

Imam-Al-Bukhari (RA) and his Principles of the Pedagogy (Teaching Methodology)

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Abstract

Imam-al-Bukhari RA (194-256 A.H) was born in Bukhara on 18th Al-Shawal. His full name is Muhammad Bin Ismail Bin Ibrahim Bin Mugheera, his patronormic is Abu Abdullah and his appellation is "Bukhari". He is among those great benefactors of the (Muslim) "Umma", the fruit of whose diligence and struggle is benefited by all till this day. He was blessed with retentive memory and competence in the science of Sunna'h (Hadith). Reading or studying seem to be food for his mind as teaching and learning was his inherent quality, reporting and writing Hadith as his daily business. He made people write numerous Hadith. This article, by analyzing the teaching methodology of Imam-Al-Bukhari, will guide teachers towards means and ways to bring improvements in their teaching techniques. Likewise, students would be able to know the methods used by the great Imam, the roots of which are found in the era of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). They will better understand the methods of the Prophet (SAWS), who was sent as a teacher for the entire humanity. We can extract and deduce the principles of teaching methods of Imam-Al-Bukhari (RA) discussed in his own words from the book "Sahih Bukhari" in chapter "Kitab-al-ilm"-the personality who reported great number of Hadith and holds an alleviated position.

Keywords: Imam-Al-Bukhari, Teaching Principles, Teaching Techniques, Sahih-Al-Bukhari, Teachers, Students

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Introduction

The position of Imam Bukhari RA and his teaching experiments are used as proverbs in literature. He became the teacher of the teachers. It means that teaching principles of Imam-Al-Bukhari (RA) hold an exemplary position i.e. a model in the educational arena for educators and students.

It is, therefore, essential for us that we may conduct research on the teaching principles and methods of this great exemplary educator, so that teachers of the Islamic institutions and other contemporary centres of learning may get acquaintance with his great style. These methods may be applied in order to make teaching technique more beneficial and effective.

Motivation of the students before the commencement of lecture

One of the most important educational principles of Imam Bukhari (R.A) is the attitude of attracting the students towards new lesson through using different inspiring techniques. Teachers have to motivate his students with the help of his previous academic experience and educational tributes. That is why Imam Bukhari, in his book Sahih-al-Bukhari, has included a chapter under caption, “The Importance of knowledge”.¹ He included this chapter to inspire educators and prospective educators to make them aware of the importance of education.

No question asking during the lecture

If a student happens to ask a question from his teacher, he may reply him after having completed his lecture. Asking question during the lecture is against the norms of conversation and teaching. The students, at first should not ask question during the lecture but if he happens to ask by mistake, the teacher cannot be blamed for not answering him during the lecture.

To substantiate the above proposition, Imam Bukhari has presented the Hadith of villager (Aarabi). It is narrated that when the villager put questions during the speech, the Prophet (PBUH) answered him after he (PBUH) had finished his discourse.

This is very much pertinent to note that such question which is of no emergent nature and enormous importance should not be put during the speech of an educator. But if it is of emergent nature and extremely important the same can be asked even during the on-going lecture and it also becomes obligatory for the speaker or teacher to reply the same.²

As earlier discussed when villager put questions to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) during his (PBUH) sermon he (PBUH)

came down of the chair, answered the concerned villager and then completed his (PBUH) sermon³

Not to scold or taunt a questioner

Through the said Hadith and from the essence of the chapter discussed above Imam Bukhari (RA) intends to educate the teacher how to behave if a question is put to him at a time when he is upset or angry.⁴ If a teacher is asked any question in such a situation as mentioned above, he should remain content and should know that there is no need of scolding or taunting the questioner. Teacher should first dispose off his urgent business or issue and then reply the questioner, as manifested by the Prophet (PBUH) himself.⁵

Not to be enraged on the (repeated) queries of the students

In the “Hadith-e-Aaa’rabi” probably the villager could not understand the meaning of “Ida’at-e-amanat” (Wastage of trust- or entrusted thing), hence he asked as to how did you waste it?⁶ This proves that if a pupil could not comprehend a certain point, he can ask a question and the teacher should not be enraged on this. However, if the question appears to be for testing teachers academic level, his enagement is justified.⁷

