing ability to simplify concepts in learning materials.

**Keywords:** *Ibn Khaldun, children's education, Kuttab*

**Abstrak** Pemikiran Ibn Khaldun dapat digunakan untuk mengkritisi lembaga pendidikan Islam yang cenderung tidak menekankan pemikiran independen dan memperluas subjek kajian. Hanya sedikit perkembangan yang bisa diharapkan dari lembaga pendidikan yang sudah mapan seperti sekolah, madrasah, dan pesantren (*Pesantren*). *Kuttab* sebagai lembaga pendidikan klasik yang terlahir kembali berpotensi mengimplementasikan pemikiran pendidikan Ibn Khaldun secara lebih fleksibel karena belum memiliki sistem pembelajaran yang terstandar. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian lapangan kualitatif dalam Kuttab Permata Qur'an. Data terkait pelaksanaan pembelajaran dalam Kuttab Permata Qur'an dikaji dari sudut pandang konsep pendidikan Ibn Khaldun dengan pendekatan fenomenologis. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan di Kuttab Permata Qur'an sesuai dengan pemikiran Ibn Khaldun dalam aspek kurikulum yang relevan dengan kebutuhan hidup masyarakat dan hubungan bermartabat antara guru dan siswa. Namun, guru tetap perlu menunjukkan kemampuan menyederhanakan konsep dalam materi pembelajaran.

**Kata Kunci :** *Ibn Khaldun, pendidikan anak, Kuttab*

## Article history:

Received 07 February  
2023

Revised 25 March  
2023

Accepted 12 April  
2023

Available online  
06 May 2023

## Introduction

Ibn Khaldun was a philosopher, historian and sociologist. Despite a career in politics, he spends most of his time writing and teaching (Irwin, 2018, p. 152). In his famous work “Muqadimah”, Ibn Khaldun wrote a special chapter on education. In his discussion of the forms/methods of education known at that time, Ibn Khaldun distinguished two types of education: (1) related to memorization and limited study areas, namely learning to read and write with the aim of memorizing the Al-Qur’an and various legal interpretations, so that students learn how to copy and apply previously established laws and explanations; and (2) emphasizes independent and critical thinking and broadens the subject of study. The first type is related to the second type (Shihade, 2017, p. 82).

Similar to Paulo Freire, Ibn Khaldun argues that the second type is healthier for students and society in general, because it allows the development of critical, independent thinking and a broader perspective to build a more holistic education. The second type is believed to be able to help develop more educated students (Shihade, 2017, p. 83). For Ibn Khaldun, learning is a natural human instinct and talent, that’s why Allah created reason, which distinguishes humans from other creatures. The purpose of education is to hone these instincts

Ibn Khaldun did not like the madrasa curriculum which was too limited or surprising, given the background of Ibn Khaldun who had never studied at a madrasah, as was common for children in his time. Instead, Ibn Khaldun chose to learn from one teacher to another, and collected diplomas (permission to teach what he had learned from a particular teacher) (Irwin, 2018, p. 157). With his family’s high social status, Ibn Khaldun was able to study with the best teachers in the Maghrib, one of whom was Al-Abili, a major scholar in logic, mathematics, and philosophy. Al Abili does not believe in the idea of formalized and institutionalized education, nor does he support state control over.

The idea of Ibn Khaldun’s education can be a subject of criticism for Islamic education which currently tends to be conservative, only trying to care for the legacy of existing knowledge. The learning model in Islamic schools, madrasas and Islamic boarding schools has been standardized in a form that does not offer much meaningful scientific development. There is hope that educational institutions outside of established forms can embody Ibn Khaldun’s ideas, for example *kuttab*.

*Kuttab* is a classical educational institution that has been reborn and cannot be classified as a school, madrasa or pesantren. The Permata Qur’an kuttab is one of the kuttabs with a clear curriculum differentiation from madrasas and Islamic boarding schools. Kuttab Permata Qur’an does not emphasize mastery of material so that it has the flexibility to develop an established learning system in other Islamic educational institutions. The details of the Kuttab Permata Qur’an Kartasura learning system will be studied and seen from the perspective of Ibn Khaldun’s educational thought in this study.

## **Methods**

This study used a qualitative field approach at Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura. Data related to the implementation of learning in Kuttab Permata Qur'an is examined in the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's educational concept with a phenomenological approach. Like phenomenological research in the social field, this research tries to see the reality of education from the perspective of Ibn Khaldun. Methods of data collection through interviews, observation and documentation (Moleong, 2008, p. 57). Data analysis used a deductive thinking method, relying on the perspective of Ibn Khaldun in looking at the phenomenon of education in Kuttab.

