



EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN EGYPT
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE FATIMIDS AND
THE AYYUBIDS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study is associated with this spectrum as it will investigate the relationship between education and politics and identify the double role of education as a politicising and a politicised factor in the two consecutive eras of the Fatimids and the Ayyubids in Egypt. The researcher selected the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods in Egypt as a focus for his investigation because these two periods constituted the most important episodes in Islamic history, where education and politics influenced each other. The impact of that influence was clear through the course and the sequence of the historical events in those two stages. This research is an attempt to open a small window on the great legacy of Islamic educational thought in the Middle-Ages, which could contribute to the efforts of reviving the Islamic educational heritage. The research tried to lay foundations for a solid intellectual platform that aims to create a modern Islamic system of education that it is comprehensive, responsive to our current needs. To serve the purpose of this research, a causal assessment method has been utilized in order to analyze the educational and political experience of the Fatimid and Ayyubid states on one hand, and to avoid the simplistic description which does not add any substantial information on the other hand. The study also tried to address all aspects which reflect the relationship of education with politics, through the analysis of the historical and religious circumstances that led to the establishment of the Fatimid then Ayyubid states, with special focus on the analysis of the educational practices prevailing at the time. The study highlights the special attention that the rulers in both periods accorded to learning and learners, and it tries to reveal the political and religious motives of that patronage. In the end, the study concludes that despite the existing political and religious affiliations of each regime, formal and informal institutions of education in both periods were arenas in which power and politics received fundamental expression. This does not necessarily mean that the politicization of education during those two phases have restricted the thought and prevented it from flourishing. On the contrary, learning was accessible for all and absolutely free in both periods. Students received stipends provided by abundant income from a chain of a deeply embedded institution in the thoughts and practices of medieval Islamic societies called *waqf*. The religious motive was fundamental in the functioning of Islamic medieval educational process and the ultimate role of education in both, Fatimid and Ayyūbid periods was the preservation of the Islamic faith and *sharī'ah*. This is the spirit that should be motivating any contemporary Islamic educational project.

ملخص البحث

الدراسة التي بين أيدينا، تحاول أن تبرز الدور المزدوج الذي يؤدّيه التعليم في سياقه الإسلامي، كفاعل يسيّس المسائل، ومفعول به يخضع لتأثيرات التسييس. وقد اخترنا لبحثنا هذا محطتين تاريخيتين إسلاميتين لكي تكونا تطبيقاً عملياً لموضوعه، هما عصر الفاطميين ثمّ الأيوبيين في مصر، لأنهما كانتا أظهر وأجلى مرحلتين في التاريخ الإسلامي على تفاعل التعليم وممارساته بالسياسة وتقلباتها في سياق حوادث تاريخية تعاقبت في تسلسل مضطرد وبيّن. قد يتساءل سائل، ما جدوى هذا البحث؟ ولما التنقيب في الماضي البعيد؟ وللإجابة نقول أنّ الحاضر يولد من رحم الماضي، وماضينا كان أزهى من حاضرنا بيقين. وعليه فهذا البحث يفتح نافذة صغيرة على تراث تربوي وفكري ثري ومشرق، تركه لنا أسلافنا المسلمون في القرون الوسطى، والغاية المنشودة هي الإسهام ولو بنزر يسير في الجهود المعاصرة التي تهدف لصياغة منهج تربوي إسلامي حديث يتميز بالشمول، ويستجيب لحاجيات العصر ومتطلّباته. وحتى يتسنى لنا الوصول إلى أغراض البحث وأهدافه، كان من الضروري أن تعرّض للمحطّات التاريخية الفارقة في المرحلتين محلّ الدراسة، مسلّطين عليها مزيداً من الضوء، ومعتمدين في ذلك على منهج البحث التحليلي. كما جهدت الدراسة في استخلاص جميع المظاهر التي تعكس طبيعة العلاقة الممتدّة بين التربية والتعليم من جهة، والممارسات السياسية من جهة أخرى، من خلال تحليل الملابس التاريخية التي أدّت إلى قيام الدولتين الفاطمية الشيعية أولاً، ثمّ الأيوبية السنيّة ثانياً، مركّزة على مراجعة المظاهر والأنساق التعليمية التي سادت آنذاك. وقد تّبّه البحث إلى الرّعاية التي أولاها الخلفاء والسلاطين الذين تعاقبوا على الحكم في الفترتين التاريخيتين للعلم والعلماء وطلبة العلم، كما أرشد البحث إلى البواعث الدينية والسياسية التي دفعت أولئك الحكّام للاهتمام بالنشاط التربوي. في ختام البحث وصلنا إلى نتيجة مفادها أنّ بسبب ارتباط النظم الحاكمة بمصالح سياسية ودينية، فإن مؤسسات التعليم الرسمي وغير الرسمي كانت حلبة لإبراز نفوذ السلطة الحاكمة، غير أنّ ذلك لا يعني أن تسيّس التربية والتعليم في تلك الفترات قد أدّى بالضرورة إلى تقييد حرية الفكر ومنعه من الازدهار، بل كان الأمر على التّقيض، فقد أتيحت فرص طلب العلم للجميع، وبدون مقابل. أكثر من ذلك، تلقّى طلبة العلم وشيوخهم منحا ومكافآت مالية، سخية أحياناً، بفضل الرّبع الذي كانت تدرّه سلسلة المؤسسات الوقفية الحرّة. لقد كان الحافز الدّيني والأخروي عاملاً أساسياً في ازدهار العملية التربوية في عصور الإسلام الوسطى، وقد كانت خدمة الشريعة والدّب عنها الغاية الأولى بلا منازع، وهذه هي الرّوح التي يجب أن ينهل منها أي مشروع تربوي إسلامي معاصر.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE FATIMIDS AND THE AYYUBIDS**

