

of the Creator.

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## MUḤAMMAD IBN SHAḤNŪN: AN EDUCATIONALIST AND A FAQĪH

*Sha'ban Muftah Ismail*

Muḥammad ibn Shanūn's full name was Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abi Sa'id Shanūn ibn Sa'id ibn Ḥabīb ibn Ḥasan ibn Hilāl ibn Bakkar ibn Rabi'ah Attanukhi. His grandfather Sa'id ibn Ḥabīb arrived at Al-Qayrawān<sup>1</sup> by the middle of the second Hijri century. His son Abdus Salām came to be nicknamed, Shanūn which is the name of a bird that is famous for its sharp vision. Shanūn's acute intelligence and comprehension enabled him to acquire knowledge early in his life at Al-Qayrawān and then further his studies in Tunis, the capital, and in Egypt where he became known and established closer contact with Mālikī School of Thought. Shanūn had studied under the supervision of 'Abdur Raḥmān Ibn al-Qāsim (died in 191 A.H.), one of the closest companions of Imām Mālik. In the year 233 A.H., Shanūn was appointed Qāḍī of the Ifriqiah region which then included Tunisia, parts of East Algeria and Western Libya.

Throughout his life, Shanūn promoted and worked for the spread of the Mālikī School of Fiqh for it to become the predominant school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*) in Ifriqiah. He passed away in the year 240 A.H. and in his lifetime, he could not meet with or study under Imām Mālik. When he was asked about the reasons for that, he answered that the reason was "the lack of money, financial resources...". However, he qualified as a great follower, student and advocate of Mālik's thoughts, opinions and contributions in all fields and branches of knowledge.

### His Early Age

Muḥammad, the son of Shanūn, the subject of this article, was born in the year 202 A.H., in a home of knowledge that became one of the centers in Al-Qayrawān which itself was the center of the Mālikī School of Fiqh and Islamic Thought. Muḥammad ibn Shanūn showed a great aptitude for learning at an early age, and his father was his first teacher. His father sent him to *kuttāb* (Qur'ānic school) to learn Al-Qur'ān and Arabic writing, and wrote to the teacher requesting him to teach his son in the following manner:



Teach my son by praising him (appreciating) and speaking softly to him. He is not the type of person that should be trained under punishment or abuse. I hope that my son will be unique and rare among his companions and peers. I want him to emulate me in the seeking of knowledge...<sup>2</sup>

Shanūn took a really serious interest in his son's intellectual and comprehensive growth as he was incredibly sharp and intelligent. His father was extra careful about his son's well-being as he was worried that his son might have a short life to enjoy, although many educationists may question the level of care and follow up demonstrated by the father. One can easily say that it all paid off very successfully. We leave further discussions and elaborations, on the "technical advice and care of Shanūn" to another study. Muḥammad ibn Shanūn was very well prepared academically and intellectually. He was able to read and discuss his father's books and writings in front of many other scholars and learners. He debated with his father on several topics on occasions. Besides his father, he received knowledge and learning from a number of scholars in Ifriqiah such as: Mūsā ibn Mu'āwiyah Assamadihī (died in 225 A.H.), 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Yahyā Al-Madany (died in 240 A.H.) and 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Ḥusayn Al-Yahsūbī (died 226 A.H.). When Muḥammad ibn Shanūn became very knowledgeable in Shari'ah sciences, which were first taught in Al-Qayrawān before many other Islamic cities, his father invited him to travel and to go for Ḥajj and to seek more knowledge and experience from the scholars in Al-Ḥijāz, Miṣr (Egypt) and Tarabulus (Tripoli) which had quite a number of *ruwāh* (narrators) and many scholars of the Mālikī School of Fiqh.

Before ibn Shanūn embarked on his academic trip, his father, his first teacher provided him with a piece of advice that is worth following. Shanūn, the father said to his son:

Work hard, do your utmost in seeking knowledge and if you come across an issue or a subject, narrated to Mālik ibn Anas, that you have not heard or learned from your teacher (Shanūn, the father), do take it and learn that it was a mistake (failure) on my part.<sup>3</sup>

This golden piece of advice, given by Shanūn introduces a number of invaluable academic ethics and morals that are worth emulating and adopting. If this was the behaviour and the discipline of his first teacher who said, "when you find your teacher is deficient in a branch of knowledge go ahead and learn it from someone else...", then it is no wonder that ibn Shanūn reached that high level of academic and intellectual attainment. How many educators today have ever tried to emulate this behaviour? How many of us are willing to adopt it?

#### His Academic Journey

After performing his Ḥajj, ibn Shanūn travelled to Al-Madīnah where he came in close contact with Abū Mus'ab ibn Abī Bakr Az-Zuhary (died 242 A.H.) one

of Imām Mālik's closest colleagues and companions. Abdur Raḥmān 'Uthmān Ḥijāzī (1406-A.H./1986 C.E.) documented a beautiful story where ibn Shanūn met Az-Zuhary at Masjid al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah when the latter was lecturing and was surrounded by a large group of students.<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad ibn Shanūn was able to tell a joke to the congregation and when Az-Zuhary heard it he adjusted his sitting position and asked:

- Z: .Where are you from?  
S: I am from Ifriqiah.  
Z: Which part of Ifriqiah?  
S: I am from Al-Qayrawān  
Z: Then you should be either Muḥammad ibn Shanūn or Ibn Libdah (died 261 A.H.) as this sort of humour may only come from the people of Al-Qayrawān.

