

# The Evolving Role of the University Professor Navigating the Past and the Present

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**Abstract:** Wondering about the profession of university professor, as a profession entrusted with task of producing knowledge and forming future minds that will improve the life in its complexity and aspects, requires knowing the principles on which this profession is based since its inception and tracing it in its historical development with the development of thought, universities, societies, and educational curricula. In this article, we trace the principles of this profession in the Arab-Islamic civilization, or rather its equivalent profession in the ancient era, which Al-Jahiz refers to in his treatise on teachers as “teaching or disciplining adults” through what famous scholars wrote about, such as Ibn Al-Muqaffa, Miskawayh the philosopher, and Al-Jahiz himself. We also trace this profession through the recently developed ideas by a Canadian researcher based on her field experience in the Canadian province of Quebec and in France. The goal is not only to stand on the common principles related to the educational process in which the Arab civilization meets the Western civilization, but also to stand on the constants of this profession that are not affected by time.

**Keywords:** University Professor, teaching, learning, methodology, creation, pedagogy.

## 1- Introduction

Today, the scientific necessity requires a reconsideration of the university professor profession and researching into the methods of practicing it and its principles upon which it is based in order to look for the means that enable it to be renewed with the renewal and change of the era, which is characterized by what some call modern inflation (1), making it a locomotive for the progress and development of societies, especially in Arab societies that have a real challenge represented in the large number of university students in it compared to other societies and the percentage of students in them is small compared to the number of their elderly people. It must be noted that the profession of university professor is a modern profession associated with the emergence of universities in Western Europe before its spread throughout the world as it is known today. Accordingly, it is a profession arose in a specific historical context influenced by a new concept of knowledge, science, and truth in the West, when education began to deviate from the control of the church and the clergy and separate from the monastery of worship, it gradually became self-contained institutions that operate in complete independence from the traditional religious educational institutions under the state’s control, planning and direction. However, this does not mean that the university professor, who is the product of this relatively new institution in the history of education, does not inherit a set of pedagogical and ethical principles, crystallized by humanity, since the launch of the educational process in ancient eras. These principles are summarized by those scholars, who are interested in the history of this profession in the West in the Socratic legacy (attributed to the Greek philosopher Socrates), but as we will see, they are similar to some of the principles formulated by Arab Muslim thinkers in ancient times in some aspects.

The following question arises in relation to the profession of university professor: Have the principles of this profession evolved with the evolution of thinking, universities, and communities? what are the barriers to its optimal practice? and what qualities should a university professor possess in order to meet the Era challenges?

## 2- An outline of the profession of a university professor: Socratic Legacy

Many researchers, who are interested in the profession of a university professor, agree on its basic pedagogical function, which derives its meaning and vitality from the existence of two fixed parties, each one of them indispensable the other one, and the absence of one of them causes the absence of the other one, they are: The university professor on one hand and the university student on the other hand. This profession in modern universities is still in its essence and seen through the relationship that connects these two parties and is defined by a set of principles and perceptions of knowledge and the

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entire educational process, as crystallized by Socrates<sup>1</sup>.

These principles and perceptions are based on the fact that the university professor should lead the student, in any discipline, to find an existing truth - may be existing in him, even if it is absent from his mind and thought - but he does not see it because he is imprisoned in the world of darkness, in which he lies, closing on himself and his ignorance that prevents him from seeing the facts as they are. The pedagogical process that is based on the relationship between the university professor and university student is based on negative justice (*égalité négative*), as indicated by Laurence Olivier, represented in giving each of them a specific percentage of what is due to him in consideration of the educational process:

There are two parties, one knows the truth and the other ignorant of it; the first party came out into the light and the other party still lies in the darkness, and this is not strange. This researcher also notes that a university professor considers information presented to him by the student in a classroom is useless because the professor is controlled by this preconceived view of the student, which strips him of his important share of the necessary knowledge for every thinking process<sup>2</sup>. What is the share of both parties then?