To give lecture loudly

The teacher should deliver his lecture loudly. Sometimes, some of the educators deliver their lectures with low and moderate voice, which causes difficulty for students in hearing, or they never happen to hear it. For the re-approval of this assertion, Imam Bukhari (RA) presented the narration (Hadith) of Ibn-e-Umar (RA). He said that he was accompanying the holy Prophet (PBUH) in a journey; he added that “as the time of prayer was too near, we were making ablutions in great hurry. For that purpose we started massage of our feet with our wet hands. On this the Prophet (PBUH) shouted and said, “Be wilderness and destruction for the feet (Heels) from fire (of the hell)” He (PBUH) uttered these words two or three times.⁸ From quoting this Hadith, Imam Bukhari intends to update the teachers to narrate an academic or educational point with loud voice so that all people may listen to it.⁹

It is also necessary for teachers to make their lessons interesting

If teachers want to present an issue before the students to arouse their curiosity, so it is permissible for them.¹⁰ Imam Bukhari (RA) presented an act of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as a proof, which has

been narrated by Ibn-e-Umar. He said “The prophet (PBUH) said that there is a tree among the trees, the leaves of which do not fall off (and remain ever green) that tree is just like faithful (Momen). Somebody may tell me which one is that tree? Attention of the people diverted to the trees of the forest. Abdullah Bin-Umar (R) says that it came to my mind to tell him (PBUH) that the said tree is the date tree. But (being younger) I could not name the same due to shyness to speak in front of elders. On this, companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) ‘ Said O Prophet (PBUH) may you tell us what is the tree?” “ He said” that is date tree”.¹¹

Educational Evaluation of Students

Imam Bukhari (RA) has set a chapter under the name, “To assess the educational level of his companions the Imam (Prophet or any other leader) can place questions before them.”¹² It means that a teacher can ask any question to evaluate students’ intellectual level. Under the caption of this chapter, Imam Bukhari has presented the narration of Abdullah Bin Umar (RA) as a proof. It means that this Hadith is reported repeatedly, but the topics are different and their narrators are also different. In the former chapter, this Hadith was first reported as an example for making lesson interesting. While in the later place, the same text was reported regarding assessing intellectual capability of students. From “Tarjumat-al-Bab”, Imam Bukhari means to inform the teacher to give test to their students off and on to assess their standard of learning. Asking questions from the students by the teachers is not only permissible, but rather better so that they remain attentive and not to waste time in negligence.¹³

Various Methods of the Teaching

Imam Bukhari (RA) has hinted towards two types of teaching methods. One is that the teacher may deliver lecture and the students may listen to it silently. The second one is that the students may read and the teacher may listen to it. Imam Bukhari (RA) says that some of the Hadith Narrators have presented the narration of “Damam Bin-Tha’alaba (RA) as a proof regarding presenting reading before a teacher (scholar). It is said that he (RA) asked the Prophet (SAWS) that “you have been directed by Allah that we should offer prayers. On this the Prophet (PBUH) replied in affirmative. Subsequently “Damam” said that it is just like reading before the prophet (PBUH)? This message was, then taken by Damam to his community and they accepted the same as sufficient proof for them.”¹⁴

Etiquettes of the class room

Imam Bukhari describes two Etiquettes of a class room in the chapter under caption “The one to sit so as to fill (Vacant places) in the meeting place” (Bab-o-Mun Qa’ada Haitho yantahi bih-al-majlas)¹⁵. The one is that if students are in greater number in the class room so wherever a person finds the vacant place he should sit down there and if it is intended to sit in the place nearer to the teacher then he should come earlier. The 2nd Rule and etiquette is that if some place is vacant in the first rows because of the fact that those who came earlier have not occupied the same, so the late comers can go forward to sit by leaping across the already seated individuals. Though leaping across has been forbidden, yet in this case those having come earlier themselves have mistakenly let the seats remain vacant which need to be filled.¹⁶

With the help of a chapter under caption “Saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that mostly the one to whom the Hadith is being delivered happens to be remembering more narrations of the prophet than the one who has listened the same Hadith directly from the Prophet (Bab-o-Qawl-Al- Nabi) Ruba-Mablaghin Aw’a mein Sam-en¹⁷ in this situation the students still should not show hesitation to listen to his teacher and gain knowledge from him. Because from this saying of the Prophet (PBUH) it is evident that he wanted to persuade the people to learn from even those who are less knowledgeable than the students.

Teachers should teach without discrimination

From the above quoted Hadith i.e “Rubba Bablagh-in, Aw’a min same, ain¹⁸” it has also become evident that the teacher should not refuse to teach a person whom he believes to possess more knowledge than the other. Sometimes a pupil surpasses his teacher in cognition of comprehension and he may draw such points from the lesson which may be hidden from the teacher.