Az-Zuhary, who was at the old age of his life, stood up and greeted ibn Shanūn and accommodated him throughout his stay in Madīnah.

This scholarly-oriented trip increased and enriched the knowledge and experience of Muḥammad ibn Shanūn. Upon his return to Al-Qayrawān he established his own study circle along with his father's.

Besides being a prolific writer ibn Shanūn was one of the top authorities in the Mālikī School of Thought. Al-Khashnī said that in this school ibn Shanūn was among the most knowledgeable and learned scholars, and in other schools he was among the top and most qualified orators. ibn Shanūn, in Al-Khashnī's view, was very rich in his knowledge as he authored a large number of books and writings. While reviewing two books on the Mālikī School of jurisprudence, one written by ibn 'Abdus and the other written by ibn Shanūn, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥakam said that the first book had presented the knowledge of Mālik in a true fashion while ibn Shanūn's book represented the ability and the depth of a scholar who was able to travel extensively and dwell in knowledge profoundly.<sup>5</sup>

#### His Intellectual and Academic Contributions

Ibn Shanūn presented an invaluable collection of Islamic knowledge that has significantly contributed to the whole body of Islamic knowledge; a collection that has covered over 180 subjects and titles in over forty disciplines. The following are a sample of ibn Shanūn's works:

1. *Risālah fi adab al-munāzarah* (2 volumes).
2. *Kitāb al-musnad fi'l-ḥadīth*.
3. *Risālah fi's-sunnah*.
4. *Kitāb al-Jāmi'*: a huge reference (book) that contains a collection of Fiqh and topics on Knowledge. This reference contains sixty chapters (sections) and is yet to be located or found.
5. *Kitāb al-ibāhah*.



6. *Kitāb al-ashribah.*
7. *Kitāb al-imāmah*
8. *Kitāb al-imān wa al-radd 'alā ahl al-shirk.*
9. *Risalah fi man sabba al-naby* (p.b.u.h.).
10. *Kitāb taḥrīm al-nabīdh.*<sup>6</sup>
11. *Kitāb tafsīr al-muwatṭā* (4 volumes).
12. *Kitāb al-ḥujjah 'alā al-qadariyyah.*
13. *Kitāb al-ḥujjah 'alā al-naṣārā.*
14. *Kitāb al-radd 'alā ahl al-bid'ah* (3 books).
15. *Kitāb al-radd 'alā al-fikriyyah.*
16. *Kitāb fi'l-radd alā al-Shāfi'i wa ahl al-'Irāq* (5 books).
17. *Kitāb al-tārīkh* (6 volumes).
18. *Kitāb gharīb al-ḥadīth* (3 volumes).
19. *Kitāb ṭabaqat al-'ulamā* (7 volumes).
20. *Kitāb al-siyār* (20 books).
21. *Kitāb adab al-mu'alimīn.*
22. *Kitāb al-warā'* which some people have counted to have covered two hundred chapters.<sup>7</sup>

For the purpose of this article we may consider ibn Shanūn's book *Kitāb adab al-mu'alimīn* as the most important reference. How did this educational, encyclopedic reference come about? What were the academic bases that enabled ibn Shanūn to come up with such an invaluable book?

To help address these questions, one should know more about the educational and academic milieu that once existed in Al-Qayrawān, the home town of ibn Shanūn and in the North African region as a whole. This should be considered in the light of the educational changes that took place in the region too. The political changes in the Islamic capital of Dawlah al-Khilāfah should not be overlooked or ignored.

### A Historical Background

Before we present this great book of ibn Shanūn it is quite important, in our view, to take a glance at the educational situation in Ifriqiah during the time in which the book was written, the third Hijri century. During and after the years of the conquest of North African region (*fath bilād al-Maghrib*), hundreds and thousands of Berbers, the indigenous people of the region, had embraced Islam and joined the Muslim society as citizens, soldiers, etc. This fact necessitated the teaching of the Qur'ān, the Prophet's Sunnah and other educational books that would strengthen and deepen their level of knowledge about Islam. These programmes were needed to help the new Berber Muslims assimilate in the Muslim life and contribute positively to the development around them.

Education was basically taking place in the mosques (*masājid*), Qur'ānic schools (*katātib*, sing. *kuttāb*): These are Islamic education institutions that are normally connected to and supervised by the mosque management directly or indirectly. As is still practised today in many schools of this type, the learners

would be sitting on the floor surrounding their teacher, most of the time in a half-circle. The teacher (*al-mu'allim* or *al-shaykh* or *al-ustāz* or *al-faqīh*) is in full control of the teaching situation, he may be sitting on the same floor level or on a higher one.

In chapter thirty-one of his book *Al-Muqaddimah* ibn Khaldūn described how Muslims in Al-Maghrib, Al-Andalus and Ifriqiah based their children's Islamic education.<sup>8</sup>

Teaching the young children Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm is a credit that has been acknowledged to the early Muslim converts who have practised and implemented it in different regions and countries. This educational practice helps to engrave the Qur'ān in the young hearts. According to this practice the Qur'ān has become the base upon which all knowledge and sciences are built in a Muslim's life and build up ...

