



## PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Objectives** – This study aims to analyze the implementation of effective learning and instructional principles within the context of modern education.

**Method** - The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument (human instrument), supported by observation guidelines, interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

**Research Findings** - The success of learning is determined by the application of principles such as readiness, motivation, perception, active participation, individual differences, transfer, retention, and reinforcement through repetition. Field observations indicate that teachers who are able to foster intrinsic motivation and provide opportunities for active participation generate higher levels of student engagement. The literature review further reinforces that the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects creates more meaningful learning experiences. Additionally, Islamic education contributes spiritual, moral, and compassionate dimensions as reinforcing elements of holistic learning.

**Theory and Practical Implications** - Teachers need to balance their role as facilitators with differentiated instructional strategies while encouraging students' intrinsic motivation. The findings may also serve as a policy foundation for designing curricula that are responsive to 21st-century learning needs.

**Novelty** - The novelty of this study lies in the integration of modern learning principles with Islamic educational principles to develop a comprehensive and sustainable instructional model.

## INTRODUCTION

Education today faces significant challenges amid rapid digital technological advancements, globalization, and dynamic social change. The digital transformation in education—including the use of online learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and personalized learning—demands a deeper understanding of effective learning principles (Siemens, 2019). In the modern era, successful learning is determined not only by content delivery but also by educators' ability to understand individual learning styles, motivation, and the creation of a conducive learning environment. This aligns with the view that meaningful learning requires pedagogical innovation oriented toward learners' needs (Kim & Reeves, 2007).

Previous studies have demonstrated that learning principles play a crucial role in enhancing academic achievement and student engagement. For instance, Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasize the constructive alignment approach as a framework for ensuring coherence among learning objectives, activities, and assessment. However, many studies still focus primarily on cognitive aspects, while affective and motivational dimensions are often overlooked. In fact, motivational factors and students' emotional engagement have been shown to significantly support learning effectiveness (Schunk et al., 2014). This gap indicates the need for further investigation into how learning principles can be applied comprehensively within the context of modern education.



Moreover, prior research has largely emphasized the effectiveness of specific instructional methods, such as project-based or collaborative learning (Prince, 2004; Freeman et al., 2014). Nevertheless, studies linking learning principles to holistic learning outcomes—encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains—remain limited. Criticism may also be directed at the tendency of previous research to emphasize the instructional dimension of teachers rather than the active role of students in the learning process (Hattie, 2009). Therefore, there is an opportunity for research to address this gap by integrating learning principles that promote a balanced role between teachers and students.

This study offers novelty by re-examining learning principles within the context of contemporary education, particularly in responding to digitalization and social change. It focuses on how learning principles can be implemented to enhance students' overall engagement—cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically—so that learning becomes more meaningful and sustainable. Another novel contribution of this research lies in emphasizing the integration of students' intrinsic motivation in the application of learning principles, which has previously received limited attention in academic discourse.

The objective of this study is to analyze the implementation of effective learning and instructional principles in the context of modern education, highlighting the teacher's role as a facilitator and the student's role as an active participant in the learning process. The study also aims to identify strategies that can enhance students' motivation and engagement through the appropriate application of learning principles. A limitation of this research is its primary focus on theoretical and literature-based analysis, thus requiring further empirical field-based research to strengthen the findings.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of learning and instructional principles through literature review and observation of classroom practices. This approach was chosen because it enables a comprehensive exploration of meanings, perspectives, and experiences of research subjects (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Several previous studies have adopted similar approaches, such as Braun and Clarke (2019), who developed thematic analysis in qualitative educational research, and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who emphasized the importance of rich description in qualitative research in higher education. Therefore, this method is considered most appropriate for examining the implementation of learning principles within higher education contexts.

Data collection techniques in this study include documentation, observation, and semi-structured interviews. Documentation was conducted to review theories and principles of learning from books, academic journals, and instructional documents such as Semester Learning Plans (RPS), modules, and syllabi. Observations were carried out directly in classrooms to identify learning principles implemented by lecturers and students. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore lecturers' and students' understanding of the application of learning principles. The primary research instrument was the researcher as a human instrument, supported by observation guidelines, interview guides, and document analysis formats. Source and method triangulation techniques were applied to enhance data validity (Patton, 2015; Flick, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three main stages: (1) data reduction, involving the selection of information relevant to the research focus; (2) data display, presented in narrative, table, or matrix form; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, aimed at identifying dominant patterns and learning principles. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail documenting the research process. This study is grounded in major learning theories—behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and humanism—which served as the foundation for developing observation and interview instruments.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The teaching process is one of the primary activities and responsibilities of a teacher. In carrying out instructional activities, the principle of carefulness is essential and must be guided by specific principles of learning and instruction in order to act appropriately and effectively. Therefore, teachers need to study the principles of learning and instruction that can guide them in planning and implementing teaching and learning activities. These principles are expected to determine step-by-step procedures and provide direction for prioritizing teachers' actions.