In order to achieve a degree of trust in this study, researchers conducted several data validity tests as follows: (1) Observation adequacy; (2) Triangulation; and (3) Conduct Member Check. In the preparatory stage, the researcher conducted preliminary research by studying Ibn Khaldun's conception of ideal education. Researchers collect and compare various references related to related topics. At the implementation stage, researchers went directly to the field, namely Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura to collect data related to the implementation of children's education implemented in related institutions. This stage begins with collecting all the information in the research location. In the completion stage, the researcher organizes the data obtained and carries out triangulation activities, namely checking data from various sources in various ways, and at various times to obtain data validity. After this triangulation activity was completed, the researcher then compiled a report on the results of data collection.

This research took place at Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura which is located at Jalan Srikaya no 10, Kemas Village, Kartasura District, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java Province. In this study, the informants who were the subjects were directly involved in learning activities at Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura, including the founders, administrators, and teachers at Kuttab Permata Qur'an Kartasura.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Biography of Ibn Khaldun and background of his thoughts**

Ibn Khaldun's full name was Abu Zaid 'Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Khaldun al-Hadhrami (27 May 1332 – 19 March 1406). He is a historian Muslim from Tunisia, and is often referred to as the founding father of historiography, sociology and economics (Irwin, 2018, p. 10). He witnessed the last days of the Andalusian Empire, lived in Morocco, visited Egypt and the East and had many students in all those parts. He is considered an eyewitness to the historical, political, social and educational changes that took place in Muslim and world history (Abdellah & Haridy, 2017, p. 4).

What was unique among the figures of his era was his ability to reason abstractly and generalize about social and historical phenomena (Irwin, 2018, p. 78). He is famous for his long introduction entitled *Al Muqaddimah* (The Introduction). The book provides another perspective on historical events, by analogy with cause and effect relationships and explains scientifically the principles behind the rise and fall of ruling dynasties or states (*dawlah*) or civilizations (*umran*) (Abdellah & Haridy, 2017, p. 4). Al-Sakhawi, a historian and Mamluk biographer notes that Ibn Khaldun spent most of his life teaching, although most of his career

was in politics and writing. He is known to teach in a way that differs from his contemporaries (Irwin, 2018, p. 152). He was never registered as a student at the madrasa. Ibn Khaldun studied from one teacher to another, and collected ijaza (permission to teach what he had learned from a particular teacher). For him, the content of a book is considered not mastered unless it has been commented on by the author, or by someone who has the authority to guide him in understanding the book. The learning he gets through a mix of dictation and commentary on what has been dictated (Irwin, 2018, p. 154). The high social status of his family allowed Ibn Khaldun to study with the best teachers in the Maghreb. Accompanied by his best teachers, he diligently studied various scientific disciplines, and studied the works of Avicenna, Ibn Rusd, Razi, Tusi, Plato, Aristotle to the Stoic philosophers (Vegneskumar Maniam, 2016, p. 115).

## **The Concept of Education according to Ibn Khaldun**

### *Education and learning process*

Ibn Khaldun saw education from a social point of view. To give birth to a cultured society and to preserve the future existence of society, education is needed (Komarudin, 2022, p. 23). Ibn Khaldun then formulated the goals of education into two, religious goals and scientific goals. Education must bring individuals to know their God, to be able to do good deeds for the hereafter and to be able to fulfill God's rights which are their obligations. Education must also lead a person to skills that enable the individual to manage his worldly life (Halim et al., 2017, p. 597).

All children have the right to access quality education, and its absence creates a cultureless and spiritually dry society. Children should be treated with kindness and respect, relaxed from overly restrictive rules, and allowed to explore (Elbih, 2020, p. 16).

Kindness and respect in an educational sense should guide students to make the right decisions, so that they are intrinsically satisfied by observing the positive outcomes of their choices. This satisfaction is expected to guide the choice of their actions in society. Ibn Khaldun does not recommend class management based on punishment and rewards, because children need rules that can show the best version of themselves. Although he did not completely eliminate the punishment method of classroom management, Ibn Khaldun did mention that punishment only breaks students' steadfastness, shows their inability to defend themselves and develops feelings of humiliation (Elbih, 2020, p. 6).