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To the souls of my beloved father Tahraoui Mohamed and the light of my eyes Hayette in the Heavens (Rahimahumallah), who regretfully did not live to see this work.

A special dedication to my beloved mother who remained a source of blessings and inspiration,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the problem	1
Statement of the problem	7
Purpose of the study	19
Previous Studies	24
Methodology of the study	37
Organization of the study	40
Limitations of the study	41
CHAPTER TWO EDUCATION AND POLITICS FROM A WESTERN PERSPECTIVE	43
The concept of education	43
The concept of politics	47
Relationship between education and politics	52
Education and social engineering	54
Education and the preservation of the status quo	58
Education and the preservation of elite's power	62
Education and economics	68
Education and finance	74
Characteristics of leading independent autonomous educational institutions	80
Characteristics of dependent (heteronymous) educational institutions	83
CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION AND POLITICS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE	88
The concept of education	88
The Islamic philosophy of education	91
The concept of politics	97
Aspects of interaction between education and politics	112
Education and the preservation of religion	112
Education and the creation of Muslim <i>Ummah</i>	113
Education and the institution of <i>Khilāfah</i>	116
Education and finance	117
The legal theory	117
Historical practices	119

**CHAPTER FOUR: IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS OF FATIMID REGIME
(358/567 AH) (969/1171 AD) 123**

Historical background	123
Establishment of the Fatimid regime	123
Nature of the Fatimid creed and ideology	130
Pillars of the Ismaili doctrine	132
The concept of <i>imāmah</i> (the Imamate)	133
The concept of <i>ẓahir</i> and <i>bāṭin</i>	138
The political system of the Fatimid Caliphate	142
New political portfolios created on the basis of the new doctrine	145

CHAPTER FIVE: FATIMID EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND POLICIES 150

