# Tutorial Instruction in the History of Muslim Education

By

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## Abstract

*Tutorial instruction is an individualized form of instruction. We find the earliest examples of this educational system in the Moslem World during the $9^{th}$ and $11^{th}$ centuries. Throughout these centuries, Moslems exhibited successful examples for one-to-one or small group tutorial instruction conducted by instructors called mu'ids and danishmends in madrasas which were official educational institutions and by the scholars in their own houses in Today, tutorial instruction offers a bright future in age of internet.*

**Keywords**: *tutorial instruction, instruction, müslim education, medieval, Islamic education.*

## 1. Introduction

Humanity has made progress in answering the question "What shall we teach to our children?" but it has not yet been able to make satisfactory improvements in answering the question "How shall we teach to our children?" That is to say, we educators have not been able to succeed in improving the methods of teaching as much as we have done in enriching the content of teaching. Therefore, we believe that our colleagues should focus their investigations on the methods of teaching. The present research was made to indicate the fact that such investigations are necessary.

Historical Field Survey Technique was applied in this study, especially the essential sources of the History of islamic Education were reached and thus a non-prejidicial and correct decision was attempted to be made. The data collected from the sources was supported by scientific provision and rational conclusions and it was attempted to reach certain syntheses.

One of the most interesting fields of didactic science worthy of investigating is individualized teaching and one of its examples, tutor instruction. Tutor instruction is the most popular form of teaching in our time. Our wish is that more researches be made in the field of teaching.

Prof. Dr. Helen C. White says in one of her articles: "Teaching is one of the fine arts" (Sharp. D. Louise 1957. p.237). Actually, teaching is an art having tens of methods techniques. Art expresses the fact that many factors that are not yet estimated are involved in the act of teaching.

Tutor is a technical term having been used in education and Roman Law, Etymologically it originates from the Latin language. it means EXCUTO, trustee, guardian, defender ete. in Roman Law. The terms "Private teacher (English), private tutor (French), privatlehrer (German), guardian (Spanish), zorganto (Portuguese), ete" are the eommon expressions used to describe this word. The original meaning of the term is a private teacher, especially one who instructs a single pupil or a very small elass, sometimes one who lives with the family of his pupil or pupils. Tutor is a university teacher who guides the studies of a number of students (Hornby, AS. 1974, p.933). That is, a tutor is a teacher who works with one student or a small group, either at a British college or university, in the home of a child (Procter, Paul. 1995, p.1572). A tutor is a person who is charged with the instruct on and guidance of another, as a private teacher, as a university officer serving as adviser to undergraduates assigned to him, or as a teacher especially at a British university ranking belovv an instructor (A.Merriam-Webster. 1967, p. 958). Briefly,

tutor means a member of the instructional staff who, through informal conferences, instructs and examines students, sometimes while maintaining residence in a dormitory with the same students. Tutor is an undergraduate or graduate student seleeted and recommended by professors to assist students by means of private conferences (Good, Carter V. 1945, p.433). A tutor can instruct the student(s) at school or at home and he can be an official staff or civil person.

Individual study method has occupied a wide application area among the present day teaching methods. For instance "Mastery Learning" developed by Bloom is an "individualized instruction". One of the typical examples of individual instruction is "Tutor instruction". Tutor instruction method can be applied at every stage of instruction. The inexperienced teacher means that he may be a student studying a few years ahead of the students he is instructing or he may be an adolescent. The basic aim of employing tutors in instructional fields is to have them improve in their profession. it is only a secondary aim in tutor instruction to have tutors help or guide students in their learning process. That is, tutor programs aim mostly to increase the self-respect of the tutors and to increase their authority and responsibility in the direction of the progress of the students whose instruction they have undertaken. Several pedagogical combinations are experimented between the tutor and the students in the process of tutor instruction (Hesapcıoğlu, Muhsin. 1988, p. 195). Thus, two goals are reached at the same time. in our time, one of the frequently applied methods in elementary education in Europe and the USA is tutor instruction.

Employing student-tutors help little children benefit from the knowledge and skills of grown-up children. The hypothesis that lies in the origin of this method is that a grown-up child can understand the manners and problems of a little child and thus, for instance, a $4^{th}$ year student can help a $2^{nd}$ year student in learning reading. Hümanist educators believe that the roles in teaching and learning can be changed. it is a natural result of this thought to employ student-tutors. The advantages expected for the tutors are;

- a- Learning a new talent,
- b- b- Developing a new understanding regarding the role of the teacher, and the hardships and obligations he encounters in preparing the subjects he is to teach.