The Hadith “Innama-Al-Ilm-o-bitta`allumi¹⁹” discussed under the caption “Tarjumat- al – Bab” reveals that knowledge can be gained through learning from others. No one can become a scholar through self study. All should be educated by the teachers. This proposition is nothing but a deception that without taking lessons from teacher knowledge can be gained through reading key notes and helping books.²⁰ Based on the Hadith, the Jurists have written that the person who studies books himself only and does not get training from experts, cannot be entrusted the assignment of verdict issuing.²¹

Teaching gradually and in phases

Under this caption, Imam Bukhari (RA), while defining the scholars and godly people, said “Rabbani is that person who teaches the smaller issues before the greater ones.”²² This explains the principles of the teaching of Imam Bukhari become evident i.e. to proceed from brief to detail (Explanation), from easy to difficult and from little to much more, slowly and gradually. This is very important for teaching process that the teacher should not confuse his students in the complicated matters of knowledge at beginning, so that they may remain locked up in the same, but to teach them easy things first so that their desire for knowledge and encouragement remains intact.²³

To keep the psychology of students in mind while teaching

It is essential for a teacher to keep the psychology of students in mind while teaching them a lesson. The lesson should neither be so lengthy to make them bore nor so short that the weak students may not understand anything. Pointing to this matter, Imam Bukhari has set a chapter under the above caption “The Prophet (SAW) used to advise people with great reverence and concession; and would educate them in a manner that they may not be irritated”.²⁴ Hazrat Anas (R) narrates that the messenger of Allah (SAW) said “Facilitate people with easiness (in their life) not to hate the people, rather please them”.²⁵ Ibn-Massood says “The messenger of Allah (SAWS) used to fix some days for giving us advice. The fact that we might become worried, he (SAW) would not give us a piece of advice every day”.²⁶

The best method of teaching is that while teaching, the teacher may say some verses or a poem to refresh the students and make them avoid boredom. The Prophet (SAW) himself would make a joke during any academic discussion.²⁷

It is derived from the “Comprehension “(Fahm-um-Fi-Al-Ilm)²⁸ that people are different in this regard. Someone is intelligent, the other one is average and there is one more who is dull minded or dunce. Hence, the teacher must take care of all. The best teacher is that who sorts out all such students and distributes them in different groups or sections to teach them separately or he may give one lecture according to the mental level of the above-mentioned three groups.²⁹

Adult Education

Imam Bukhari, reporting a saying of Hadrat Umar (RA) has set a chapter denoting that the people should understand Deen before

they are appointed the leaders of their tribes. “The word,”Siwad” is taken from “Siwad-al-lihyah” which means to gain knowledge before the hair turn white.³⁰ Imam Bukhari Says “from this saying of Hadrat Umar it should not be mistaken as not to get education after turning of a person elder or becoming an elder or leader of a tribe (an aged man)” while the companions of the prophet (PBUH) used to get education even in their old age.³¹

So gaining knowledge for the individuals in the middle age of their life or acquiring education is not prohibited. They should also be taught.

To hold the debate among the students

Imam Bukhari (RA) narrating the story of “Hadrat Ibn-e-Abbas and Hur Bin Qais (RA)”. In this context Hadrat Abbas won the competition from Hur Bin Qais.³² Imam Bukhari (RA) wants to derive this rule from it that the teacher, sometimes, should hold a debate on a topic among the students in the classroom, so that the students may be motivated and become alert for listening to lecture.

During the lecture mentioning the examples for the students comprehension

Imam Bukhari (RA) in chapter “Man Alima Wa Alamma” has reported through Abu Musa Al-Ashari saying the Prophet (SAW) said that Allah (SWT) has sent me with ilm and guidance.³³ The example which Prophet (SAW) illustrated is of a severe rain (while it rains). This rain on smooth land will lead to absorption of rain water and as a result will bear greenery and crops, but some land is very tough and rough which contains water on its upper surface. “Allah wants to make people benefit from it. They drink water from it and get their fields watered but some pieces of land are so smooth, which neither retain the water nor grow greenery. The former is the example of that person who learnt deeni science and made others benefit from it. He made them benefit from what I have brought here. The other is the example of that person who did not learn deeni science and did not move for that furthermore, the last one did not accept my message and mission”.³⁴

What even science and wisdom that Allah bestowed upon the Prophet (SAW), he explained the same with very good examples. He (PBUH) said that there are always three types of people available in the society. One is the group of those people who benefitted themselves and made other also benefit. The Second group is of those who did not benefit themselves but let the

other benefit from them. These two groups are, however, better than the third one. The third group is of those people who did not even give due heed to the instructions (DAWAH) of the Holy Prophet (SAW).³⁵

From this example we can understand the procedure and methodology of teaching used by Imam Bukhari, i.e., to give example while teaching, as the Prophet (SAW) used to do so to make the companions understand a cluster of one thousand words.