Ibn Khaldūn explained how the people of Al-Maghrib (Morocco, the Western Sahara area and Mauritania) gave the pupils Islamic education in their early childhood:

The people of Al-Maghrib did not add to their children's education any other science or knowledge beside Al-Qur'ān, while at a later stage (at high school level) the students may be taught: Drawing and Writing sciences. The students who become very learned in memorizing and understanding the Qur'ān do not mix it with any other knowledge such as: Ḥadīth, Fiqh, Poetry, Literature, etc ... until they become highly qualified to do so.

If this was the tradition of the people of Maghrib, what about the people of Andalus? The people of Andalus had a different system of education that was based on a different philosophy and had different objectives:

In education, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) were taught as independent subjects in Al-Andalus (Spain). However, as Al-Qur'ān is the heart and the basis of all knowledge and sciences it had been made as the base upon which all sciences are taught and built. Al-Qur'ān was not taught as an independent subject, but its subjects were taught along with others such as poetry, Arabic literature, fine calligraphy. It was expected that a young learner in his youth would be able to have acquired and accumulated certain degrees of knowledge in a variety of sciences and academic knowledge.

When we come back to Ifriqiah in the same era, we find that the educational system was one that allowed the young learners to study and comprehend the aspects of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and the laws of certain sciences.



In teaching the sciences of the Qur'ān, the people of Ifriqiah, as ibn Khaldūn documented, were very close to the system implemented in Al-Andalus. At this stage it is worth mentioning that while Islamic education includes the teaching and learning of all fields and branches of knowledge, it also acknowledges the specific needs and goals of different regions, nations and communities. Islamic education has recognized and established the ground rules for "unity and diversification, the only path to complete success".

The Great Qur'ān has become the origin of education in the Muslim World. Muslims in their different countries have chosen and adopted different methods of teaching Al-Qur'ān to children.<sup>9</sup>

The latter part of the second Hijri century had witnessed a change in the educational system that Al-Qayrawān had known since its establishment during the life of the great leader 'Uqbā ibn Nāfi'. These changes can be witnessed in three major elements:

- (1) A large number of "Berber" mosques were built to enable the Berbers to understand and learn more about Islam. The mosques helped the Berbers to learn to speak Arabic.
- (2) The effects of the educational missions that were sent by Banu 'Umayyah from the Muslim capital Dimashq (Damascus) and from other cities along with the groups of 'Ulamā', and scholars who established great academic reputations at Al-Qayrawān, Telemsān, Al-Andalus, Al-Qarawiyyīn and later on at Azzaytunah in Tunis, the Capital.
- (3) The quick and huge appearance of many privately built and owned mosques that were constructed and donated by wealthy Muslim individuals to become centers of education and knowledge that spread the teachings of Islam and Arabic. Among the most famous mosques of this type in Al-Qayrawān were: Masjid Al-Hubuly, Masjid Aby-Maysarah and Masjid Muḥammad ibn Khairun Al-Andalusī.<sup>10</sup>

By the beginning of the fourth decade of the second Hijri century the era of Banu 'Umayyah witnessed its end in Dimashq, and before the Abbasid era established itself politically, strategically and educationally, many scholars and learned academicians sought migration to the West where they joined the academic and educational institutions in Al-Qayrawān, Telemsan and later in Al-Qarawiyyīn (in Fās, Al-Maghrib), in Qurṭubah (Cordova) and Tulaitilah (Toledo) in Al-Andalus (Spain).

This particular academic and intellectual migration had enriched the educational environment in the North African region and caused its educational institutions to receive high recognition and respect from all parts of the world. During this great period of human civilization and growth, Muḥammad ibn

Shanūn was born, educated and trained to become an outstanding scholar of Islam.

Omar R. Kahalah (1400 A.H.-1980 C.E.) summerises the main knowledge and scientific phenomena that existed in the region of North Africa and the Mediterranean, during the second and third Hijri centuries which are:

- (1) The birth of the State of Knowledge at Jāmi'ah al-Qayrawān with its two separated wings (the men's and the women's) is a shining fact in the history of Islamic education.
- (2) The educational and scientific needs were sufficiently met in Al-Qayrawān, where scholars and learners from Al-Andalus, Al-Maghrib, Al-Jazāir (Algeria), Tarabulus (Tripoli, Libya), Barqah (East of Libya) and Siqilliyyah (Sicily, Italy) came to fulfill their ambitions and desires in knowledge.
- (3) The academic and educational independence through acquiring books produced and published in Ifriqiah such as the books of ibn al-Jazzar in Medicine, the books of *tafsir* of Muhammad Al-Qayrawānī and the Mudawwanatu ibn Shanūn.
- (4) The independence of education as a specialized academic field of knowledge with its own classifications and departments after it has been connected to Al-Fiqh (Jurisprudence). Education was declared independent in this region after the appearance of *Kitāb adab al-mu'allimīn*.
- (5) Higher education institutions existed and played major roles in knowledge seeking, especially in such areas as Sicily, Malta, Barqah, Tarabulus and in the Jāmi' of Palermo (Sicily).
- (6) A large number of technical and specialised institutes were established to teach and train in medicine, engineering, mathematical sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, language, arts, astronomy and translation: translation from Latin to Arabic as it was the main language of education in Europe then. The Arabs of Salerno (Italy) were able to establish the Jami'ah (University) of Salerno whose professors and lecturers were Arabs and its academic references were in Arabic.<sup>11</sup>