The educational experience in the Fatimid Egypt and its features	150
Relationship between the curriculum and the adopted doctrinal school (<i>madhhab</i>)	152
Types of curriculum	159
Public legal curriculum	160
Esoteric curriculum	161
Educational institutions	169
<i>Jāmi' al-Azhar</i>	170
<i>Dār al-Ḥikmah</i>	177
Other formal and informal educational institutions	181
<i>Al-Jawāmi'</i>	181
<i>Al-Maktabāt</i> (Libraries) and Bookshops.....	183
<i>Al-Makātib</i>	185
<i>Al-Roḩuṭ</i>	186
<i>Al-Bīmārīstānāt</i>	186
Ranks and status of teachers	188
Ordinary teachers	188
Private tutors	188
Master scholars	189
Role of jurists and scholars	190
<i>Al-Qāḩi al-Nu'mān</i>	197
<i>Al-Mu'ayyad fī al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī</i>	199
Students and their Social Background	201
Public exoteric learning	203
Exclusive <i>majālis of al-Ḥikmah</i> for the Ismailis	207
Reaction of the Egyptian population towards the policies of the Fatimid state.....	214

**CHAPTER SIX: IDEOLOGY AND POLITICS OF AYYUBID REGIME
(569/666 AH) (1174/1263 AD) VIS-À-VIS THE FATIMID POLITICAL
PRACTICES 226**

Establishment of the Ayyubid's regime (foundations and principles).....	226
Nature of the Ayyubid's rule and ideology	237
The concept of <i>Sultān</i>	237
Ayyubid style of governance: <i>Iqtā'</i> system	241
Ayyubid administration	243

System of <i>al-Ḥisbah</i>	247
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER SEVEN: EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM UNDER THE AYYUBID VIS-À-VIS THE FATIMID EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES 250

Relationship between the curriculum of the state and its adopted <i>madhhab</i>	251
Characteristics of the Ayyubid educational curriculum	256
Preference of the Shāfi‘ite school	256
Promotion of <i>taṣawwuf</i> (Sufism)	260
Patronage of Ash‘arite doctrines	264
Curriculum and Syllabus of the Ayyubid institutions of learning.....	267
Major educational institutions	270
<i>Al-Madāris</i>	271
<i>Al-Khawāniq</i>	282
Other Institutions of learning	284
<i>Al-Jawāmi‘</i>	284
Jāmi‘ of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ	285
Al-Azhar during the Ayyubid period	286
<i>Al-Roḩuṭ</i>	288
<i>Al-Makātib</i>	289
<i>Al-Maktabāt</i> (Libraries)	292
<i>Al-Bīmārīstānāt</i>	294
‘ <i>Ulama</i> and teachers in the Ayyubid period	296
Ranks and status of the ‘ <i>ulama</i> and teachers	302
<i>Al-Qārī</i> of Qur’an	302
<i>Al-Mu‘allim</i>	303
<i>Al-Mu‘addib</i>	303
<i>Al-Mudarris</i>	303
<i>Al-Mu‘īd</i>	303
<i>Al-Shaykh</i>	304
<i>Al-Qādī</i>	304
Students and their social background	307
Reaction of Egyptian population towards the Ayyubid control over Egypt.....	312

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND ECOMMENDATIONS 317

Fatimid Period	317
Ayyubid Period	318
Similarities	320
Differences.....	324

BIBLIOGRAPHY 333

APPENDICES 353

GLOSSARY 356

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Among the various activities that organized and civilized human societies practiced, education remained the most prominent. It expanded and grew more complicated as life and human activities grew more complex. In fact, it always carried with it social, economic, and political dimensions, and it always served various purposes.

The political dimension of education has constantly been a vital feature, because it influenced the production, stirring, and development of politics. In fact, education has been since the dawn of history and it is still the most practical way to shape the social reality in accordance with the ideological ideals that the ruling authorities choose for its citizens. The political nature of education is a reality that was recognized by philosophers like Plato (427/347 BC), Aristotle (384/322 BC), Ibn Sīnā (980 AD/1037 AD), and Al-Fārābī (870 AD/950 AD) to mention few of them. They have treated education and presented their educational thoughts in connection with its political contexts, and the successive historical events also affirmed this reality¹

They all agree that education is a key to the minds of the people; because of its ability to direct their inclinations and preferences, to the extent that the one who controls education can actually control the people. Such great association between politics and education drove the latter to play a double role in which it could be a politicizing factor as well as a politicized factor.