Loosen from binding rules does not mean free without rules. In the *Muqaddimah* he said that: when Harun Ar Rasyid sent his son Al-Amin to his teacher, he said: "Hi Ahmar: actually Amirul Mukmin has sent his heart and his heart to you, extend your hands to him, he must obey you, then be Amirul Mukmin for him, teach him to read the Al Qur'an, recite various news stories, narrate various poems, teach sunnahs, give insight into the position of the kalam and its beginnings, and forbid him from laughing much except when it's time. Don't let anyone pass unless you take advantage of one benefit that you take advantage of without making him sad and then it kills his heart, and don't tolerate him too much, then he feels comfortable with free time and becomes tame to him, straighten up as much as you can by approach and gentle,

In exploring, the child needs scientific guidance and instruction, because it advances the soul and makes a person more intelligent and allows them to develop noble qualities (Elbih,

2020, p. 11). Scientific instructions are taught as well as the basic principles of fiqh. For Ibn Khaldun, learning the basics of ushul fiqh is one of the largest, most important, and most useful disciplines of religious law. Because he builds a scientific construct of a person (Irwin, 2018, p. 82).

#### *Learning Materials and field specialization*

Ibn Khaldun believes that education has a direct effect on changes in individual thoughts and behavior. According to him, the best teaching method is to start with calculations, because it deals with clear and systematic knowledge. Learning calculations from the beginning of life makes a person accustomed to honesty. Calculation has a solid foundation and requires self-discipline, so that one becomes familiar with the truth and adheres to it methodically. This then forms the quality of a person's character (Vegneskumar Maniam, 2016, p. 7).

Apart from calculations, Ibn Khaldun also emphasized the importance of learning crafts, from writing to making bread. Writing deals with theoretical matters, scientific interests and helps turn imagination into verbal communication (Elbih, 2020, p. 7). Writing shows what is in the soul, and it is second only to oral expression. As for making bread is part of the life skill to live in society (Hardaker & Sabki, 2015, p. 883). There needs to be a balance of planting theoretical foundations and applied competencies through training, practice, studying and conducting research (Khanday, 2018, p. 4).

Ibn Khaldun divides knowledge into two categories; one that man is aware of by instinct (ascribed to primary science) while the other is acquired through education (acquired - secondary science). He explained; "God has offered man two useful things that man should make use of: the mind through which we can obtain the most useful and enduring needs, and the senses through which we can gain knowledge."

He also further divided the mental sciences into the philosophical and wisdom sciences. The science consists of four different branches of science, namely (1) logic (the science of reason to protect the mind from errors, and in the process of developing unknown facts), (2) physics (the study of elements that can be captured by the five senses, namely minerals, plants, and animals created from (elemental substances), celestial bodies, natural motion, and the soul from which the motion originates), (3) metaphysical science (the study of metaphysical and spiritual matters) and, (4) measurement science (consisting of four sciences namely mathematics, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy).

Regarding logic, Ibn Khaldun notes that logic is a useful tool, but not completely necessary in learning. There is a danger in relying too much on logic. Some people believe that logic is nature's means of apprehending truth, but become confused when doubts arise about its evidence, and they can hardly extricate themselves from (these doubts). Therefore, inspiration that comes from God will be much more effective in guiding students' understanding (Irwin, 2018, p. 155). One of his famous educational theories is the theory of "the human self". Ibn Khaldun connects the role of the mind with the role of the hands and explains the main task of the hands in serving the mind by making machines that are used as substitutes for the human body. Every action, whether material, spiritual, mental or physical must leave an impact on human beings. With repetition of this action will become a habit which in turn will become a specialist/expert (Elbih, 2020, p. 9).

The theory of “specialization and learning perfection” is one of the basics of Ibn Khaldun’s opinion about education and parenting. Ibn Khaldun said: “The perfect way of conveying an idea is eloquence. Fluency is the conformity of speech to the requirements of the situation. Once the requirements of a particular situation have been pointed out, various ways arise in which the mind moves between ideas with the help of various types of meanings (words). The various ways (mind) of moving in this way also have their own conditions and laws, which are like rules. They are made into (special) crafts and are called (science) styles.”

### *Teaching Method*

For Ibn Khaldun, the oral transmission of knowledge is primary, and not books. He mentioned that there were too many books, and to go through them all, would take him more than a lifetime. According to him, the best way of teaching is for the teacher to present a brief and simplified presentation of the problems arising from a particular subject and then discuss them again and again, in greater depth. Students should not be directly confronted with what is unclear and difficult, but directed slowly. Only one subject at a time is studied (Irwin, 2018, p. 155).

Learning must develop diverse experiences, he criticized the Muslim educational approach in Spain (Andalusia) and most other Muslim countries which at that time only emphasized learning the Qur’an, ignoring other disciplines such as language, poetry, and rhetoric (Vegneskumar Maniam, 2016, p. 115). His views confirm the common understanding of Ibn Al-Arabi’s opinion that children should be taught poetry and philology first, followed by arithmetic and then study the Qur’an, because this will make it easier for them to understand the Qur’an (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017, p. 6).