We would like to document that most of the experts and educationists who have written on Islamic education (mainly about its historical development), have equally acknowledged the positive contribution of *Kitāb adab al-mu'allimīn* to the establishment and independence of education as a field of knowledge and practice. All the credit in this development goes to Muḥammad ibn Shanūn, whose deep knowledge in methodology of knowledge and research qualified him to contribute and promote solutions to educational issues that still draw attention of people from all walks of life.



We will try to present as many aspects of ibn Shanūn's contributions to education as possible in this work, and also in future works. However, ibn Shanūn's educational theory cannot be adequately discussed in one paper.

### ***Kitābu Adabil-Mu 'allimin***

*Kitāb adab al-mu'allimin*—translated into English as “The Book of Teacher's Morals”, or “The Moral Code of Teachers”—is the most important educational treatise of Muḥammad ibn Shanūn. He is known to many people as a prominent and respected Faqih and 'Ālim in the Mālikī *madhhab* although to Muslim educators he represents a higher calibre as he had introduced the first specialized book in the field of the theory of teaching and learning.

Ibn Shanūn's contribution in this regard comes in a compilation of several educational issues that were of concern to parents, scholars, community leaders and concerned educators of his time. As an example, the issue of teacher's compensation (remuneration and salary) was an issue most frequently discussed and argued upon. A quick look at the topics included in his educational theory may illustrate the fact that before he became a Faqih (Jurisprudent, theologian) he was an educationist.

Ibn Shanūn's educational theory in *Kitāb adab al-mu'allimin* is composed of the following ten chapters. (topics):

1. Teaching Al-Qur'ān al-Karīm.
2. Equal treatment of all school children.
3. What it is disliked to be wiped off from Allah's sayings written on the *lawḥ* (board) and what should be done with that during the process of teaching and learning.
4. Code of ethics, what is approved and disapproved of teaching and learning.
5. The completion of a course (graduation) and the teacher's compensation.
6. The Eid gift.
7. The limits of school children's freedom.
8. The teacher's role and responsibilities in the supervision and in the follow-up of children's progress.
9. The teacher's salary (compensation).
10. The book utilisation charges: the book lending and borrowing policy.

Before we go into an in-depth analysis of this theory let us highlight the following facts:

- (1) This theory was presented in the mid-third Hijri century, which is around the early years of the tenth century C.E. While some of the educational issues included in this list have been resolved by the contemporary theories of education, some others are yet to be resolved or fully addressed.

- (2) This theory should be understood, analyzed and studied in light of the era in which it was put forward and not our present technological era.

- (3) A fact worth knowing is that the development in the Islamic system of education started by teaching children and youth the Holy Qur'ān in the mosques. Later this task became the full responsibility of the capable parents especially during the ruling of influential and wealthy dynasties. This picture was very clear during the Banu Umayyāh era (from the year 30-130 A.H./790-890 C.E.) where the rulers, princes and educated parents chose the teachers of their children.

The father's guidance for his children's education was not regarded as a wrong interference. On the contrary it showed the level of interest and the quality of knowledge the father had and what he expected to see his child achieve. This “Arab” tradition continued until two or three centuries later as practised by Hārūn Ar-Rashīd (170-193 A.H./786-809 C.E.) who wrote down his very famous educational advice to the teacher of his child (Al-Amīn 170-193 A.H.), who became the Crown Prince and the Ruler after his father's death. (See Appendix A).

- (4) Some historians believe that by the middle of the second Hijri century the *kuttāb* system of Islamic education came to be very well known and spread throughout the Muslim World.<sup>12</sup>

We may agree with this view simply because in the context of our research it seems that the *kuttāb* system was a predominant element in educating the children and the youth. Ibn Shanūn successfully focused his theory on issues and problems that existed in the *kuttāb*, i.e. children's discipline, classroom management, classroom leadership, and in the community such as teachers' compensation, gift giving and receiving and the limits of physical punishment of pupils. The discussion presented by ibn Shanūn represents the high degree of development achieved by Islamic education in that time and the effects of what we consider today as school-community-parent relationships of co-operation and co-ordination.

- (5) Ibn Shanūn focuses on the teacher (*mu'allim*), as the major point of the educational operation in a manner close to what has been known as the teacher-centred theory. He looks at the teacher as a person who possesses knowledge and is able to deliver it. The teacher in this regard agrees with the parent or parents and is entirely responsible to them for reporting the progress or lack of achievement of their children. Giving the teacher such an elevated position should not at all mean the opposite to other partners in the educational operations: i.e. students, books, physical facilities, discipline and regulations, etc... Experts in education look at all these factors in educational operations as equally important in their roles and functions. The difference between a factor and another is only in its degree of involvement. We should note here that in the last three decades, the history of contemporary international education has witnessed several “temporary” shifts in the “focal point” in different national



educational policies. At one place and time it may be the teacher, in another place and time it may be the learner and in another it may be the books and curriculum design. While these "temporary" trends cannot be stopped and should not be prevented, educationists and policy makers should always look at education as one complete mechanism where every component in it is vital and important.