The abundant share in the educational process, of course, shall be granted to the professor, who is a scholar entrusted with the task of leading the other party to truth and knowledge. Hence, the greatest responsibility is entrusted to him, and this is what grants him an authority he shall practice over those who do not possess knowledge and those who do not know what they do not know, and guiding and leading him like a blind person to the scientific truth, whether it is of the natural facts or those related to man and societies, and then bringing him out of darkness into light, whereby he can then claim that he has reached to seeing things and matter as they are in themselves and in the best way. Obviously, this practice is subject to a set of rules, as it has been customary since ancient eras to restrict the educational process and the authority of the teacher with a set of conditions aim to making him practice his authority over the student with intelligence and wisdom.

For this purpose, a set of techniques called pedagogy has been devised, which are varied techniques aim to reduce the severity of the negative effects of this authority on the educational process, which must be indicated that it is summed up in the method that helps the student to get out of the cave of ignorance to the garden of knowledge and rid him of the illusions in which he is immersed in because of his ignorance and the dominance of prejudices over him. Here it must be noted that the contradiction between truth and illusion is the principle according to which the educational process derives its legitimacy as it aims to mold the student in a way that does not make him imagine illusions as facts. This principle could not have been established in this way without believing that the left individual without education is ignorant by nature and believing in the division of human beings into scholars and non-scholars. Therefore, the opinion of the scholar teacher can only be an opinion that is not subject to prejudices, the authority of imitation, habit, and the prevailing opinions of the common people<sup>3</sup>.

Before returning to this concept of the educational process inherited from Socrates in modern universities, which still raises controversy in the global academia interested in higher education in general and the profession of university professor in particular, it must be noted that this concept intersects with the understanding of education by the ancient Arabs and Muslims, especially philosophers and thinkers of education at the peak of the development of Arab-Islamic civilization from the second to the fifth century of Hijra, but it is distinguished from it because it is influenced by the Socratic legacy, as a result of the convergence of Arab-Islamic thought with the Greek philosophical heritage, as a result of the translation movement that has been completed and matured during these three centuries.

### 3- A general discussion about the profession of a university professor in view from the Arab and Islamic legacy

From the most famous works that have found, and through which we can draw features of the Arab-Islamic theory of education in its pedagogical level, as it is termed recently, the collection of techniques that the "Educator of Adults" must possess, as Al-Jahiz terms, which is the equivalent of a university professor today, in order to form his students and lead them to truth and correct knowledge, is the "Advice for Teachers" by Al-Jahiz himself<sup>4</sup>, "Al-Adab Al-Kabir and Al-Adab Al-Saghir" by Ibn Al-Muqaffa<sup>5</sup> and "Refining Ethics and Purifying Races" by Miskawayh<sup>6</sup>. These three scholars are considered among the most important thinkers of Arabs and Muslims throughout history, and it is not surprising that each

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Olivier. (2004). "Ne plus savoir quoi penser ? Un principe de pédagogie universitaire à enseigner les sciences sociales, *Expériences de pédagogie universitaire*". Paris. L'Harmattan. p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Op Cit . p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Op Cit., p. 28- 29.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Jahiz Abo Uthman (159- 255 AH) One of the most famous Arab scholars in the first Abbasid era.

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Al-Muqaffa (106- 142 AH) A contemporary of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.

<sup>6</sup> Miskawayh, a Muslim philosopher (330-441 AH) The most important Arab Muslim thinker in ethics.

one of them attaches importance to the educational and scientific process.

If we look at Miskawayh's philosophy of the educational process, or what we can call it as the ethics of the profession<sup>7</sup> through which the teacher's relationship with the student is determined, we see that it is determined by a set of characteristics that the student must have in order to make the entire educational process successful, as well as from a set of techniques that the teacher must possess in order to succeed in his mission and appropriate social conditions that help both parties to perform their tasks. Miskawayh calls the set of these qualities and techniques the term "manners". In order not to make the reader think that it is etiquette for children [equivalent to preparatory school students today] Miskawayh confirms that it is also suitable for adults [equivalent to university students today], he says "These good manners for children are also useful for adults they accustom them to love virtues and grow up on, so vices do not burden them, and after that all that is drawn by wisdom and determined by the Islamic Sharia and Sunnah becomes easy for them"<sup>8</sup>.