For some schools, employing student-tutors appears to be a new efficient method to form teaching and learning. Temporary and experimental applications have been proved to be positive. A program of this kind has been conducted for many years in "öpen schools" in England and thus, as has been stated, the natural potential of schools has been successfully used (Hesapcıoğlu, Muhsin. 1988, p.195). Student-tutors may be employed especially in teaching reading and writing skills, in such branches as dravving, handicrafts, football, swimming, volleyball, and in laboratory studies in which experiments are conducted.

Briefly, individual observation made by another person is the essential characteristic of tutor instruction. in this method, students are given sufficient time to learn the content. This principle was also the basic part of mastery learning (Hesapcıoğlu, Muhsin, p.228).

Let us go on with our explanations about tutor instruction by shortly focusing on the concepts of "tutorial plan" and "tutorial-perceptional plan". Tutorial plan is, as originated at Harvard University, a plan for carrying out specific individual guidance through the assignment of students to individual instructors, whose responsibility it is to develop effective study habits in the student and relate his intellectual activities to his whole life, the plan involves weekly conferences, preparation for each conference usually consisting in the accomplishing of specific reading assignments and sometimes the writing of papers (Gage, N.L. 1979, p.566-571).

Tutorial-perceptional plan is as originated at Colgate University, a plan of individual guidance involving the assignment of each incoming student to a general counselor (preceptor), who is concerned with the whole development of the student rather than instruction. in any given subject; in the upper 3 years of the college, students are assigned to tutors whose responsibility it is to help students work out special

problems of scholarship and research in certain designated areas (Good, Carter. p.433-343).

*Tutor's tasks:*

a.   Observing the students,
b.   Determining the level of the students preparedness,
c.   Recognizing the students,
d.   Planning the instruction process,
e.   Preparing the instruction atmosphere,
f.   Motivating the students, encouraging them,
g.   Assisting the students, by advising, directing, and giving examples,
h.   Sharing his knowledge and experiences with the students,
i.   Supporting the students by motivating them
j.   Recording the progress made,
k.   Inspecting and evaluating students at certain intervals.

*The Principles of Tutor instruction*

A tutor conducts his duties mentioned above obeying the following principles:
a.   He should respect the children's personality,
b.   He should not harm the students. This principle is more significant than being useful to the children because the physical health and mental hygiene of the children is more important than anything else
c.   Multi-dimensional improvements (cognitive, emotional, and behavioristic) should not be impeded and the progress should be freed from any obstacles.
d.   What is essential is that the behaviours should be changed towards more positive. The scientific way to do this is to learn.
e.   Acquistion and changing of the behaviours that required changes should be put on an order and extended to a certain time frame.
f.   Cognitive, emotional, and behaviouristic learning dimensions should be conducted in a balance.
g.   Ali the theoretical and practical activities should be directed to a certain aim. The tutor should be aware of the fact that ali these activities serve to improve his own career as well as that of the students.

*Tutorial Instruction in Medieval Islamic Cultural Environment*

There are two applications similar to the "individualized instruction" in the Islamic cultural environment
1.   The instruction conducted by Mu'ids who were the staff members of the Madrasas.
2.   Individualized instruction conducted in the houses of the scholars.

The first one is that Mudarris and Mu'id are titles frequently used in connection with the teaching staff of madrasas. Mudarris, namely professor, is the person in the center of the teaching at the madrasa. However, individualized instruction was performed only by mu'ids.

> The term mu'id comes from the Arabic verb "awede" which means "to come back, to visit a patient, to become a habit, to repeat, to be experienced, and to have mastery" in science ete" (Ibid. p.434).

> The term mudarris may come to mean professor, chief instructor, or even the direetor of instruction of the madrasa. However, the mu'id held the lovvest rank; he was the under-tutor or "repetiteur". The mu'id was probably chosen by the professor from his advanced students, and his duty was apparently to instruct he junior pupihs and to make them repeat their lessons till they knew them by heart (Kotinsky, Ruth. 1933, p.188).

> Among the duties of a mudarris, there are the ones such as to join in the administration of a madrasa, to plan instruction and to apply the program ete.

