



Ibn Khaldun and Education

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Abstrak: Ibn Khaldun adalah pemikir besar muslim, yang gagasan-gagasannya mempunyai arti penting dalam sejarah pemikiran Islam. Pemikirannya yang orisinal dan inovatif, mampu meneropong ke masa sesudahnya, bahkan tetap berguna hingga kini. Dalam artikel ini, dipaparkan beberapa pemikiran Ibn Khaldun dalam dunia pendidikan, khususnya berkaitan dengan sistem pendidikan. Penekanannya tentang hubungan guru dan murid yang lebih manusiawi, dan pengajaran yang menyesuaikan dengan kemampuan dan kebutuhan murid, merupakan sumbangan bemilai bagi dunia pendidikan. **Kata Kunci:** *Ibn Khaldun, pendidikan, pengajaran, guru, murid.*

Introduction

The great thinker Ibn Khaldun was born in Tunis, 1332 AD and died in Cairo, 1406 AD. His ideas have reflected their importance on the history of universal thought as much as within the Islamic realm. His thoughts are all self-created. He has been affected by savants before him but he is not a continuation of them. He created genuine and innovative ideas. It is due to this fact that although he lived during the 14th century his thoughts still manage to shed light among events of current times. His ideas have not lost their relevance as time has passed. Recognized as the founder of sociological sciences, Ibn Khaldun has been accepted and commented upon by historians, jurists, theologians, politicians, economists, teachers, educators and environmentalists alike. Ibn Khaldun's great work of art, *The Muqaddimah* has been translated into the world's most common languages.

Here, we shall try to enumerate his education-teaching views which shed light on current educational systems and consequently provide a text from which we may take benefit.

Imparting Information to Students at their Level of Comprehension

Information should be given to students gradually in stages, lower to higher, which they may understand. If teaching methods are gradually applied to students, the education will prove more effective for them. Initially, the main principles of information and sciences should be taught, and taking into consideration the learning capacity of the students these matters should be explained briefly. The subjects to be taught should be provided with this method until completion. Such a method will result in the students showing more aptitude to the given information. However, the students' aptitude will remain weak and insufficient. The students during this period will have learnt to absorb the given information. Pursuant to this, the teacher should revise the subjects with a little more elaboration and continue to provide the information in a wider aspect until completion. Then the students' knowledge and adjustments shall be enhanced accordingly. The teacher shall then revise the subject three times over



from the beginning. During this period, the teacher shall be able to explain more difficult and deeper aspects of the subject. This will result in the students reaching their utmost aptitude. The subject needs revision three times over and then students become well familiar with the subject. This is the correct method of teaching according to Ibn Khaldun.¹

Students should not be Forced to Memorize

Teachers usually explain the difficult and deeper aspects of subjects which students are learning for the first time, therefore, forcing the students to memorize the subject. They accept this as the correct form of teaching. However, the students' brains are not capable of understanding this. It's difficult enough for them to learn a lesson. This results in the students becoming lazy, their mind rejects the information and the period of learning is prolonged. This is subsequently a result of poor teaching methods. The teacher should not impose upon the students whether they are new or accustomed to the subject. He should not overload the students with lessons beyond their capabilities and capacities, or should not intrude beyond the textbook under study or begin a new textbook before the current one is completed. Otherwise, the issues will be scrambled and subjects will become complex. When teaching, one must provide thought and revision. Memorization should be avoided.

Learning the Subject

Subjects should not be Taught in a Broken Sequence

To teach subjects in a broken sequence is to prolong the term of study for knowledge or the sciences. For breaking up lessons or pausing results in a further period to learn that subject. The connection of issues within a subject will lose its significance. If issues within the subjects of information are applied in an organized manner until completion, these subjects will become more profound and their impression more permanent and students will therefore gain more. The information shall be connected with relative subjects and concretely formed within the brain and the mind.

Two Subjects should not be Taught Together

Two subjects should not be taught at one and the same time or be mixed with another subject. One should not pass on to another subject while the first remains incomplete. For this separates the heart from the mind. Concentration on learning both subjects at the same time unfortunately leads to an incomplete knowledge of both the subjects; the student absorbs neither information correctly.

Appropriate Length of Subjects Taught

According to Ibn Khaldun, an over-summarized text on certain information as well as an over-extended text will create difficulty in learning the actual information. Furthermore, he separates the sciences into two categories of science-means and science-purposes. He explains the drawbacks of over-emphasizing on science-means. He believes that the wise men of recent times and their emphasis on science-means have led to negative results in the learning of these subjects.



It is Harmful to be very Strict on the Student

During education and teaching, it is harmful to be very strict on the student especially if the student is of young age. This sort of aggressiveness negatively influences the child. It may affect the psychology of the child and create unhappiness as well as corrupt his desire to work and study. This will drive the child to misbehaviour and to lie out of fear. He will learn to display actions contrary to those really within his heart. In time, this will become his nature and part of his character. It will corrupt the enhancements of social activities, modernization and the whole meaning of humanity consisting of self-esteem and family values.² Therefore, teachers, mothers and fathers should not be aggressive towards children in order to teach them obedience and manners.³

Travelling and Conferencing with Scholars is Useful for Education

People sometimes learn knowledge, ethics, occupation, views and virtues from teachers and also from persons who are masters of their fields or simply others whom they accept as role models. Practical experience usually influences more concrete ideas on certain subjects. The more knowledgeable the teacher from whom information is gained, the more solid the knowledge is acquired by the student. Terminology of subjects usually complicates the learning process. Due to this, some assume that these terminologies are just part of the subject. This incorrect attitude may only be rectified by various means and teaching performed accordingly. Hearing the information from various masters shall strengthen his knowledge and assist him to differentiate between terminologies.⁴

Education should be Practical

Ibn Khaldun also emphasizes the teaching of arts and crafts. He states the importance of practical application such as to observe, to feel and to apply the knowledge gained as much as possible. He places emphasis on the fact that these sort of subjects cannot specially be taught only in theory.⁵ He states that theoretical study must be accompanied by practical study.

Learning Science requires Skill

Ibn Khaldun believes that learning science requires skill. Tradition is important in teaching. Tradition must be upheld for the progress of science. Otherwise, science and education will recede. Tradition of science and education only prevails in places which have progressed in prosperity.

Conclusion

Ibn Khaldun has emphasized the importance of science, education and teaching. He foresees science and education as an inseparable part of prosperity. According to him, the real difference between mankind and other beings is the power of thought. Science and art are born from open-minded thought and the intricate learning of the principles of all issues. Ideas emerge from those who have the curiosity



and desire to investigate what is unknown. From this situation, the issues of education and teaching arise.⁶

He advises teachers to teach in a comprehensive manner and to gradually teach subjects in stages, moving from easier to the more difficult. Memorization should be avoided. He emphasizes that teaching methods should be simple and not complicated. He states that the teaching of subjects should not be in broken sequences or else the subject will become scattered and forgotten. Also, aggressive behaviour towards children will turn them off from lessons, create laziness, making them unwilling learners as well as negatively affecting their behaviour.

Education should consist of theory and practice. Education should be revised and repeated until a good level is attained. He also declares that learning and teaching the sciences require skill and that the teachers of these sciences should be knowledgeable in their fields. These clearly defined issues of Ibn Khaldun are still relevant for educational issues of contemporary times.

Endnote

¹ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, vol. 3 (Istanbul: UGAn, 1988), p. 145, (translation: Zahir Kadir).

² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Suleyman Uludag, *Ibn Khaldun (His Life-Works-Ideas)*, p. 142.

⁶ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*.

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