The student must show evidence of his submission to the authority of his teacher, and this submission, which is the cornerstone of Socratic theory, still arouses widespread criticism in the academia which focuses on the educational process in the modern university (We will return to it later in this article). It seems to Miskawayh that through one's acquisition of a set of powers, the most important of them is "the enthusiasm for the discretion human actions first, so that he becomes perfect in this discernment, and then he is called wise"<sup>9</sup>. The wise person in this case is the only student who can acquire knowledge and find the truth by learning, therefore a set of physical signs must appear on him before signs of another type "the first thing that occurs in him of this strength is bashfulness, which is the fear of the appearance of something ugly from him, therefore we say that the first thing that must be examined and used as evidence for his mind is: Bashfulness, as it indicates that he has feels something ugly, and with his feeling, he warns himself to avoid this thing, and he is afraid that this thing will appear from him or in him. If you look at him and see him shy and sagging with his tip, collapsing with his limb to the ground, not arrogant, that is the first indication of his quality, and the testimony for you is that his soul senses.

With the beautiful and the ugly... and this soul is ready for discipline, fit for care: It must not be neither neglected nor left"<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the student, whether young or old, must show bashfulness and fear towards his teacher, just as he must get used to be, as Miskawayh emphasizes, taciturn and does not speak anything except the answer. In the presence of someone who is higher than him [his teacher] he will listen to him [his teacher], keep silent before him, and use to serve him and everyone is higher than him. If his teacher punished him, he must not cry out or seek the intercession of anyone, these are the acts of slaves, and they are very weak, and he must use to be obedient to his parents and teachers"<sup>11</sup>.

Miskawayh's theory of education and learning concludes that it can only be understood through the classical cognitive system epistemological system, including the Socratic method, which makes the teacher a master and the student like a slave, so it calls for disciplining him with a big stick (look in Michel Foucault's book "Discipline and Punish") if it is required, and makes the teacher monopolize organized violence just as the state according to Max Weber, and this is what modern pedagogy categorically rejects<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, Miskawayh affirms that knowledge and luxury are on opposite sides; he calls for the creation of rigor, roughness, and harshness, without which the student cannot move up the ladder of knowledge. "The virtuous Persian kings did not grow up their children between their modesty and elite, and they were grown up in a harsh and rough life, and they did not know luxury, and many of their leader, in our time, transfer their children to their homelands to grow up there, so they become accustomed to these morals and move away from the morals of the people of bad countries. I mean that he who is grown up contrary to this doctrine of discipline, we shall not hope for his success and work on reforming and correcting him, as he has become like the wild pig that does not desire to be tamed; his rational soul becomes a servant of his bestial self and his angry self, as there is no way to tame the wild lions that do not accept discipline. Likewise, there is no way for someone who has been grown up in this way, accustomed to it, and has grown a little older to be tamed. This is the person who we hope him disengage from his morals by gradualism and return to the ideal path through repentance and companionship with good people and people of wisdom and focusing on philosophy"<sup>13</sup>.

For Miskawayh, Focusing on philosophy means that the student liberates himself not only from the authority of imitation, habit and superstition, just as Socrates called before him, but also from the authority of lust, bestial instincts, and immersion in sensual pleasures, and all of this cannot be done without the help of an educator and teacher, who must be from a good people, according to Miskawayh, stern, from the people of estrangement and roughness of life, uses force,

Laurence Olivier, « Ne plus savoir quoi penser ? », p. 22- 29. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Miskawayh, *Discipline of Children and Discipline of Adults*, Cairo, El Thaqafya El Diniyah Library. p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Op Cit., p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Op Cit., p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Op Cit., p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> Laurence Olivier, « Ne plus savoir quoi penser ? », p. 29

<sup>13</sup> Miskawayh, *Discipline of Children and Discipline of Adults*, p. 71.

among other means, if necessary, not necessarily by beating, like a teacher of boys, but by restraining means, like threatening and intimidation, if necessary, but he must start taming himself first by “teaching himself before others” as Abdullah Ibn Al-Muqaffa<sup>14</sup> says in his book “Al-Adab Al-Kabīr and Al-Adab Al-Saghir,” and this is in perfect harmony with the famous saying of Socrates “Know yourself by yourself”<sup>15</sup>.