Now we return to ibn Shanūn who did not favour the teacher over other elements but addressed most of the attention to him/her because of the vital contribution he/she may make.

### A Contemporary Analysis of ibn Shanūn's Theory

Most of the reviews and researches that have addressed this theory present it through the ten "original" topics that it covers and were listed earlier. Some have, however, taken a different approach. This fact is quite obvious and clear when we acknowledge that different researchers and writers come from different academic, educational and personal backgrounds. Abdur Rahman A. An-Na'iq (1990) confirms our view by calling upon the contemporary educationists to search, work and reorganise the educational wealth presented by ibn Shanūn, ibn Jamā'ah, Az-Zarnūji ibn Khaldūn and others. However, An-Na'iq suggests that the reorganization or reclassification ought to be done in light of the contemporary frame of reference. We should add that a wider and more honest understanding of the time in which the theory was created is very necessary. This understanding, that carries a clearer picture of the socio-political, economic and educational situations, will always be an asset to the researcher, the reader, the learner and others.<sup>13</sup>

Abdur Rahman O. Hijazi (1406 A.H.-1986 C.E.), believes that this list of topics might have been prepared as responses and ideas discussed and presented by ibn Shanūn during his teachings. Therefore, Hijazi tries to reorganize the topics in accordance with the contemporary theories of education. Consequently he represents them as follows:

- |             |   |  |
|-------------|---|--|
| 1st chapter | : | Educational Curriculum and Teaching Methodology. |
| 2nd chapter | : | The Teacher's Role.                              |
| 3rd chapter | : | Disciplinary Methods of ibn Shanūn.              |
| 4th chapter | : | School Administration.                           |
- school (classroom) location.  
 class leader (representation).  
 school vacation (holiday).  
 rewards/gifts.  
 book requirements.  
 book (usage) charges and  
 teacher's compensation.<sup>14</sup>

In our view, Hijazi has correctly arranged the topics. He calls the 4th chapter "School Administration" and not educational administration as there is a difference between the two concepts in nature and practice. However, we believe that the available resources from and about ibn Shanūn document that he contributed extensively to the issue of classroom management in his writings and thoughts. This element may easily qualify to have an independent chapter by itself in this reorganization presented by Hijazi, under which class leaders (representatives) should be included too. We also believe that educational curriculum and teaching methodology should be presented independently. Ibn Shanūn has presented them both united and separated but it is clear that they were quite independent in his mind, as in one, he deals with the quantity and quality of the curriculum content while in the other he deals with delivering the message of teaching techniques i.e. teaching, instructing, being the right example, teaching the students while possessing certain specific values, etc.

The clear distinction in Ibn Shanūn's thought between the educational curriculum design and the classroom teaching techniques qualify him, in our view, to be considered and looked at as a pioneer in Muslim educational theory who is really unique of his type in his time and today.

Abdur Rahman Hijazi might have overlooked the issue of students' fair and equal treatment by their teacher. Unfortunately, this issue has lost its priority on the list of educational operation priorities in the West today. In many instances after the era of student-centred education pupils/students have come to be considered as the clientele, the final product, the school output, the beneficiaries, the recipients of educational services, etc. Some of these market economy concepts may simply consider the learners to have a lower status than the one given and maintained by ibn Shanūn and many Muslim scholars.

### Child Abuse in ibn Shanūn's theory

To the surprise of many Muslim educationists, Muḥammad ibn Shanūn has adequately and bravely addressed this "very sensitive issue". He has specifically indicated what the use of punishment means in the true sense of the word. He explains that, according to the authentic and reliable *ḥadīths* (sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad) teaching and educating the child has nothing to do with physically or mentally abusing him/her. Ibn Shanūn documents that punishing the young learner should never be practised "out of anger" or "in reaction" to a behaviour. The teacher should be aware of the negative consequences that may happen due to his/her punishing the child. Ibn Shanūn specifies the size and the effect of the tool that can be used and the frequency of the beating/caning. It must be stressed here that children's discipline is a must in any school environment in the world. It is a real problem when the school environment starts to witness many unacceptable actions and incidents, such as abuse and murder of school children. An endless list of incidents, dates and places can be provided in this respect especially from the American schools and police records.



Educators and educationists should know that school discipline neither starts with beating the disruptive child nor stops there. A school administration may have its own in-house regulations and by-laws that govern all the disciplinary policies. These policies serve the functions of the educational operation.

### Other Components in ibn Shanūn's Theory of Education

#### (A) *The Obligatory and Optional Education*

Here ibn Shanūn makes a sharp and distinctive classification whereby he combines the teaching of Al-Qur'ān with the immediate implementation of the text. He presents this in a practical way that may be evaluated as a very useful methodology in teaching and learning.

