



A Review of Educational Views & Pedagogical Skills of Imam Abu Yusuf (738-798)

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Abstract

The study aims to discuss how eminent Muslim educationist and scholar, Imam Abu Yusuf incorporate educational setting with epistemological belief for the prospective teachers. The dilemma of Muslim world is the inadequacy of theoretical record of such proficient teacher and researchers. The main aim of the study is to examine Imam Abu Yusuf's educational contributions, his teaching methodological implications in educational setting and his educational perspective with reference to his teacher and students.

Keywords:

Imam Abu Yusuf, Educational Views, and Pedagogical Skills.



Introduction:

Yaqub ibn Ibrahim al-Ansari, al-Kufi or more commonly known as Abu Yusuf. Abu Yusuf was born in declining period of Umayyad caliphate. Abu Yusuf's (b. 113/731) personal name was Ya'qub. According to Islamic calendar Imam Abu Yusuf was born in Kufa, in the 93rd year Hijri, and passed away in the 182nd year Hijri. He lived for 89 years. Imam Abu Yusuf took his lessons from 'Abd al-Rahman bin Abi Laila. His enthusiasm towards education brought him in the circle of Abu Hanifah. From different prominent intellectual, Abu Yusuf acquired knowledge which include: Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Ahmad bin Hambal, Imam Shafi'ee, Sufyaan Thawree, Imam Awza'ee, Abdullah bin Mubarak, Sufyaan bin 'Uyaynah, Muhammad bin Ishaq, Yahyabin Ma'een, Wakee' bin Jarraah⁽¹⁾. He contributed as a phenomenal writer and orator. He wrote numerous books which had lost its existence but his books *Kitab-ul-Kharaj*, *Kitab-ul-Asaar*, *Kitab Ikhtilaf*, *Kitab al-Rudd 'Ala Siyar al-Awza'iis* available in western libraries. Imam Abu Yusuf conducted classes in different ways for approximately 32 years⁽²⁾.

Ali Bin Ja'd narrates that Imam Abu Yusuf used to say: "When my father passed away, I was very young. My mother took me to a washer man to learn and earn (how to wash clothes to make a livelihood). Imam Abu Hanifah's classes were on the way to the washer man. I left the washer man and joined the classes of Imam Abu Hanifah"⁽³⁾.

Imam Abu Yusuf developed a sharp intellect, a spiritually cleansed heart and a deep and vast understanding, due to his immense and meticulous urge for learning and teaching. While considering his teaching, he has precision and clarity which persuaded his student to attend his classes. Bishr told Hanbal, "I can't afford to lose that which I had gained from sitting in this class due to my misbehavior towards Imam Abu Yusuf"⁽⁴⁾.

1.1.Kufa and Education:

Kufa was not only the birth place of Imam Abu Yusuf but is considered the realm of renowned educationists. The Quran says " Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting towards all which is good, enjoying what is right, and forbidding what is wrong"⁽⁵⁾.

In the society there must be a group of believers fully engaged in educating the common people. Therefore, Umar (RA) sends Ibn-e-Masood with the words "I have preferred you with him over myself, so take him"⁽⁶⁾. Hazrat Umar wanted Kufa to be a place of great scholarship and education. Ibn-e-Masood was eminent educationists who taught four thousand students. He was amongst the few men who were approved by Muhammad (PBUH) to teach Holy Quran. Narrated Masruq: ... I heard the Prophet says that take (learn) the Qur'an from four (men): `Abdullah bin Masood, Salim, Mu'adh and Ubai bin Ka'b⁽⁷⁾.

He taught Abu Hanifah, whose famous disciple was Imam Abu Yusuf. He holds an important position. Similarly Imam Abu Yusuf got the chance to collect jewels of education with 108 highly intellectual scholars and educationists. Abu Hanifah taught religious rules to Imam Abu Yusuf in Kufah and in Madinah, his teachers were Malik b. Anas, Layth b. Sa'ad and others. One of the most important methods of teaching was direct contact between teacher and student,

through the oral transmission of knowledge. As a result many students and scholars travelled to meet and listen from the teacher directly. The classes were conducted in the form of seminars, tutorials, conferences, symposium and consortium. Imam Abu Yusuf attended those seminars with his fellows' students. Reciprocal teaching was prevailing strategy of his time. Students and teachers were gathered in seminars and having dialogue, discussion, prediction, questioning and clarifying educational issues. The idea of contact directly with the teacher to acquire the Islamic knowledge was an important part of unbroken chain of knowledge that every student was keen to maintain.