¹ For further details, refer to: ‘Abdullāh ‘Abd al-Dāim, *Al-Tarbiyah ‘abr al-Tārīkh: Min al-‘Uṣūr al-Qadīmah hattā Awā’il al-Qarn al-‘Ishrīn* [Education across History: From the Ancient ages up to the Twentieth Century], (Beirut (Lebanon): Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1973)

Our study is connected with this spectrum, and will examine such relation as manifested in the case of Egypt during the Fatimid and the Ayyubid eras.

However, two questions could cross someone's mind: Why Egypt? And: Why precisely this period? Such genuine queries merit an explanation that justifies the selection of the space and the time of this investigation. To do that, we need first to shed some light upon the importance of Egypt in history, then, we will demonstrate the significance of the Fatimid and the Ayyubid periods.

There is unanimous agreement that Egypt played a fundamental role in the human history. It was the home of the Pharaohs whose kingdom formed one of the most formidable ancient civilizations that mankind proudly produced, and which continues to draw researchers' attention and puzzles them after every new disclosure.

Situating at the meeting point of the two continents, Asia and Africa, Egypt is a geographical phenomenon. Although the total surface of the modern state of Egypt, the Nile valley and delta, occupies but a narrow strip of land between vast deserts, yet the valley of the Nile is one of the oldest meeting places of man, and the fertile ground upon which one of the first civilizations developed and flourished for over 4.000 years.²

Due to such strategic position in the middle between Asia and Africa, and its towering over the Mediterranean from the north and the Red sea from the east, and to its proximity to the homes of the ancient civilizations, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans ...and so forth, Egypt has been exposed to series of invasions many invaders, and targeted by foreign conquerors such as the "Hyksos, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans ..."³

However, the most significant event to occur in Egypt since the unification of upper and lower Egypt by King II Menes in 3400 BC into one kingdom⁴ was perhaps

² Panayiotis J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 4th edn., 1991), 3

³ Ibid, 9

⁴ Ibid, 6

the Muslim conquest of Egypt which smoothly reshaped the identity of Egypt as an Arab-Muslim country until today.

The importance of the Arab conquest of Egypt, led by ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘Ās in 461 AD, lay in the imposition upon a Christian Egypt of a new faith, Islam, and a new language, Arabic. The natives relinquished Coptic and Greek in favor of Arabic; and abandoned Christianity for the faith of Allah... regardless of the reasons for the mass acceptance of Islam by the Egyptians, after the seventh century, Egypt gradually became part of the Islamic-Arab tradition and civilization, and eventually its very center.⁵

The Muslims sought the conquer Egypt as it was regarded as a very strategic base to expand the Islamic state to farer new lands, an objective which was successfully achieved later when the Muslim armies expanded west until Morocco, and from there they traversed the Straits of Gibraltar to Spain. It is needless to mention here that in the beginning of its expansion plans, the Islamic state was in a dire need for new sources of revenues that would strengthen its economy and provide sustenance to the armies of Islam which were busy with their conquests in different fronts. Egypt, as a very rich source of revenue and food supplied the Hejāz and other parts of Arabia.

The Arab-Muslim conquest of Egypt was also paralleled by an active and rapid movement of Arabization and Islamization of Egypt, “though Egyptians certainly gave their own coloring to it and retained their own characteristics.”⁶

In addition to the military factors, the tolerant administration of the early governors (*wulāt*) and the economic conditions in the country, education was a fundamental variable which contributed immensely to the transformation of Egypt from a predominantly Christian country to a Muslim one. Mosques were intensively built in every town and village, annexed to them and established by Muslim preachers

⁵ Ibid, 10

⁶ Waterfield Gordon, *Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1967), 56

were some primitive forms of elementary schools called *makātib*, “where young Egyptians were taught to read and write in order to learn the teachings of Islam. Thus, Arabic language of the Qur’an became the language of the people and Islam became the religion of most Egyptians.”⁷

These purposed educational efforts, as well as the effects of the contingent spontaneous factors, contributed to the establishment of Islam and Arabic as new but fundamental ingredients for the Egyptian identity.