In the obligatory sciences he includes the necessity of teaching the Qur'ān by teaching the roots and the origins of the words to give the pupils a comprehensive rather than a partial degree of learning. Here he adds that the teaching of Arabic style along with other styles of calligraphy is very helpful as it enables the learner to read pause and stop at the right spots when reading and reciting Al-Qur'ān.<sup>15</sup>

The teacher should show the pupils how to prepare for their five daily prayers especially when they reach the age of seven such as washing and cleaning themselves, doing ablution and being fully attentive in their prayers. Teaching the daily prayers should help the learners grow up with good and proper knowledge about different kinds of obligatory and voluntary prayers with full dedication towards Allah the Creator and the Lord of the Universe.

In the optional sciences (education) ibn Shanūn suggests other subjects to be taught such as Mathematics, Poetry, Arabic, Speech and History. Ibn Shanūn leaves the door wide open for the teacher and the parents to teach the child whatever is beneficial and helpful to his/her mental, social and educational growth.<sup>16</sup>

The method suggested here by ibn Shanūn represents a unique style of teaching that respects the learner's ability to work, co-operate and progress, but it meanwhile allows him/her not to continue with the same *kuttāb* if he/she chooses to. The method implies that once the student satisfies the requirements for graduating or loses interest in learning at the *kuttāb* he/she has the full option to move out and continue at another place.

This leads us to understand that the Qur'ānic schools were quite independent at the early stages of Islamic education. This position somewhat changed before the implementation of the public school system, still in existence, as discovered and adopted in the sixth Hijri century.

Ibn Shanūn has proposed the teaching of "speech arts", which was considered then and, even now, to be a very important field of knowledge that trains the student in debating and presenting different views and ideas, with available evidence and examples.

... Then Fez and other parts of the Maghrib remained without any effective education systems after the absence of the leading roles of Qurṭubah and Al-Qayrawān. As a result of this situation the quality of teaching and transforming knowledge has been affected and the ability of creating qualified learners and scholars with high academic and knowledge potentials became very evident. The ability of debating and expressing scientific evidence has diminished among the knowledge seekers as they have become more interested in reciting and memorizing only. Furthermore, the luckier (students/learners) ones have become able to debate or discuss in their very limited fields of knowledge...<sup>17</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn confirms ibn Shanūn's concern when the latter consider 'debating and speech arts' as a very important optional science that students should be trained in. Ibn Khaldūn's clinical observation reflects an era of decline in the Islamic intellectual and academic life in Ifriqiah, Al-Maghrib and Al-Andalus. He observed that the lack of training in speech and debate among the students was evident because their teachers were not teaching or training them in the field. As a result the students depended on memorizing and repeating what they knew.

During an in-depth study on forty-nine full-time Islamic schools conducted in North America in 1988-89, we discovered that the same topic was facing a great lack of attention from the Islamic school educators and administrators:

Out of 27 (form 49) schools, 3 schools said that their students were *excellent* in "Debates", while 3 more schools saw that their students were *very good* and 14 believed their students were *good* in Debates, 6 schools noted their students as *poor* and 1 said *very poor*.

Our observations were:

- (1) The two categories judged as excellent are Sports and Islamic Celebrations.
- (2) Poorest performance areas are Fine Arts and Debates.

Our conclusions were:

- (1) One of the aims of Islamic schools to develop Muslim leaders is not met as seen from the poor rating given to Debates.
- (2) Full-time schools are not paying enough attention to Debates, therefore not supporting the development of Muslim leaders.<sup>18</sup>

#### (B) *The Teacher's Responsibilities:*



Ibn Shanūn does not limit the teacher's role to the classroom's four walls or confine it to the school environment. He requests the teacher to follow up with his/her students' conduct and behaviour in the community, during their travel to and from school and at home by consulting with their parents and discussing the evident strengths and weaknesses. This should not be looked upon as weird or strange in our contemporary system of education because the teacher, through the school administration and pastoral care, is doing and fulfilling the same obligations today. In the case of the student's absence it is the responsibility of the teacher to inform the parents and to find out the reasons for the absence. In today's system, mainly in American public education, a teacher is assigned to supervise and provide socio-psychological guidance and assistance to a group of students.

The teacher, in ibn Shanūn's view, should be fully engaged in the operation of teaching and training the students. Any other outside teaching obligations especially at the early ages of the learners, would cause serious interruption and intervention. At a later age the teacher may get the time to be engaged in outside teaching, for short intervals. He/she can be involved in and out-of-school tasks, if he/she has trained the more able students to help their fellow class mates understand specific topics. However, ibn Shanūn warns of the extensive dependence on such techniques and emphasises the importance of the teacher's full control of the classroom operations.

We should bear in mind that this phenomena still exists and many full-time teachers have secondary jobs/tasks that they do after leaving school. The reasons for this are always available and justifiable. What is not justifiable though is the practice of a teacher, whose professional teaching is not his/her primary or sole priority.

The teacher should come well prepared and equipped to the classroom, it is not advisable or encouraged to send his/her students to bring the materials that he/she forgets to bring to the classroom.

According to Muḥammad ibn Shanūn, the teacher should not allow the learners to be on vacation without their parents' consent and approval.

He also holds that the ability of teaching can be easily judged from the level of comprehension achieved by the student. In our view this cannot always be a true indicator as in the cases when the student does not like the subject taught or has no interest in the class or is not happy with the teacher. So, we think that to evaluate or assess the teacher's ability to teach solely on the level of students' comprehension is unfair and unjustifiable.