The mudarris probably had administrative duties and responsibilities, but teaching constituted his main aetivity. The translation of the term mudarris by "chief-instructor", therefore, seems quiete appropriate. This translation is justified also by other available information, especially by the fact that there were several professors in the Nizamiya madrasas, but that only one professor in each madrasa bore the title of mudarris, and he enjoyed very great prestige. The mudarris was probably responsible for the program of instruction and arrangement of the courses, thus controlling the distribution of the subjects to be taught among the instructors of the madrasa (Molüf, Lüweys Al-Muncidn. 1973, p.536).

> However, the only duty of a mu'id is to instruct. He sits with the audience and listens to the lecture given by the professor. When the lecture ends, the funetion of the repeater starts. His duty is to go över the same subject again, explaining the complicated parts and helping the less-gifted students to understand the topic (Talaş, A. 1939, p. 50). The madrasa gathers in its body many a student with different learning abilities. So, mu'ids were needed to help students with different abilities and to have them reach to the level of other students. Sources have recorded examples proving that two mu'ids were employed being supervised by each professor during the reign of Ayyubids (Al-Magrizî, 1270, p.374 - Al Suyutî, 1321, p. 157).

Even sources mention men who gave instruction in the Nizâmîya only on one of the many subjects taught in that school; they gave instruction as full-fledged teachers and not in the capacity of mu'id (Al-subki. 1908, pp.154-155). Another instructional assistant personnel whose duties were similar to those of mu'ids in madrasas was "faqih".

The term faqih has the well-known meaning of jurist. Faqih is also found used in connection with madrasas as a technical term, and has been interpreted to mean "student" (Talaş, A. Ibid, p.56). Yet, we have the belief that the term "faqih" was used to name learned and distinguished students studying jurisprudence rather than ordinary ones Ali these details would indicate that Ibn Jubayr used the term "faqih" for a full-fledge professor (Abû'l-Faraj, 1890, p.425).

In the fîfteenth and sixteenth century Ottoman madrasas we find a subdivision of the madrasa into several parts. Some of these corresponded to specialization in different directions and the others indicated stages of accomplishment in education. İn these madrasas we meet, besides mudarris and mu'id, also the terms danishmend and softa. These two terms both indicated students, the danishmend being an advanced student (Sayılı, Aydın, 1948, p.43).

Briefly, we can say that between the 13th and 18th centuries in madrasas in the Turkish, Iranian, and Arabic cultural environments, there were people with no official identity and function. These people, serving together with officially appointed mu'ids as someone other than mudarrises, were named "faqihs" in the madrasas of the Seljuk Empire, "danishmends" and "softas" in the madrasas of Ottoman Empire. We may call these people "experienced unoffieial students" or îunoffieial advanced students. These people;
1) Prepare students for the lesson before the professor starts instructing.
2) Retell the lesson after the professor has fînished his instruction,
4) Explain the topics and the units that have not been understood well by the students,
5) Help single students or groups of two, three or more students and have them catch up with other advanced students.
6) Provide pedagogical and guidance support to students having difficulty in perceiving some subjects or in adapting to rituals thus give individualized instruction service.

The second one is that the history of using houses for educational purposes goes back to the time of Prophet Mohammad. However, Moslems have not considered houses as places to be used for public education. The educational function was put on masjids before and even after the madrasas were found, on madrasas that were built in different periods. Yet, this practice has not prevented the houses of ordinary men as well as scholars being used for educational purpores. Although practice of teaching the Qur'an in houses has received little sympathy (Ünver, A. Süheyl. 1946, p.24), those places have been used for education in case of need (Pedersen, Johs. p.350-376).

Private houses were used as teaching centers before the masjids were founded. Prophet Mohammad used the residence of "Erkhâm", one of his friends, for this purpose and explained the teachings of Islam in that house (Qur'an. El-Ahhzâb, verse 53). The houses used for educational purposes and visited on certain days at certain hours by people coming to receive instruction were called "manzill". We are describing briefly some of the most famous manzills here.