Politically speaking, Egypt became one of the major provinces of the ever expanding Islamic caliphate. A governor was always appointed by the central capital from Medina during the times of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-Khulafā al-Rāshidūn*) and from Damascus after the Umayyad resettled the power, and later, from Baghdad in major part of the Abbasids caliphate. However, when the latter began to show signs of weakness and flabbiness, Egypt as well as many other Islamic regions took advantage and started to break away from the central caliphate in Baghdad, motivated by ethnic ambitions at times and sectarian religious incentives at other times. Whatever the case:

The Abbasids from Baghdad never exerted much control over North Africa, and in the tenth century there were three caliphs, an Umayyad caliph of Spain, a Shia Fatimid Caliph in Tunis centered on Qairawan, and the Sunni caliphs at Baghdad.⁸

Egypt was not an exception because “when Aḥmed Ibn Ṭūlūn was sent from Baghdad in A.D 868 as Governor to Egypt, and there set himself up as an independent ruler, he was regarded as a rebel against the caliph of Baghdad.”⁹

The ruling of Ahmed and his progeny, the Tulunids, (868/905 AD) in Egypt did not last for long because the central government in Baghdad managed to regain

⁷ Gorchan Judith, *Education in Egypt* (London: Groom Helm, 1986), 2

⁸ Waterfield Gordon, *Egypt*. 58

⁹ *Ibid*, 57

control of the province and until 935 AD, Egypt was ruled by governors appointed by the caliph directly, but they were not strong enough to control the country which subsequently fell a victim of a state of utter anarchy.

To fix that situation Muḥammad b. Ṭughj Al-Ikhshīd was appointed in 935 AD / 324 AH as the new governor of Egypt by the Abbasid caliph. Apparently, he was a strong willed leader who managed to put an end to all unrest and disorder in Egypt. Muḥammad belonged to an ancient ruling dynasty of Fargana. The chiefs of Fargana were then called Ikhshidids. But, he subsequently announced his autonomy in 938 AD / 327 AH, and the Ikhshidids dynasty ruled Egypt and parts of Syria and Hijaz until 969 AD / 358 – 359 AH, when Gawhar, the general and minister of the Fatimids in North Africa marched to Egypt:

Muiz gave his minister and scribe, Johar¹ a huge army in 355 A.H and ordered him to march to Egypt; he proceeded gradually, regularizing the administrative affairs. Akhashedi'd troupes could not withstand the assault; with the result that Johar stormed into Egypt on 15 Sha'bān 359 A.H and delivered an address in the name of Muiz from the Grand Mosque of Egypt. In Jumada al-awal 359 A.H, Johar offered his prayer in Grand Mosque of Ibn Tūlūn and ordered them to add 'Hiyya 'ala khair il 'amal.¹

The Fatimid's advance to Egypt was regarded as a major military and sectarian victory for the Ismaili Shia movement over the mainstream Sunni official Abbasids. They became strong rivals to the central caliphate and its authority over the Muslim world.

The Fatimids were conscious of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Egyptians were followers of the Sunni denomination, who embraced the Sunni explanation of Islam for centuries. Therefore, the best way to reach to their minds was through education and learning. Hence, they engaged in state-sponsored

¹ We are using 'Gawhar' in our text.

¹ Najeebabadi Akbar Shah, ¹*The History of Islam*, Vol 3, 1st edn., Revised by Safi-ur-Rahman Mubarakpuri, (Riyadh : Darussalam, 2001), 249

systematization of various religious and intellectual disciplines, coupled with rigorous campaign of *da‘wah* (propagation) and indoctrination which used the learning, especially the religious one, and the educational infrastructure as major component to change the creed of the Egyptians and encourage them to convert to the Ismaili Shia stream. The establishment of al-Azhar mosque as a *masjid jāmi‘* and university was a platform to propagandize their beliefs.