Ibn Khaldun criticized the idea of passive learning, or learning by rote. He advocates a student-centered pedagogy that values dialogue and discussion, problem posing and reflection, deductive reasoning, critical reading, and application of knowledge (Dajani, 2015, p. 310). A teacher must match his teaching methods to students’ level of understanding, provide students with a good foundation in subject matter, avoid memorizing, ensure adequate interaction with knowledge, and supplement theoretical learning with practical applications (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017, p. 7).

In certain sciences, especially mastery of Arabic language and literature, Ibn Khaldun emphasized the importance of having a lot of memorization for related scientific development. Ibn Khaldun believed that a person is what he has memorized; the better the quality of what has been memorized, the better it is for one’s soul. What is emphasized more is how much memorization becomes a source of creativity for the owner (Irwin, 2018, p. 159).

### *Teacher and student relationship*

Regarding the teacher-student relationship, Ibn Khaldun explained that teachers must get respect from their students (Vegneskumar Maniam, 2016, p. 8). In return, teachers must be moral leaders who respect students and believe in their ability to succeed. Teachers should encourage students to pursue their interests and provide them with support and guidance. Being a role model for students because of their virtues and students, in turn, it is hoped that students will grow to apply these virtues in society (Elbih, 2020, p. 12).

In the early part of his autobiography *Ta'rif*, Ibn Khaldun specifically lists his teachers to establish his credentials as a scholar of religious sciences. Cooperson notes: "To better understand pre-modern biographical writing, it is helpful to remember that its primary goal was often to place the individual on a tree of authority and a network of simultaneous relationships." In the culture that belonged to Ibn Khaldun, the transmission of knowledge orally from teacher to student was prioritized over reading books, so Ibn Khaldun realized the importance of an expanded and discursive list of teachers, and that was the tradition at that time (Irwin, 2018, p. 101).

## **The Implementation of Education Kuttab Permata Qur'an**

### *Education and learning process*

One of the educational concepts promoted by Kuttab Permata Al-Qur'an, like other kuttabs, is (1) adab before knowledge, (2) knowledge before charity, and (3) faith before Al-Qur'an (Sofanudin et al., 2021, p. 124). The integration between adab, science, charity, faith and the Qur'an is a picture of educational idealism that aspires to be implemented and integrated in the form of curriculum and teaching and learning practices there. Education is said to be successful if students can show good manners, including when studying the Qur'an. Through this principle, the Qur'an is not taught until good manners are shown by students. In other words educators do not teach science before students are truly educated in manners.

Not teaching knowledge before the conditions are met is in line with Ibn Khaldun's principle that knowledge which does not serve the purpose of human creation is considered useless. Like money, knowledge is not accumulated for its own sake but must be used. And the proper use of knowledge from a Muslim point of view is to help people to acknowledge Allah, to live according to Islamic law and to fulfill Allah's creation purpose (Halstead, 2010, p. 520). Good adab is one measure of the usefulness of received knowledge, and knowledge will be of value when adab accompanies it. As Ibn Mubarak said "a little knowledge accompanied by adab, is more valuable than a lot of knowledge without the inclusion of adab in it" (Ardiansyah, 2020, p. 43).

The definition of adab is often associated with traditions and culture accepted by certain communities. The values that develop in a society directly influence the definition and practice of adab itself (Husaini, 2013, p. 530). This is in line with the purpose of education according to Ibn Khaldun, which is to form a cultured society (Dajani, 2015, p. 78). Cultured in Kuttab's interpretation is civilized, in accordance with the rules that apply in society, without having to violate God's rules.

Religious standards remain above societal standards. When Allah mentions that the criterion for human glory is piety (QS. Al Hujurat [49]: 13), the etiquette that applies is respecting someone because of their piety and faith, not because of position, popularity, wealth or beauty. When the Qur'an mentions the glory of knowledgeable people (QS Al Fatir [35]: 28, QS. Al Imran [3]: 7 and QS. Al Mujadilah [58]: 11), then good adab is respecting people who are knowledgeable and respecting activities science (Husaini, 2013, p. 380).

Cultural standards based on Islamic terminology are a characteristic that distinguishes Islamic education from liberal education. Halstead (Halstead, 2010, p. 530) mentions that among

the differences between Islamic education and liberal education is that the form of society that is justified in liberal education is an open, pluralist, democratic society, while in Islam the best society is a society governed according to divine law.

The etiquette curriculum taught in Kuttab Permata Qur'an is still related to the life of students and the surrounding environment, including: (1) adab to Allah, (2) adab to the Prophet, (3) adab to parents, (4) adab to teachers, (5) ) adab to others (6) adab to the environment, (7) adab to knowledge and assembly of knowledge, and (8) daily manners which include eating and drinking habits, sleeping habits, defecating habits, and asking permission.