1.2. Teachers and Educational Appetence:

Imam Abu Yusuf studied from Imam Abu Hanifah for Twenty Nine years. He was among the most favorable and diligent student. Teachers of Imam Abu Yusuf i-e IbnKaleem, Shaibani, IbnIshaq, Abi Khalid, Bin Muslim etc. He had studied multiple subjects such as biography of the Prophet, scholastic theology, tradition, literature, Qur'anic commentary, and history. Imam Abu Yusuf intrinsically equipped with metacognition since childhood. It is about "thinking about thinking as a critical component of successful learning"⁽⁸⁾. It is about self-control and self-reflection on strengths and weaknesses. Metacognitive experiences are more likely to occur in circumstances that require a great deal of attention, a very high level of "conscious thinking". In fact while observing Hanafi School of Thought and Imam Abu Yusuf the dominant characteristics were conscious and persistent thinking.

He has untiring and indomitable lust for education. Ibrahim Bin Jarraah said: "I personally heard Imam Abu Yusuf saying: 'We studied with innumerable students. However, only he who sufficed with milk, benefitted from his knowledge.'" He always listens to his teacher with auscultation. Husain bin Waleed said, "I once heard him discussing a difficult phenomenon. His tongue (i.e. speech) appeared as if it was moving (flowing) like an arrow striking its target. The reason of his strong argument was his critical thinking and deep meditation during his lessons. He attained high commendable powers of observation and analysis and sharpness in thoughts and words. He never relied upon single teacher rather would consult multiple of them to draw perfect conclusion. In one of the incident, particularly with Muhaddith, A mash who smiled and said, "Abu Yusuf! I remember that Hadith from before your father got married, but only today, after you explained it to me, I learnt its interpretation (i.e. meaning) and it is perfectly correct, my mind did not even go to that (explanation)"⁽⁹⁾.

1.3. Diligence and Students:

Imam Abu Yusuf was a great scholar and educationist of his time. He had an immense and comprehensive insight of Quranic education to develop analogy. According to him Quran provided primary source of all educational research. He always proposed Ijtihad (self-directed learning) to his students. The approach actively involve students to acquired high order outcomes; understanding, contextual meaning, reasoning and critical thinking. Ijtihad basically deals with spiritual development & welfare of society. He believed that students with logical reasoning (inductive and deductive) could easily comprehend

educational issues. He was of the view while doing self-directed learning; students would present perennial and pragmatic approaches towards education and learning. Imam Abu Yusuf was himself a voracious and rigorous student and expected his students to behave in same manner. Ali Bin Aljad said "I have never seen such a magnificent scholar like Imam Abu Yusuf"⁽¹⁰⁾.

2. Library and Scholarship:

Ali Bin Isa says: "Once I went to visit Imam Abu Yusuf. I thought he will be resting, thus I would not be able to meet him. When I knocked, immediately I was granted permission to enter. When I entered, I found Imam Abu Yusuf in a (separate) room with stacks of books around him. He always appreciate reading books. He build small library in his house and spend hours in it. The exact figures of books are not known but he read thousands of books. "If the wealth of today's people is measured by their luxury cars, Muslims in the period between the nineteenth and thirteenth centuries would be measured by what they have in terms of books and manuscripts."⁽¹¹⁾ Imam Abu Yusuf always endorsed research based education at tertiary level. He was of the view that students should be equipped with the research based skills which help them to face and accept the new demands of society ⁽¹²⁾.