Ibn Al-Muqaffa says “Whoever appoints himself as a [teacher], he must start with teaching himself and correcting it in his biography, earnings, opinion, and speech, so his teaching with his biography will be more informative than his teaching with his tongue. Just as the words of wisdom please ears, so the wise actions please eyes and hearts; and the one who teaches and disciplines himself deserves respect and preference more than the teacher and discipline of people”<sup>16</sup>. It must be noted here that unlike Miskawayh, who focuses more on the morals of the student, but Ibn Al-Muqaffa focuses more on morals of the teacher: The teacher of wisdom and the educator of the elders, who is also called “writer” or “wise scholar” who is resembled his student with water without it the “student” who is resembled as water and his student who seek for his knowledge and wisdom as the seed that cannot row, ripen and bear fruit unless it is watered by him, then he says “with moral, minds grow and become pure”. Just as a seed buried in the ground cannot get rid of its dryness, show its strength, and rise above the earth with its flowering, fragrant, freshness, and growth, except with the help of water that runs deep to it and rescues it from the harm of dryness and death, and grants it strength and life, Allah willing.

Likewise, the minds are hidden in its place in the heart: It has no power and life, and there is no benefit in it until it is employed by the discipline, which is its gains, life, and pollen. Most of the discipline is logic, and most of logic comes with learning. There is neither a letter in its lexicon nor a name from the types of its names except that it is narrated and learned, taken from a previous teacher, from a speech or a book. This is evidence that people don’t innovate its origins, and its knowledge does not go to them except from the all-knowing, the wise”<sup>17</sup>. This is how Ibn Al-Muqaffa puts “the all-knowing, the wise” teacher in an important rank position that he derives from a rhetorical and constructive lexicon drawn from nature and the record of growth and fertility.

In order for the teacher to be worthy of the rank of virtuous and wise, in whose charge is entrusted the responsibility of teaching generations of students, he must be freed from the authority of whim and lust, and or if we want to use a contemporary language used by the theorists of university pedagogy in arts and human sciences, he must be freed from the ideology that blinds sights, falsifies facts and drowns its practitioner in delusion “and the wise person must avoid proceeding with the opinion that he does not find in agreement with, even if he thinks that he is certain. And the wise person must know that opinion and passion are antagonists and that it is the business of people to delay opinion and give preference to passion, so he opposes that and seeks that his passion still procrastinating, and his opinion is aiding. If the wise person is unsure about two things, and he does not know which of them is correct, he must consider his passions to them, and he will be warned”<sup>18</sup>.

Like most philosophers, Ibn Al-Muqaffa triumphs for opinion over passion and reason over lust; in the language of our era, knowledge over ideology<sup>19</sup>. Rather, he goes further when he advises teachers before the learners that in case of doubt about something or an idea and confusion about the truth in it, they must verify if it is closer to their whims and avoid it seeking objectivity and knowledge. Then, learning is a mental sport and a systematic method in which matters are calculated accurately and its goals are clear, and it cannot be in this way unless the teacher tells his subject and invests his efforts in it so that it does not go to waste in the wrong place. Ibn Al-Muqaffa says “One of the doors of success in learning is that the face of the man with which he turns in terms of knowledge and discipline is in accordance with obedience, and he has a bearing and acceptance for it. His hardship does not go away without singing, his days do not end without overburdening, he does not devote his share to what he fails in, and he is not like a man who wanted to populate the land of charge, so he planted nuts and almonds, and the land sat down, so he planted palm trees and bananas”<sup>20</sup>.

In conclusion, Ibn Al-Muqaffa’s educational theory attaches great importance to the teacher's methodological rigor and belief in relativism, and not claiming the knowledge of everything and delving into topics of knowledge that are outside the scope of his competence. It also attaches importance to what is recently called the epistemological conditions of scientific knowledge, which require the teacher of wisdom in any field of knowledge to possess scientific and objective integrity, and all other ethical conditions that must be available in the world, especially with regard to the conformity of theory to practice and word to action. Here, Ibn Al-Muqaffa leads us to the evidence for knowing the ideal teacher in a

<sup>14</sup> Abdullah Ibn Al-Muqaffa, *Al-Adab Al-Kabīr and Al-Adab Al-Saghir*, Beirut, Dar Sader, 2005 (p. 24).