In instructional planning, learning principles can reveal the boundaries and possibilities within the teaching process. During the implementation of instruction, the development of knowledge and understanding of learning principles can assist teachers in selecting actions that positively impact the teaching and learning process. Teachers are expected to develop the attitudes necessary to support the effective and efficient improvement of students' learning outcomes.

**Principles of Learning and Instruction.** This section consists of ten principles of learning. First, the Principle of Readiness. The learning process is influenced by students' readiness. Readiness refers to the condition of an individual that enables them to learn. There are various levels of readiness for specific tasks. A student who is not prepared to carry out a learning task may experience difficulty or even frustration. Readiness includes physical maturity and growth, intelligence, prior experience, previous learning achievements, motivation, perception, and other factors that enable a person to learn.

Second, the Principle of Motivation. Goals in learning are necessary for a directed process. Motivation is a condition that initiates activity, regulates its direction, and maintains persistence. Naturally, children are curious and inclined to explore their environment. This curiosity should be encouraged rather than hindered by imposing uniform rules on all children.

Attention plays a crucial role in learning and instruction. Without attention, learning cannot occur, either from the teacher as instructor or from the students as learners. Students' attention arises when the subject matter aligns with their needs. If the material is perceived as necessary and relevant, their attention to learning it will become stronger.

Psychologically, when an individual concentrates on something, other stimuli become less significant. As a result, the activity performed will be more accurate and effective. Learning materials will be more easily retained in memory, responses will be clearer and more stable, and recall will become easier.

Motivation also plays an important role in learning activities. A person will succeed in learning if the desire to learn emerges from within. Motivation includes two elements: (a) knowing what will be learned, and (b) understanding why it should be learned. These two elements form a solid foundation for successful learning. Without them, the learning process is unlikely to succeed.

When an individual possesses strong internal motivation, they can act without external encouragement; this is referred to as intrinsic motivation. Conversely, if intrinsic motivation is weak, external motivation—known as extrinsic motivation—is needed. Extrinsic motivation may come from teachers, parents, peers, books, and other sources. Both forms of motivation are necessary for successful learning, but the most important factor is the student's own ability to motivate themselves, supported by the teacher's skill in designing instruction that stimulates interest and enhances motivation.

Gage and Berliner define motivation as the force that energizes and directs a person's activity. Motivation can be compared to the engine and steering wheel of a car. It functions both as a goal and as a tool in learning. As a goal, motivation is one of the objectives of teaching. As a tool, it is a determining factor—like intelligence and prior achievement—that influences students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor success.

Motivation is a fundamental element of learning, and learning cannot occur without attention. An object is said to attract a child's attention when the child focuses on it spontaneously without deliberate effort. If spontaneous attention arises because the lesson is inherently interesting, such attention may not require additional motivation, although motivation and attention generally go hand in hand. In contrast, deliberate attention requires motivational support.

Third, the Principle of Perception and Activity. Individuals tend to believe according to how they interpret situations. Perception, as an interpretation of lived experiences, is a process by which individuals understand their environment. Each person perceives the world differently, and these perceptions influence behavior. A teacher can better understand students by being sensitive to how they perceive particular situations.

According to Thomas M. Risk, teaching is the guidance of learning experiences. Learning experiences occur when students actively respond to their environment. For example, when a child attempts to solve a problem, they must think systematically and follow certain steps. Likewise, acquiring skills requires physical engagement and coordination.

Students must always be active in learning, both physically and psychologically. Successful learning involves various forms of activity, not merely memorizing formulas or information, but engaging in actions such as reading, listening, writing, and practicing skills.

From a psychological perspective, knowledge must be acquired through observation and personal experience. The mind possesses its own energy and becomes active when driven by needs. In learning, students process and internalize information according to their will, ability, talent, and background, while teachers stimulate activity by presenting appropriate instructional materials.

Fourth, the Principle of Goals and Direct Involvement. Learning objectives must be clearly envisioned and accepted by students during the learning process. Objectives are specific targets to be achieved. Direct involvement is essential in instruction. As teaching and learning are interactive activities, both teachers and students must be actively engaged. This involvement includes both physical and non-physical participation, ensuring that students feel valued and significant in the classroom so that they can enjoy the learning process.