In fact, the visible combination between propagating the sectarian creed and politics became a prevailing feature of that period. Politics intrinsically relied on the indoctrination and learning through different institutions such as mosques and circles of *da‘wah*, and according to many historians and researchers, the “Fatimids influence outside their political domain, however depended on the success of the *da‘wah* against the counter-propaganda of their various enemies.”¹ The Fatimids tended to control the Muslim world and their ambition to stretch the influence of the Ismaili Shia creed made “the purpose of these *dā‘īs* and the *da‘wah* for which they worked was not primarily to promote Ismaili loyalty in Egypt of course; but rather to spread it abroad.”¹

3

The same situation occurred with the Ayyubids who ousted the Fatimids and eliminated their sectarian *madhhab* (denomination) on 1174 AD / 569 AH. They established a new state and restored the Sunni mainstream doctrine which was originally espoused by the Egyptians since the first Islamic conquest on 640 AD / 19-20 AH.

The Ayyubids were also aware of the importance of education for their cause, and that it represented the key to people’s minds and hearts. Subsequently, they

¹ Petry F. Carl, ed, *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt 640-1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1st edn., 1998), Vol 1, 146

¹ Ibid, 145

financed many educational institutions, founded new ones and sought to consolidate their relationship with the learned elite in order to gain their loyalty:

The educational policy pursued by the Ayyubids was required because of the general conditions and the reality fact during that time. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn who was considered the most important executive to lead the state's policy has by all means designed his policy of diffusing knowledge and building schools aimed to serve the interests of his state.¹ [Translation mine]

4

In short, we can say with a high level of certitude that the two periods of the Fatimid and Ayyubid dynasties constituted the most important episodes of the Islamic history in which education and politics influenced each other and their gravitation was visibly witnessed within the historical and chronological succession of events.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the creation of human kind is laid down in the Qur'an in a concise but semantic and well spoken manner. A high destiny is intended for him, i.e. to become the vicegerent of God on earth. The vulnerable and weak creature is commissioned to be the viceroy of the Maker, the Sustainer of the world, and the Creator of everything on earth. Allāh says in the Qur'an: 2 (Al-Baqarah): 30:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" he said: "I know what ye know not.

Then, what is required from man to adequately perform his duties as an active agent? And how could he adapt himself to shoulder this honorable yet burdensome charge?

From this vital point emanates another essential reality that is a major aim of education in Islam, the preparation of man as Allāh's viceroy on earth.

¹ Ḥasan Sh'mīsānī. *Madāris 'Demashq fī al-'Aṣr al-Ayyūbī* [Madrasas of Damascus in the Ayyubid Period], (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1983), 261

Syed Naquīb al-Attās explains it:

Islam made this goal the most balanced and comprehensive and conceivable in the world. Man is regarded as potentially the vicegerent of God on earth. God has given man authority over the entire creation in order to realize this authority in the actual life. He must acquire wisdom that transforms him into a good man and at the same time turns him into a wise master. Education is that process which helps man in acquiring this wisdom. It is therefore a comprehensive process because it trains emotional, intellectual, and sensual faculties simultaneously.¹

5

In addition to this individual goal of education, it also serves as an agent which preserves and transmits culture at the societal level. Such role propels Islamic education to cohere with many other human relationships, in economy, culture, religion, and particularly in politics. The latter influences the lives and affairs of the entire community, directly and indirectly.

The inter-relation of human activities within any sphere of the society and influence of other spheres is a recognized fact. Consequently, the connection between education as one of the active agents in human life and politics, which is another vibrant agent, is undoubtedly an essential relationship. Scholars and thinkers have long recognized this since Plato and Aristotle's times.