### (C) *The Teacher's Personality (Qualifications)*

Ibn Shanūn has indirectly indicated in his proposal of obligatory and optional sciences the qualifications needed to be acquired by teachers who are willing to take teaching as their life profession. In this part we may follow the classification reported by Abdur Rahman O. Hijazi (1406-1988):

- (1) *Academic qualifications*: the teacher should have reached (acquired) a high level of education that enables him to:
  - (a) Memorize Al-Qur'ān and know its rules of reading and recitation.
  - (b) Possess knowledge of jurisprudence that allows him to teach and explain certain basics to the learners.
  - (c) Have knowledge of Arabic Grammar and writing skills.
  - (d) Understand Arabic Calligraphy.
  - (e) Be well-versed in the arts of poetry, prose, literature in general and speech.
- (2) *Personal behaviour*: as he/she is the model and example to his/her students the teacher should be:
  - (a) Honest and sincere in teaching and training the young learners in the way he/she wishes to teach and train his own children.
  - (b) Pious and fearing Allah in observing what is permissible and what is not permissible.
  - (c) Fully responsible for the children and regard them as a trust that he/she will be accountable for in the Hereafter.
  - (d) Kind and caring to enrich an environment of care and co-operation between the educational institution and the community.<sup>19</sup>
- (3) *Teaching experience*: Abdur Rahman O. Hijazi confirms a fact documented by Ahmad Shalaby in which the latter says that:

It is a source of pride to say that Muslims have discovered, a long time ago that knowledge alone is not sufficient (enough) in the teaching profession. The teacher has to be well trained in the art of teaching that necessitates awareness and knowledge of child psychology, child behavior, techniques of dealing with children, etc ... These qualifications are the only ways to guarantee the proper transmission/transfer of knowledge and experience from the teacher to the learner.<sup>20</sup>

While we confirm that ibn Shanūn has mentioned and documented all of these facts earlier and has proposed several ways for the teacher to achieve the qualifications sought, we would like to add an observation made by ibn Khaldūn in his *Al-Muqaddimah*:

Teaching is a real art because there is no *one* style in it. Most of the great scholars, if not all of them, have possessed different styles and techniques in their teaching and educating careers. However, different branches of knowledge require different techniques too.<sup>21</sup>

Ibn Shanūn had differentiated between the teacher in the early stages of education and in the later stages. He sees that a teacher teaching at two different levels, may spend less time with the learners at an older age. Ibn



Shanūn attributes that to the maturity and experience factors generated in the young learners. This observation is also true in today's teaching.

### Full Employment

In addition to the previously mentioned responsibilities proposed by ibn Shanūn which put the teacher under the obligation of continuous follow-up of the children's progress or failure, the teacher's job requires full commitment and devotion.

While the teacher is not encouraged to get involved in any job besides teaching the children, his/her obligations are defined and the compensation should be up to the expectations of both contracting sides: the parent and the teacher.

### Conclusion

While this research cannot claim the full coverage of ibn Shanūn's thoughts, we do not foresee this job achievable by any single research or book. We have not analyzed ibn Shanūn's views on the classroom management, educational administration, library books policies, teacher's financial compensation and gift giving. This will be the purpose of our next research on ibn Shanūn's educational theory.

The contributions of ibn Shanūn in declaring education as an independent field of knowledge are yet to be given enough attention for research, evaluation and testing. It is high time that such scholarly and elegantly produced theories are properly studied and analysed to enrich the human experiences in the field of education and learning.

### Appendix A

#### A letter of "Education" to an Educator

The great Muslim Leader, Hārūn Ar-Rashīd had sent a letter to the teacher of his young son Al-Amin. The teacher was Khalaf ibn Ḥayyān Al-Ahmar (d. 180 A.H.) and is considered one of the best teachers of his time as he was in the highest rank of the people of knowledge and literature. Ar-Rashīd said in the letter:

"Dear Ahmar: Please acknowledge that Amirul-Mu'minīn (Ar-Rashīd) has sent to you the most precious essence of his soul and heart (his son). So, please extend your authority of knowledge upon him, and make his obedience to you obligatory. Be with him in the position chosen for you by Amīrul-Mu'minīn.

Teach him the Qur'ān and inform him about the news (educate him in the Qur'ān and History). Train him in poetry and acquaint him with the traditions. Prepare him in reading and comprehension. Do not allow him to laugh except on appropriate occasion. Enable him and educate him to respect and honour the Bani Hashim scholars and elders and train him to recognise and greet the leaders in their respected fields when they come into his presence to meet him. Please do not miss any chance to teach and educate him, and enable him to benefit from it. Do not make him sad or miserable as this condition will kill his heart and intellect. On the other hand do not exaggerate in forgiving him as this may allow him to enjoy more leisure and tranquillity. Make sure to correct his behaviour softly and gently and if he refuses to abide then be tough and more serious with him."<sup>21</sup>