Edgar Dale states that effective learning occurs through direct experience. Learning through direct experience is not merely sitting in class while the teacher explains, but actively participating in the instructional process. The learning activities implemented by the teacher become meaningful learning experiences for students.

Fifth, the Principle of Individual Differences. The learning process varies for each individual. Instruction should consider individual differences within the classroom to facilitate the highest possible achievement of learning objectives. Teaching that focuses on only one level of target will fail to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, teachers must consider students' backgrounds, emotions, motivations, and abilities, and adjust instructional materials and learn tasks accordingly.

The learning process currently implemented in schools still tends to follow a classical model, meaning that one teacher is responsible for 30–40 students in a single classroom. Teachers often use the same instructional methods for all students and treat them uniformly without considering their socio-cultural backgrounds, abilities, or other individual differences. In reality, each student possesses unique characteristics and personal traits. Some students may be tall and thin, others short and overweight; some are agile, energetic, and cheerful, while others may be slow, introverted, or easily offended. These variations reflect the diversity of individual characteristics within the classroom.

To provide appropriate support so that students can effectively participate in the learning process, teachers must genuinely understand these individual characteristics. Furthermore, teachers must be capable of managing instructional activities comprehensively—from planning and implementation to the final stage of assessment or evaluation. Through proper instructional management, students from diverse backgrounds and varying abilities can participate fully in the learning process without experiencing significant disparities.

S. Nasution, as cited in Ahmad Rohani, proposes four strategies for adapting instruction to individual capacities: (1) Individualized instruction, in which students complete tasks at their own pace; (2) Additional assignments, where high-achieving students are given supplementary tasks beyond the general class assignments, while maintaining classroom unity; (3) Project-based instruction, allowing students to work on tasks aligned with their interests and abilities; (4) Ability grouping, where the class is divided into groups consisting of students with similar levels of ability. Individual differences must be a central consideration for teachers in preparing classroom instruction. Such differences constitute a fundamental principle of learning that cannot be neglected if the teaching and learning process is to achieve optimal success.

Sixth, the Principle of Transfer, Retention, and Challenge. Learning is considered meaningful when individuals are able to retain and apply what they have learned in new situations. Whatever is learned in one context will eventually be used in another. This process is known as *transfer*, while the ability to reuse learned material is referred to as *retention*. Knowledge and skills that have been learned and internalized can thus be applied by students in new and different contexts.

Kuantsu, as cited in Azhar Arsyad, states: “If you give a man a fish, he will have a single meal. If you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life.” This statement aligns with the principle of challenge in learning. Students will not feel challenged if they are merely spoon-fed information and simply receive what is given by the teacher. Without challenge, students may become indifferent and less creative, and the material learned will leave little impression. Therefore, instructional materials should be sufficiently challenging to stimulate strong motivation in students to overcome obstacles enthusiastically and effectively.

This is consistent with one of the key principles of the contextual teaching and learning approach, namely inquiry. Inquiry is a learning process based on searching and discovering through systematic thinking. Students are encouraged to seriously identify problems first and then independently discover solutions.

Seventh, the Principle of Cognitive Learning. Cognitive learning involves processes of recognition and discovery. It includes forming associations among elements, concept formation, problem identification, and problem-solving skills, which subsequently shape new behaviors. Thinking, reasoning, evaluating, and imagining are mental activities associated with cognitive learning. This process can occur at various levels of difficulty and requires diverse mental activities.

Eighth, the Principle of Affective Learning. Affective learning determines how individuals relate themselves to new experiences. It encompasses values, emotions, drives, interests, and attitudes. In many cases, learners may not be consciously aware of affective learning taking place. In fact, it forms the foundational basis of attitudes, emotions, motivations, interests, and personal dispositions.

Ninth, the Psychomotor Learning Process. Psychomotor learning determines how individuals control their physical movements. It involves both mental and physical aspects in coordinating bodily activity.

Tenth, the Principle of Repetition. One of the oldest principles of learning emphasizes the importance of repetition, as proposed in faculty psychology theory. According to this theory, learning involves training the mental faculties, including observing, perceiving, remembering, imagining, feeling, and thinking. Through repetition, these faculties develop and strengthen.

In the context of instruction, repetition refers to repeated practice carried out by students to reinforce learning outcomes. Reinforcement is understood both as improvement and expansion achieved through continuous practice.