This is in line with what Ibn Khaldun said that education must be adapted to the needs of the individuals who receive it (Dajani, 2015, p. 80). And the needs of Kuttab children with an age range of 5-13 years are to know themselves and their surroundings. The introduction of Allah becomes the point of emphasis in the introduction of other elements. As a form of maintaining the natural nature of human creation, namely knowing their Lord/God. Getting to know Rabb is part of faith education which is a basic need for children, Abdullah Nashih Ulwan (Ullwan, 2020, p. xii) mentions several other needs, namely moral, physical, intellectual, mental, social and sexual education.

#### *Learning materials and field specialization*

The material studied by the Kuttab Permata Qur'an students is divided into 3 parts, namely qur'ani material, faith material and ulumul wasail. The three are not considered to be separate material, but each one becomes a wasilah (introductory) for the other. Like Qur'anic material to lead to an understanding of faith material, faith material is delivered with Qur'anic material, and ulumul wasail material becomes a tool for understanding Qur'anic material and faith. Qur'anic material includes reading, memorizing and understanding short surahs. Faith material includes material aqidah, adab, sirah and fiqh. Ulumul wasail includes Arabic, literacy, and simple arithmetic.

In terms of reading the Qur'an, Kuttab Permata Qur'an sets a fairly strict standard of reading. Santri are taught to be patient to meet the teacher's isnad standards. Read etiquette, how to read properly and correctly according to practice and repeated continuously so that students consistently read according to existing standards. This follows what Ibn Khaldun calls the perfection of learning (Elbih, 2020, p. 9). So it is not surprising that the students who are there have quality readings of the Qur'an, and this is where the attractiveness is offered by the school.

Equal reading standards do not only apply to all teachers and students, but also guardians of students. Every 2 weeks the school holds a wali santi assembly and is devoted to refining reading according to the standard isnad that has been certified by a competent sheikh to the teachers there. The school continues to try to synchronize teachers and students' guardians on this matter.

With regards to material skills or life skills, it seems that they haven't been worked out properly. Skill material is still an additional material and has not become the main material. It takes seriousness from the school to formulate skills material that suits the needs of students and the surrounding community, so that students have bargaining power and independence after completing their education.



### *Learning methods*

Learning at Kuttab Permata Qur'an is carried out classically with the halaqah system. Learning is still dominated by the dictation method and has not maximally developed discussion, reflection and deductive-inductive reasoning as in Ibn Khaldun's conception of good learning (Dajani, 2015, p. 301). Indeed, it is not an easy matter to simplify concepts and talk with children, especially matters relating to something abstract. These skills can be obtained by the teacher along with the teacher's experience in managing the class. So it is necessary to provide assistance to managers related to the development of teacher creativity in teaching.

Learning is still dominated by memorization and memorization processes owned by students have not been maximized properly as a source of their creativity and inspiration. It takes teachers who are truly competent who can do this. And one of the privileges of earlier scholars, including Ibn Khaldun, was that they could choose their own best teachers.

### *Teacher and student relationship*

The relationship between teachers and students at Kuttab Permata Qur'an is built on exemplary principles. Being a cultural value that lives there is a teacher must maintain his dignity (honor) in front of the students and guardians of students. The teacher sets a good example, and students get used to always asking their teacher for permission when they want to do something, even in small things like taking a drink, changing seats or when asking questions.

With regard to maintaining dignity in front of the santri guardians, the manager stipulates a rule that criticism of suggestions related to teachers may not be conveyed directly to the teacher. Criticism and suggestions can only be conveyed through the manager, and there is no obligation to always fulfill what is expected of the santri guardian. The deliberation mechanism remains the most important part in improving institutional governance.

## **Conclusion**

Ibn Khaldun provides a comprehensive perspective in viewing education from a social perspective. The suitability of education with the needs of society that continues to grow, allows for massive paradigm shifts in the educational process that were never imagined before. The task of educational institutions is to read this phenomenon and immediately adapt.

Learning should no longer be seen as a process of transferring knowledge, but how can education produce educated souls who are open-minded, and able to filter all forms of irregularities. Field specialization becomes more possible in the era of open access to information, because everyone can access knowledge and meet experts more easily. Education should provide the tools for that.

Need to improve in all fields, especially improving the competence of teachers as pioneers of change. The teacher is the opener of horizons and ignites the learning enthusiasm of his students, so the teacher must prepare in advance so that his competence is in accordance with the various demands of change.

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