Aristotle disagreed with his teacher Plato in the issue of state's exclusive authority to educate the child instead of the family. On the contrary to Plato's conviction that the state has the right to educate Sparta children, Aristotle placed his confidence in the family to discharge that responsibility even if he remained loyal to the general guide lines of the classical education, as in his support for common public education, and his call for the state's intervention to take full charge of the youngsters when they reach the age of seven, by nurturing, disciplining, and educating them to become virtuous citizens:

¹ Syed Muḥammad al Naquīb al Attās, *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, (Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton, King Abdulazīz University, 1979), xiii

The fourth period lasts from seven to the age of puberty, and the fifth from puberty to twenty-one. During these periods education is to be fully public, for reasons indicated before, not merely subject to state regulation, and I take this to mean that it is to be carried out in public schools and training grounds.¹

6

Al-Fārābī's political views especially in his treatise: *Ārā ahl al-madīnah al-Fāḍilah* (Views of the people of the virtuous city) combined the insights of Plato with the requisites of Islam. Al-Fārābī's *madīnah* constitutes perhaps a pioneer attempt of a Muslim thinker to comprehensively associate the scientific and philosophical mould with Medina state, established by the Prophet (pbuh). He begins from the premise that humans cannot attain the perfection they are destined to attain, outside the frame work of political association, because they are constantly in need for assistance from their followers in the provision of their basic needs and their very survival. Al-Fārūqī¹ summarizes this view:

The ruler is at once philosopher and prophet, combining the prerogatives and virtues of both. Al-Fārābī's perceived Islamic brotherhood as requiring that the citizens be like members of an organic body, that labor be according to competence and reward according to capacity. He avoided Plato's communion of husbands and wives, knowing how quickly such a view would arouse the Muslims to condemn him.

As for Dewey's theory, education is a social process that cannot be separated from the total character and tasks of society which holds the key to an orderly social reconstruction¹. He considers the school as a special form of environment that is entrusted by society to assimilate the worthy features of the community, and eliminate the unworthy. It is also entrusted with the task

¹ Frankena K. William, *Three Historical Philosophies of Education: Aristotle, Kant, Dewey* (Chicago: Scott Forsman and Company, 1965), 86

¹ Isma'īl R. al-Fārūqī and Lo'īs Lamya al-Fārūqī, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986), 308.

¹ Dewey John, *Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), 25

of balancing the often contradictory social tendencies characteristic of modern civilization. He asserts:

The individual who is to be educated is a social individual and society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests and habits must be continually interpreted -we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents-into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service.¹

Dewey foresees the result of this association between the educated child and the authority:

When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service and providing him with the instrument of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.²

As we have seen it with Aristotle, Al-Fārābī, Dewey, and many others, the state, or the society was given the legitimacy to shape the educational system as it desires, through its educational policies.

At the same time, education is usually viewed by some as one major determinant of all aspects of change. It plays a significant role in transmitting national cultural heritage, forming political leaders, creating political attitudes, and encouraging common political goals in society. It also has much to do with a nation's political stability. Hence, the educational system is theoretically able to lead or support the capability of the political system.

¹ Dewey, 'My Pedagogic Creed', *The School Journal*, Vol LIV, No. 3 (1897) pp. 77-80

² Dewey, *The School and Society and the Child and the Curriculum* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn., 1991), 29

However, it is evident that despite state's control over the educational system, educated people can always affect the political stability and the existence of the political system itself, in both, positive and negative ways.

It is generally admitted that the stability of any political system would largely increase its capacity of administering the nation and bringing about its prosperity and development. In fact, a very quick view to some stations in the history of Islam would only confirm the existence of such inter-relationship, and we will not fall short to set forth examples effective from the first educator, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who started his mission by engaging his companions in an intensive revolutionary process of refinement, enlightenment, and education, in order to replace and remold the habits and behaviors which they inherited from their fathers and fore fathers by new principles, guided by the revelation and based on the *tawḥīd*. Muḥammad Quṭb sheds some light upon the comprehensiveness of Islamic education:

Islam's method of education is to treat the human being as a whole, in a comprehensive manner which does not leave out or neglect anything, his body, his intellect, his soul, his material life, his spiritual life, and the entire of his activities on earth.² [Translation mine] ¹