2.1. Accolade of Contemporary:

Imam Abu Yusuf expertise was acclaimed by his contemporaries. He studied from Imam Abu Hanifah for Twenty Nine years. He was among the most favorable and diligent student. Imam Abu Hanifah used to say: "I had no student more punctual for classes than Imam Abu Yusuf." Ahmed Bin Hanbal was one of his student regarded him as the most captivating teacher. Muhammad Bin Jareer Tabaree has mentioned that Imam Abu Yusuf was a great scholar and a great Haafiz-e-Hadith, he was famous for his memorization of Hadith and was very sharp minded. He could learn 60-70 Ahadith merely by listening and then narrate them to the people. He had such passion for learning and knowledge that he would gave up special days. Imam Abu Yusuf said that he spent plenty of years in the service of Imam Abu Hanifah. Except for the days he was sick, never was he ever absent. Even on the days of Eid he was present. Similarly another incident occurred when Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Zufar had a discussion, so Imam Abu Hanifah concluded "Dominion in knowledge is reserved for Imam Abu Yusuf; you (referring to Imam Zufar won't be able to gain it." Indeed his yearning for education and learning as commented by Haroon Rashid "Due to the occupation of being a Judge, he conducts lessons during the nights (to the people). Yet, his quality of teaching is such that he doesn't teach with any book or any notes (i.e. short-notes)." Another incident when people were conspiring about Imam Abu Yusuf position so Haroon Rashid said "In the name of Allah! I have examine in every field of knowledge and found him to be the most experienced, accomplished, talented and well versed. IbneAbiImraan said, "I have not seen anyone possessing what Imam Abu Yusuf had."⁽¹³⁾

3. Influential Implication on 21st Century Teachers

Imam Abu Yusuf remained the most fascinating and influential student cum teacher of his time. His life as a student and teacher comprised of thirty nine

years. He had an advantage to be belonged to Kufa, which was a haven for students and teachers. Kufa was a mount full of gemstones. Imam Abu Yusuf had an opportunity to study from great scholars and educationists. He had enormous contributions in the field of education. He was an expert of multi-disciplinary field primarily educational competencies. How his educational competencies benefitted for prospective teachers? He propagated multiple methods and strategies for teachers to arouse the hidden treasures among students which are discussed below:

a. Education by Preaching, Advice and Commandment:

Imam Abu Yusuf was of the view that Quran recommend preaching and advice Preaching (teaching) helps in modification psychological and social behavior of an individual (student) towards society⁽¹⁴⁾. According to Islamic teaching methodology, advice and commandment of Quran leads to the moral development of learner. Imam Abu Yusuf once said “Don’t you fear Allah?! You have made the Qur’an a customary speech?! The one, who recites the Qur’an, should recite it with humility, submission, and fear for Allah and awe (respect)”. He had a great reverence for holy book. The students critically analyze the benefits of those commandments and when implemented in real life, provide with a better results.

b. Teaching by Repetition:

Educational objectives: reading, writing, speaking and comprehension could be polished through repetitive attempts. Imam Abu Yusuf would constantly write each and every educational matter and discussed with his teachers simultaneously. For instance Imam Abu Yusuf said: "I would like to hear Hadith from Abu Muhammad Sufiyan." (When this request was put forth to him) Hazrat Sufiyan immediately narrated 40 Ahadith. When Hazrat Sufiyan left, Imam Abu Yusuf said: "Now test me with those Ahadith which Sufiyan narrated."⁽¹⁵⁾ The above mentioned incident raised the importance of repetition in each and every aspect of knowledge. “Repetition is known as **Tikrar**, the learners to cultivate learning and reasoning by repetition, so as to acquire the knowledge owned by great prophets, philosophers and educationists.

c. Teaching by Narrative Method:

A teaching became effective when presented in narration. It produces a desirable outcome of long-lasting intellectual impression, comprehensiveness and expedition. Imam Abu Yusuf was of the opinion that Quranic stories build psychological evidence towards events in student’s minds. Ali Madini narrates that when Imam Abu Yusuf came to Basrah in the year 180 Hijri, a few of us would attend his seminar in order to gain benefit. His method of teaching was that he used to narrate ten Ahadith and thereafter explain Fiqhi points⁽¹⁶⁾. He would narrated incident from Quran and compare them with real life experience. The purpose was to create clarity and coherence.

d. Teaching by Dialogue Method:

Reciprocal teaching is one the most prevalent and vital method used in teaching. It was introduced by medieval Muslim educationists. A conversation with students serves as a purpose to draw attention and triggering their intellect.

Imam Abu Yusuf was one the eloquent debater of his class. Dawood bin Rashid said, "When I used to find out that Imam Abu Yusuf was engaged in any scholarly discussion, it appeared as if he was scooping handfuls of treasures of knowledge and insight ⁽¹⁷⁾He believed that every individual must participate in classroom discussion. Multiple perspectives of student highlighted on single topic through discussion.