To give assignments to the students to do that at the home

Imam Bukhari (RA) is of the view that the teacher should not remain satisfied on the completion of teaching duty only, but he should make the students learn the lesson by heart and transfer the same to others to make the entire process of teaching and learning as continuous. The teachers should not commit any negligence in making the students understand the lesson and impart the same to others.³⁶

Sometimes the teacher may show displeasure during class

Imam Bukhari has established a chapter under caption “Baab-al Ghadab-fi al-mauezat-wa-al-taulum”.³⁷ From this, the Imam wants to prove that keeping in view narration like “Facilitate people and do not make them annoyed” may not make one think that no anger can be exhibited before students. At appropriate times showing displeasure is not only permissible but a pleasant act.”³⁸

To observe moderation in the teaching

Moderation may be adopted while teaching a lesson. If a lesson is extremely lengthy, the students may fall prey to wearisome and boredom. Imam Bukhari has reported a Hadith of the Holy Prophet (SAW) which says “O People: you spread hatred among themselves. The individual who offers prayers before his fellow Muslim, he should make it brief. From this sentence we can assess that the teacher should not prolong his lecture so much that it may create displeasure or hatred among the students”.³⁹

To take care of ill and helpless students in the class

Keeping in view this point Imam-Al-Bukhari has reproduced the above-mentioned Hadith related to “Kitab-al-Salah” (Chapter on prayer) in the Chapter “Kitab-al-Ilm” (Chapter of knowledge). In this Hadith, the Prophet (SAW) makes the prayer leader aware of prolonging the prayer and says “Because there may be an ill, a weak old and helpless” person among those who are offering

prayer.⁴⁰ From this we can deduce that care should be taken of the patient, weak and helpless students in the class.

To deliver lecture slowly and steadily

The teaching pedagogy of Imam-Al-Bukhari is that “the teacher should deliver his lecture slowly (giving chance to students for digesting the same), clearly and in proper tune. That is why he set a chapter under caption, “Man aada al-hadith, salasan, liyoufhama anho.” (the one who repeats “Hadith” three times so that the student) understands it.”⁴¹

In this chapter Imam Bukhari has reported the Hadith of Anas (RA) as a proof:

“Whenever, the Prophet (PBUH) would talk, he would repeat (the words) three times to give chance to the listener to learn it. The Prophet (PBUH) did not use to repeat each and every saying three times everywhere, but this would happen in such cases where there would still be some confusion. For example, when the Prophet would be sure that the listener could not understand his words.⁴² Similarly, He (SAW) would make repetitions in such situations when the aim would be transmission and education or the gathering was greater. When the gathering would be huge and his (SAW) voice would not reach all of them, he (SAW) would repeat it.⁴³

Conclusion

- To educate people, the training of the teacher is very essential. The teacher who is not properly trained, he cannot make students understand.
- The narrations of Hadith, “Mufasssereen” and the religious scholars of Islam have established such principles, rules and regulations for education and training, the importance of which is recognized in this era too.
- Imam Bukhari has no doubt, presented a complete viable method for the training of teachers in the light of the Hadith of the Prophet (SAW).
- This orthodox methodology though has been facilitating the succeeding generations to make improvements in their curricula and schemes of studies, since long, yet very small members of the European educators recognise the same to be as a beacon for them.
- The study will open a gate way towards the recognition of the fact that the methodology used by our great imams like Imam al Bukhari, is of the importance as that of the

renowned European educators. Also, his method was also based on the modern psychological and scientific foundations.

- The article may prove helpful to make the readers feel the need of conducting study on important researchers to ascertain the realities reported regarding Imam-al-Bukhari. This research may result in enlisting his name among the numbered educators as claimed to be only those hailing from the West.

Notes & References

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- ¹³ *Kashf-Al-Bari*, Vol: 3, p.52,
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