<sup>15</sup> Socrates is a Greek philosopher lived in the 15th century BC.

<sup>16</sup> Abdullah Ibn Al-Muqaffa, *Al-Adab Al-Kabīr and Al-Adab Al-Saghir*, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Op Cit., p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Op Cit., p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Gabel, « Idéologie » in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, France 1986

<sup>20</sup> Abdullah Ibn Al-Muqaffa, *Al-Adab Al-Kabīr and Al-Adab Al-Saghir*, p. 35.

paragraph appears the form of wisdom entitled “evidence for the knowledge of the scholar” in which he says “the knowledge of what the scholar perceives of matters, his abstention from what he does not comprehend, his adorning himself with honors, the manifestation of his knowledge to people without showing him pride or wonder, his knowledge of the time in which he is, his insight into people, his taking justice, his guiding guidance, and his good dealings are his intercourse, his levelness between his heart and his tongue, and his investigation of justice in every matter, and his open arms in what he called out, and his arguments in what he did, and his good insight are evidences to the knowledge of the scholar”<sup>21</sup>.

It seems that the educational theory of the Arabs and Muslims, especially with regard to the morals of the teacher of adult students “disciple of adults” is a reference, as Al-Jahiz calls. And their means, i.e. their pedagogy, in the modern concept of the word, is not complete unless we meditate Al-Jahiz’s own concept of the educational process through his famous treatise “Advice for Teachers,” which is not limited to teachers of children and juveniles, as may come to mind at first sight, but goes beyond it to teachers of adults, which is equivalent to the university professors today. Al-Jahiz defines the teacher saying “they say that the name teacher is derived from knowledge and the name writer is derived from literature, and we have learned that knowledge is the origin and literature is a branch of, literature is either creation or narration. And they call him polite in general,”<sup>22</sup> then he lists the types of teachers saying “we have found that for every type of everything people need to learn, teachers such as teachers of writing, mathematics, impositions, the Qur’an, grammar, prosody, poetry, news, and archaeology. And we have found the first ones had used to appoint teachers to teach their children writing and mathematics, then astrology, music, medicine and geometry, and they had ordered to teach the citizen’s children farming and building [architecture], so they had not exposed any of these types that people had appointed teachers for, except for those who teach nothing except writing, mathematics, poetry, grammar, impositions, prosody, astrology, and names of days, months and transitions”<sup>23</sup>.

Al-Jahiz begins his treatise by highlighting the value of the teacher in society as the best of the creatures, and there is no one deserves reverence and glorification more than him, after prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, and he highlights their suffering in teaching children, which exceeds the suffering of sheep herders and horse tamers, although he does not hesitate to criticize some types of teachers with harsh criticism by pointing out their shortcomings, “And we have no favor for anyone in that after Allah, who invented that for us and guided us to it and took our forelocks to Him as the teachers whom He subjected to us and reached their need to what is in our hands. And these are the ones I mock, complain about, and dispute with, and I hold the elders accountable for the fault of the younger ones, and I judge the diligent to ignore the neglectful. And I do not inherit the instructors from slowing the children down from what is meant for them and stopping them from diverting their hearts to what they memorize and study, and the teachers are more unhappy with the children than shepherds of sheep and masters of skill.”<sup>24</sup>.

In this way, Al-Jahiz believes that the teaching profession cannot be practiced by any person except after he has proven his competence to do so by attaining the highest levels of knowledge in a field of knowledge, so that he becomes famous for that and reaches his reputation among statesmen, so the kings attract him and entrust him with the education of their children. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that the teachers of adults are usually from the elite of the people and those who are known for their knowledge, such as judges, wise men, leaders, ministers, and others”. It is also inferred from the commandments of kings to discipline their children and correct their actions, as they entrusted them with their affairs and their conscience to realize the perfection in disciplining their children, and the kings would not entrust those teachers without their high level in literature and passing their examinations successfully. You, Allah favors you; if you investigate the number of grammarians, prosody, hypothesis, arithmetic, and calligraphers, you will discover that the majority of them are excellent authors. Do you suppose there are many narrators, judges, wise men, leaders and leaders, presidents and gentlemen, famous writers, poets, pastors, and authors among them?”<sup>25</sup>.