### Notes

1. Al-Qayrawān: now in Tunisia and was first established by the great Arab Muslim leader, 'Uqbā ibn Nāfi' in the year 69 A.H. 'Uqbā chose a unique, in-land location for the new born city as he wanted it to be a secured fortress for civil and military education and training. Al-Qayrawān enjoyed the fame of accommodating the first higher educational institution in the history of Islamic education.
2. *Riyāḍun Nufūs*, published by Hussain Mu'nis, introduced by Hassan Husni Abdul Wahab, vol 1, Maktabah Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, 1951, p. 35.
3. *Riyāḍun Nufūs*, Abi-Bakr Abdillāh ibn Muḥammad Al-Mālikī, Darul-Gharbil-Islamy, Beirut, Lebanon VI, (1403-1983) pp. 443-444.
4. *Al-Madhhab Attarbiyy* 'inda ibn Sahnūn, by Abdur Rahman O. Hijazi, Muassasatur Risālah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1406 A.H.-1986 C.E.), pp. 18-22.
5. *Tarjamah al-Muallifin Attunisiyyin*, Muḥammad Mahfudh. Darul Gharbil-Islamy, Beirut, Lebanon III, Vol 1st edition, 1984-1404, pp. 19-20.
6. When ibn Sahnūn was writing this book, he reported that his father entered the room and saw what he was writing. The father advised his son saying: "Oh my son, you're reacting to the people (scholars) of Iraq, be aware that they possess acute intellect and sharp tongues, do not allow your pen to write what would require your apology later on", Ibid, p. 23.
7. Ibid, pp. 23-24.
8. *Muqaddimatu ibn Khaldūn*, Darul-Qalam, Beirut, Lebanon, 4th edition, 1981, pp. 537-540.
9. *Baitul-Ḥikmah fi 'asril-'Abbasiyyin*, Dr. Khedhir Ahmed 'Atallah, Darul Fikril Arabi, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 1989, p. 91.
10. *Jawlatun fi rubu 'it-tarbiyah wat-ta'lim*, Omar R. Khalah Muassasatur-Risalah, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition (1400-1980), pp. 140-141.
11. Ibid, pp. 144-145.
12. *Attarbiyatu wat-ta'lim fil-fikril-Islāmy*, Ahmad Shalaby, Maktabatun-Nahḍah al-Miṣriyyah, Cairo, Egypt, tenth edition, 1992, pp. 56-58.
13. *Attarbiyatul-Islāmiyyah, Risālah wa Masirah*, By Abdur Rahman Abdur-Rahman An-Naquiib, Darul Fikril-Arabi, Cairo, Egypt, 1990, pp. 187-192.
14. *Al-Madhhab Attarbiyy* 'inda ibn Sahnūn, pp.49-50.
15. Ibid, pp. 51-55.
16. *Ibn Khaldūn*, pp. 431-432.



17. *In Depth Study of Full-Time Islamic Schools*, ed., Sha'ban Muftah Ismail, Islamic Society of North America Plain Field, Ind. U.S.A, 1991, pp. 50-51.
18. Abdur Rahman O. Hijazi, pp. 66-69.
19. Ahmad Shalaby, p. 212.
20. Ibn Khaldūn, pp. 430-431.
21. Islamic Education Encyclopaedia, see under "The Educational Thought of Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn al-Azraq", pp. 272-273.

## KING 'ABD AL-'AZİZ ĀL SA'ŪD'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE POLITICS AND EDUCATION OF ARABIA

*Muhammad Abdul Jabbar Beg*

A modern historian has compared King 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān Āl Fayṣal Āl Sa'ūd (better known in the west as ibn Sa'ūd) with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk of Turkey and Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran. They had a common global aim: modernisation. Each one of them improved his country's transport and communications, expanded administration and education within his country, and introduced new laws and caused a reorientation of international relations of their countries. The extent of achievement of developmental goals varied from one country to another, but the trend of modernisation of the economic infrastructure in each country was phenomenal in comparison with that of the last century. The conspicuous difference between them was that the founders of modern Turkey and Iran based their modernising reforms on the model of secularism. As a result, the Republican Turks not only abolished the Ottoman Sultanate and Khalifate (*Khilāfah*) but went further along the path of secularism by disestablishing Islam in Turkey's constitution in 1928.<sup>1</sup> Atatürk's ruling Republican People's Party implemented the dogma of secularism in all aspects of Turkish national life. It was a tremendous achievement of secularism in a Muslim nation which had, until the outbreak of World War I, ruled over a vast Empire. On the other hand, Reza Shah Pahlavi, an admirer of Atatürk, marginalised religion and undermined the Shi'ite religious authority in Iranian national life.<sup>2</sup> Last but not the least, ibn Sa'ūd of Arabia was an Arab leader (b. 1880 C.E.) with a central Arabian background. Conservative and puritanical in outlook, he became the architect of a modern Kingdom with Najdi tribal support. Ibn Sa'ūd, a warrior-King, was a reluctant moderniser of his Arabian desert Kingdom. He derived political inspiration from his ancestral history and from the religious teachings of the eighteenth century Islamic reformer, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-92 C.E.).

The epitome of ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's reformist message was an adherence to the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* (Divine Unity) and rejection of its antithesis, *shirk* (association of divinity with non-divinity). Ibn Sa'ūd was sometimes inaccurately described by some Europeans as the first Wahhābī King of Arabia during the twentieth century. The so-called Wahhābism was, in fact, monotheistic fundamentalism which emphasised the puritanical spirit of pure Islamic thought championed by Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855 C.E.).