Another theory emphasizing repetition is connectionism, pioneered by Edward Thorndike through his well-known *law of exercise*, which states that learning involves forming connections between stimulus and response, and repetition strengthens the likelihood of correct responses. Similarly, conditioning theory, developed further by Ivan Pavlov, asserts that behavior can be conditioned and that learning involves shaping responses to specific stimuli. Teaching, therefore, includes forming habits through repeated actions, which may be triggered not only by primary stimuli but also by associated stimuli.

Although these three theories do not fully explain all forms of learning, they remain relevant because repetition continues to be a fundamental basis of instruction. Stimulus–response connections become stronger with frequent use and weaken—or even disappear—if rarely practiced. Therefore, exercises, repetition, and habituation are essential components of effective learning.

The principle of feedback and reinforcement is further emphasized in operant conditioning theory, particularly the *law of effect*. Students will be motivated to learn when they receive positive results. Good outcomes serve as pleasant feedback and positively influence subsequent learning efforts. However, learning motivation is influenced not only by positive reinforcement but also by negative reinforcement.

For example, when students receive good grades on a test, they are motivated to study more diligently to achieve even better results; this represents positive reinforcement. Conversely, when students receive poor grades, they may fear failing or not advancing to the next level. This fear encourages them to study harder to avoid negative consequences; this is referred to as negative reinforcement, where students attempt to avoid unpleasant outcomes.

The primary function of repetition is to ensure that students master the required competencies of a subject. Students learn more easily and retain information longer when they repeatedly practice what they have understood. As stated by Allah in Q.S. Al-Isra (17:41):

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَكَّرُوا وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا

Indeed, We have repeatedly explained (Our warnings) in this Qur'an so that they may take heed. Yet it increases them in nothing except aversion (from the truth).

The verse clarifies the necessity of repetition so that human beings consistently remember what has been conveyed and practiced. Likewise, in the learning process, repeated practice aims to reinforce learning outcomes and to develop students' thinking skills in solving problems, both individually and collaboratively.

**The Application of Learning and Instructional Principles in the Context of Islamic Education.** The implementation of learning principles within Islamic education is highly significant, as it seeks to nurture individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and possess noble character. The following outlines several learning principles and their application in the context of Islamic education.

First, the Principle of Tawhid (Faith in Allah). All learning processes are directed toward strengthening closeness to Allah and understanding His creation. Subject matter is consistently connected to the manifestation of Allah's power; for example, scientific concepts are related to the greatness of His creation. As stated in Qur'an, Surah Al-Ikhlās (112:1):

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say (O Prophet Muhammad), 'He is Allah, the One'

This verse affirms that the evidences strengthening faith are clear and unequivocal. Allah declares—making it known to all creation—that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him, and that He has no partner. As stated in Qur'an, Surah Ali 'Imran (3:18):

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَابِئًا بِأَقْسَطِ لَأ إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah bears witness that there is no deity except Him, the Upholder of justice. Likewise, the angels and those endowed with knowledge (bear witness). There is no deity except Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

Allah begins the testimony with Himself, followed by His angels, and concludes with those endowed with knowledge (the scholars). This sequence underscores the virtue, nobility, and elevated status of knowledge and its possessors.

Second, the Principle of *Ta'lim* and *Tarbiyah* (Instruction and Character Education). Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but also the cultivation of moral values and character. The teaching of *akhlāq* (moral conduct) is central, not supplementary. Teachers serve as role models in attitude and behavior. According to Al-Ghazali, Islamic education strongly emphasizes moral formation, asserting that knowledge without ethics may lead a person astray. In his work *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, he explains that the primary objective of education is the formation of noble character—not merely the transfer of knowledge, but the transformation of the soul.

Third, the Principle of Dialogue and Interaction (*Shura* and *Tabayyun*). Learning encourages active interaction between teacher and student through discussion and question-and-answer methods. It emphasizes two-way communication and active student participation, as exemplified by Muhammad. Students are given space to think critically and express their opinions with proper manners (*adab*).

Fourth, the Principle of Individuality and Potential (*Fitrah*). Every child is born in a state of *fitrah* and possesses unique potential. Instruction should therefore be differentiated, adapting to students' abilities and interests, and encouraging the development of talents within the framework of *sharia*.

Fifth, the Principle of Compassion (*Rahmah*). The educational process must be grounded in compassion and gentleness. Teachers should treat students with love rather than harshness, creating a conducive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. This aligns with the statement of the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, who introduced the concept of a "curriculum of love," emphasizing that education should cultivate mutual respect and affection rather than exclusivism or hostility toward others.