Imam Abu Hanifah instructed his student Imam Abu Yusuf to be cognizant while writing ⁽¹⁸⁾. He believed that incorrect sentence leads to misinterpretation and misunderstanding of whole idea. Traditionally dictation method of teaching became prevalent throughout ages. It occupies central position in the student listening, writing and pronunciations skills. Dictation methods helps student to erase grammatically, semantically and phonetically mistakes. The student may develop a) full grip on grammatical structure, b) semantically and syntactically sound sentences and c) pronounce each term properly.

4. Outcomes of Teaching Methods:

Hazrat Talha bin Ja'far said, "Imam Abu Yusuf was famous and eminent. His knowledge and virtue was of a very high stage. His knowledge, wisdom, nobility, dignity and rank had reached their perfect state. He was the first to spread the knowledge of Imam Abu Hanifah far and wide."⁽¹⁹⁾The spreading of Hanafi school of thought was not an easy task. The principal of Hanafi school of thought based on Quran, Sunnah, Companion, Analogical proposition (Qayas), preferences (Istihsan), Personal Opinion, Unanimity of Theologians (Ijma) and Traditional distribution (Orff). The understanding of such principles needs rigorous thinking and meditation. Imam Abu Yusuf believed that arousal of critical thinking among students must be the prime objective of teachers.

5. Critical Thinking:

The concept of critical thinking that is evolving today is largely shaped by the West. The scientific philosophy of Western ideological thought is totally contrasted with the Islamic philosophy^(20&21). According to the Western perspective, critical thinking connects the mind primarily to the basic elements of logic and reasoning, which are based on an empirical point of view. Instead, thought offers revelation as a guide for thought activities. Therefore, the concept of critical thinking in Islam is based on values and ethics. These differences clearly affect the application of the concept of critical thinking in the classroom. Imam Abu Yusuf has always emphasized critical thinking, for example he instructed the teacher to focus on critical teaching as it would also influence pedagogical and didactic approaches. Less effective teaching practice will lead to unclear underlying concepts. Bishr told me: "I cannot lose what I have gained by sitting in this class because of my misbehavior towards Imam Abu Yusuf"⁽²²⁾. The importance of critical thinking falls into three main categories; 1) critical thinking dispositions, 2) critical thinking skills, and 3) values that guide critical thinking.

6 Guiding values of critical thinking:

Values are divided into parts: Faith and Etiquette. For confidence, the capacity to deduce a solution depends on individual essential values. The inference is applied to Allah. This applies that critical thinking is an instrument for growing

trust in Allah. This means that critical thinking is a means to increase faith in God. Imam Abu Yusuf said, "I am very familiar with both subjects. One cannot be chosen over the other." He believed that the Qur'an and Hadith were guides for everyone (student / learner).

7. Mission of Teachers:

Imam Abu Yusuf highlighted an engaging positive, collaborative, goal oriented, investigative, and meaningful global learning environment. He promotes student- centered learning by empowering students through their own queries to develop knowledge. As a lifelong process, it lays a strong foundation for stimulating learning. Analytical and logical thinking was deemed such that students would obtain meaningful knowledge, not merely recall facts. When student render personal discovery, new data will be generated. He preached to teachers that students should do their own experiments so that they may understand the task by themselves. Teachers need to foster active engagement and meaningful communication to guide students whenever they need them.

Conclusion:

Imam Abu Yusuf life is the lighthouse for upcoming generation. Imam Abu Yusuf flourished in the time when great scholars, Tabiyain and Tab-e-Tabiyain lived. In that era, 'knowledge, interpretation, Hadith, history, the four Madhabs etc. were welcomed, discussed and taught in almost every home. Imam Abu Yusuf conducted classes in different ways and numerous students benefitted from his classes. His students became great philosopher and thinker of their times. Imam Abu Yusuf accolades had never achieved having read a few books or spending a few years in studying rather, it is the result of his immense sacrifice and devotion to sacred knowledge. Imam Abu Yusuf taught multidisciplinary subjects. He argued that teaching and learning is unstoppable process. The role of teacher and students towards education must be pure and subtle. He stressed that teaching must have precision, coherence, concreteness and related to tonic.



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