1. Yakub bin Killis (d. 990), the vizier of the Fatimid Caliph el Aziz Billah had sound knowledge about the İsmaili Creed. He received his students in his residence especially on Fridays. Among his students were both young and aged people (Ell-Abdevî. 1902, p.97).
2. The lessons in the house of Ebu Hayyân et-Tevhidî (d. 1009) were attended mostly by adults. The topics included the problems of philosophy such as epistemology, antology, and aesthetics. Explanations would be made on the ideas of Greek Philosophers. Tevhidi would direct the discussions (Shalaby, Ahmad. 1954, p.30).
3. Ebu Süleyman es-Sicistanî (d.1012) had one blind eye and therefore he would not go into crowds. Instead, he would teach his lessons in his home There were both young, and adult people, and even scholars among his students. He would not only lecture but also conduct the discussion technique. Ebu Süleyman would act as a juristprudent in learned discussions (El-Maqrizî. 1270, p.341).
4. One of the most important scholars conducting private lessons in his own home vvas Sîna (980-1036) He would lecture in his home in the evenings. He would explain subjects from his own works Eş-Şifa and Al Qanun. He would answer questions (Ebu Hayyân al Tawhidi. p.43,49).
5. Al-Ghazalî (1058-1111) received his students in his residence, after lecturing for a short period in Nishabur Nizamiye Madrasa. He spent his time in his home, in Thus by lecturing and by conducting religious service (El-Qıfti 1902, p.282-283).
6. Ali Bin Mohammad el -Fasihi (d.1122) taught Nahiv (Syntax) in Nizamiye Madrasa. He was blamed for being a Shiite. He resigned and he began to teach in his residence (El-Qıfti. p.420).
7. Mohammad Ebu Tahir (d.1180) was a poor scholar. He converted his house in Alexandria to a center of instruction (Al-Ghazali, 1306, p.3).

Ali those we mentioned above are some examples of famous men conducting rather individualized lectures in their own homes in the period of Medieval islam World. We may admit that there were thousands of others acting in the same way.

The lessons that the tutors in Medieval Islamic Cultural Environment taught were generally: Reading the Qur'an Basic Islamic Teachings; Hadith,; Islamic Jurisprudence; Tefsir; Interpretations of the Qur'an); Kelâm (Philosophy of islam); Islamic Ethics; Literature; Grammar; Poetry; Medicine ete (Al-Maqrizi. p.341)

It is certain that there were, although rarely, others condueting tutor instruction on subjects other than those mentioned above. We may conclude, depending on the data above, that those people conducted tutor instruction and selected appropriate teaching methods and techniques

a. according to the age of their students,
b. according to the conceiving level of their students,
c. according to the number of their students,
d. according to the characteristics of the subject they taught,
e. according to the level of difficulty and complexity of the subject,

f.   according to the time frame being short or long.

It is interesting to say that almost ali of the mu'ids, faqihs, and private teachers giving tutor instruction throughout the medieval history of education in the Moslem World were men. These people used different teaching methods. Among these methods and techniques:

a)   It was observed that they used   "Thakrir" (lecture, declaration, confirnıation...) medhod.
b)   It was understood that they used istigwabb (sokratiyye Catechetical) method.
c)   It was felt that they used munâgasha (discussion, dispute, arguing) method.

## 2.  Concluding remarks

As a result of this study, it was concluded that tutor instruction which is one of the techniques of individualized instruction and which gained great popularity especially in Europe and in the USA in recent years is not a new technique. it may also be admitted that the term "pedagogue" used during the Ancient Greek and Roman Times, to name the professional tutors teaching to the children of aristocrat families carries partly the same meaning as tutor.

Tutor instruction has a place also in medieval history of education in the Moslem World. Tutorship was conducted both by mu'ids (assitant professors) in madrasas as an official duty and by some scholars or private teachers giving private lessons in their own homes to an individual student or to a group of two, three, or even more despite the fact that what they were doing was not their official duty. However, unlike the tutors in Western world, these people were not professional teachers. Most commonly, they conducted their teaching for God's sake (fi-sabilillah). in addition, their students varied not only in terms of age but also in terms of social class.

Mu'ids or tutors would determine the teaching method by considering the level of the students. The most commonly used teaching methods were lecturing and catechetical methods. Discussion was also employed in advanced groups.

We may say that it is no more a must in this age of Internet that the tutor and the students come face to face. A tutor can present to his students several alternatives with various characteristics for learning at several levels and students can proceed their learning activities following the alternatives appropriate for their learning levels; they can even be tested through internet. As one tutor can teach to more than one group at a time by means of this technology, a student should be able to receive instruction service from more than one tutor. Because it has been understood in our time, that one of the greatest rivals of humanity is time. The individual should be able to realize the highest level of improvement and maturing and be able to start production. The essential spirit of tutor instruction is to reach this goal.

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