Sixth, the Principle of Practice and Habituation (*Amaliyah*). Knowledge must be practiced and internalized until it becomes part of daily life. This includes habituating congregational prayer, remembrance (*dhikir*), and daily etiquette. Practical application is emphasized in subjects such as *fiqh*, morality, and Islamic economics.

Seventh, the Principle of Continuity (*Istiqamah*). Learning and self-development must be continuous. Character formation requires sustained guidance. Assessment should not be limited to cognitive achievement but should also encompass spiritual and social dimensions.

**Implications of Learning Principles for Teachers and Students.** Understanding and effectively applying learning principles has significant implications for both teachers and students. These principles serve as guidelines for creating a conducive learning environment and fostering meaningful learning experiences.

Implications for Teachers. a) Attention and Motivation. Teachers should design engaging and motivating instructional strategies. This may include the use of interactive media, varied teaching methods, positive feedback, and the creation of a pleasant learning environment. Teachers must also understand and respond to students' needs and interests to enhance motivation.

b) Student Activity. Teachers should actively encourage and facilitate student participation through assignments, group discussions, presentations, and practical activities that involve students directly in the learning process. Opportunities should also be provided for students to explore their own ideas and perspectives.

c) Direct Involvement. Instructional activities should promote students' direct engagement, such as through project-based learning, problem-based learning, and practical applications that enable students to apply their knowledge and skills. Students should also be given opportunities to make decisions and take responsibility for their learning outcomes.

d) Repetition. Teachers must recognize the importance of repetition in enhancing understanding and retention. Strategies may include spaced review, practice exercises, and peer discussions. Students should also be given opportunities to revisit material using methods that are most effective for them.

e) Challenge. Appropriate challenges should be provided to stimulate motivation and interest. Challenges must align with students' developmental levels and should not lead to frustration. Teachers should support students in overcoming difficulties and learning from mistakes.

f) Individual Differences. Teachers must understand and respond to individual differences in learning styles, cognitive abilities, and backgrounds. Differentiated and personalized instruction enables students to learn in ways that are most effective for them. Teachers should also allow students to choose learning approaches that best suit their needs.

Implications for Students. The implications for students can be outlined in several key aspects: a) Attention and Motivation. Students need to recognize the importance of attention and motivation in the learning process. They should develop the ability to focus on instructional material and cultivate intrinsic motivation to learn. Additionally, students are encouraged to actively seek information and learning resources that are engaging and relevant to their interests.

b) Active Participation. Students are expected to be actively involved in the learning process. This includes participating in discussions, delivering presentations, and engaging in practical

activities. They should also demonstrate the courage to ask questions, explore ideas, and share their thoughts with classmates.

c) Direct Involvement. Students should engage directly in learning activities by completing assignments, solving problems, and collaborating with peers. They must take responsibility for their learning outcomes and continuously seek ways to deepen their understanding.

d) Repetition. Students need to understand the importance of repetition in strengthening comprehension and retention. They should allocate time to review material, complete practice exercises, and discuss lessons with peers. Identifying and applying the most effective review strategies for themselves is also essential.

e) Challenge. Students should embrace challenges to enhance their motivation and interest in learning. They need to be willing to try new approaches, solve complex problems, and learn from their mistakes. Developing resilience in overcoming challenges is crucial for achieving learning goals.

f) Individual Differences. Students should acknowledge individual differences in learning styles, cognitive abilities, and backgrounds. They are encouraged to identify learning methods that work best for them and to seek assistance when necessary. At the same time, they should respect the diversity of their classmates and foster a supportive learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, this study concludes that the principles of learning and instruction play a crucial role in creating effective and efficient teaching processes. The research successfully identified and elaborated on ten primary principles: Readiness, Motivation, Perception and Activity, Goals and Direct Involvement, Individual Differences, Transfer and Challenge, as well as Cognitive, Affective, Psychomotor, and Repetition principles. These principles are not only relevant in general educational contexts but are also specifically applicable within Islamic education.

The implementation of principles such as Readiness and Motivation can be realized through engaging strategies aligned with students' needs, while the principles of Direct Involvement and Challenge emphasize the importance of project-based and problem-based learning. Furthermore, the principle of Repetition—reinforced by educational theories such as Thorndike's Law of Exercise and supported by Qur'anic teachings—highlights the importance of practice and reinforcement for better retention. These findings clearly address the research question concerning the practical application of learning and instructional principles in educational settings.

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