Hence, from an Islamic point of view, the relation between education, economy, culture and politics is permanently strong; it reaches levels of cohesion sometimes. In addition to that, the Islamic theory of education always considers the human's potential capability for good and noble achievements. Ḥussain and Ashraf illustrate this distinctive point:

It does not believe that man has a basically tainted nature and spends the whole of his life struggling against it...on the contrary, Islam emphasizes that every child, like his primordial grandfather is born is a

² Muḥammad Quṭb, *Al-Taḏwīr wa al-Thabāt fī al-Ḥayāt al-Bashariyyah* [Development and Consistency of Human Life]. (Cairo: Dār al-Shorouq, 6th edn., 1987), 175

state of innocence and if it succumbs to evil later, it is because of its failure to rise above temptation.²

In fact, these combined factors -education, economics, culture, and politics- cultivate the individual's personality and determine his/her outlooks towards life issues; they also create his/her thoughts. Hence, it is nothing short than a fallacy if someone considers one single factor and isolates it from the others.

When the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) was educating his companions, he simultaneously implanted into them the moral norms of truthfulness, trust, cleanliness, and decency, side by side with an intensive training to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. Allah says: (3: 110), "*Ye are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allāh, ...*"

Abdullāh Yusuf 'Ali comments on this principle:

Doing the right and being an example to others, and having the power to see that the right prevails, eschewing the wrong, and being an example to others to eschew wrong, and having the power to see that wrong and injustice are defeated.²

Abandoning the practice of enjoining virtue and forbidding vice is likely to incur the displeasure of Allāh:

Narrated by Ḥudhaifah (RA), Allāh's Messenger (pbuh) said: By Him in Whose hand my soul is you must enjoin what is reputable and forbid what is disreputable, or Allāh will certainly soon send punishment from Himself to you. Then you will make supplication and not receive an answer. Collected and transmitted by Al-Tirmidhī² [Translation mine] ⁴

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong represents the first step towards political mobilization which aims to change the current circumstances.

Therefore, the connection between education and politics had existed since the dawn

² S.S. Ḥussain and S. A. Asḥraf, *Crisis in Muslim Education* (Islamic Series) (Jeddah: Hodder and Stoughton, King 'Abdulazīz University, 1st edn., 1973), 36

² Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Ḥōly Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, Mary Land: Amana Corporation, 1989), Footnote 434, 155.

² *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad*. [Collection of ḥadīth by Imām Aḥmad] (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1st edn., 1991), Vol 5, 22790

of the Islamic mission. But a question would eventually pose itself: Does such direct relation between Islamic education in its essence and the religion expose the former to politicization?

Indeed, some Islamic educational institutions like the mosques have always been utilized from the early days of Islam for political ends, even by the testimony of the Qur'an, (9: 107-108) which fixes that role:

And there are those who put up a mosque by way of mischief and infidelity to disunite the believers, and in preparation for one who warred against Allah and His Messenger aforetime. They will indeed swear that their intention is nothing but good; but Allah doth declare that they are certainly liars, never stand thou forth therein. In it are men who love to be purified; and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure.

The first ever educational institution in Islam was the house of *Al-Arqam Ibn Abī al-Arqam* in Mecca, where the Messenger of Allāh held secret meetings with his early followers before Allāh commanded him to proclaim Islam openly and bring the divine revelation to the public.

Still the mosques played a prime role in educating and purifying people from the misdeeds of the pre-Islamic era, especially the mosque of the Prophet (pbuh) which was built soon after he immigrated to Medina in 622 AD.

The very fast growth of the Islamic empire and the large expansion of its borders, in addition to the mass conversion of various ethnicities into Islam prompted the concerned authorities to develop a stronger method of education.

This method was expected to break through those foreign cultural structures of the converted communities and refine them to accommodate and proceed in accordance with the Islamic ideological order on one hand, and to develop their complete loyalty to the new political reality on the other.