After praising the teachers and presenting their types, Al-Jahiz moves to what is more important, extending the pedagogical means that the teacher must be mentally and intellectually prepared for in advance. It requires maturity that entitles him to his age and his development in the degrees of knowledge to acquire it, so he affirms on the preference of deduction over memorization the mentality of reason, discrimination, scrutiny, criticism of opinions, sifting them, implementing opinion in them, and not taking them for granted, so he is satisfied with memorizing and ruminating them, and they unanimously agree that they do not find a word less lettered, nor more profitable, nor more general in usefulness, nor urging for clarification, nor inviting clarification, nor satirizing those who left understanding and fell short in understanding than the saying “The value of every person is what he does well”. The person who says “the study of men

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<sup>21</sup> Op Cit., p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Jahiz, Advice for Teachers, Literary treatises, Beirut, Al-Helal Library and House, p. 203.

<sup>23</sup> Op Cit., same page.

<sup>24</sup> Op Cit., p. 200.

<sup>25</sup> Op Cit., p. 201.

impregnates their cores” does well, and the wise leaders, the people of deduction and thinking hated the quality of memorization of the place of reliance on it and the intellect’s omission of discrimination until they says “memorizing is the soul of the mind,” and because the user of memorization is just an imitator, deduction is what leads its practitioner to the certainty and trust.

The right case and praiseworthy judgment: When memorization perpetuate, it harms deduction, and when deduction perpetuates it harms memorization, even if memorization is of a more honorable status than deduction. When a person ignores sight, meanings do not rush to him, and when he ignores memorization, meanings do not adhere to his heart and remain in his chest less. The nature of memorization is different from the nature of deduction; with which they treat and seek help with is agreed upon, which is heart emptiness for something and desire for it, and with them completeness is realized, and virtue appears<sup>26</sup>. Al-Jahiz does not deny the importance of memorization in educational attainment as one of the means by which knowledge is acquired, but he prefers it for its rational approach. Deduction, as it is the compass that leads to the truth or what he calls certainty, and is what modern university pedagogy emphasizes on, which requires the professor to deduce, is an essential means of knowledge and that he develops it in his students, because memorization teaches them laziness, lack of self-reliance, and the inability to think when something is confusing for them in its absence<sup>27</sup>. To develop this skill, the student must insist on asking himself and his teacher, and as Ibn Al-Muqaffa says “he must be inquisitive”<sup>28</sup> where he asks a lot about what he does not know, there is nothing wrong with him, on the contrary, it is an indication of his intelligence, acumen and diligence.

Al-Jahiz, who believes that education is an art or an industry, does not confine himself, as he put it, to mentioning the advantages of deduction, but rather he gives a lesson in what the language of the teacher must be “the all-knowing, the wise,” the discipline of adults or children alike,” then he defines the arguments of the writers gets rid of them with the easy, close word taken on the vague meaning.

The teacher makes the student taste the sweetness of brevity and the comfort of sufficiency, and warns him of affectation and his abhorrence of the phrase, for the most honorable of all that is what is understanding for the listener and does not argue for interpretation and tracking, and is limited to its meaning, neither negligent nor superior to. Therefore, choose from the meanings what is not hidden with the complex wording, drowning in multiplication and affectation, so what more does he care about consuming the meaning with the subtlety of the word and its ambiguity to the listener after being consistent with the saying and the meaning is still hidden and not revealed by the phrase. The meaning is still based on concealing it, and the expression has become meaningless and an empty adverb<sup>29</sup>. If the communication between the teacher and his student passes first through the language, it is more appropriate for the teacher not to resort to lose expressions and to verbosity and tautology, but on the contrary to choose from the phrases and concepts the most accurate and most consistent with the denominator. “And the worst [teachers] are those who prepare the drawing of the meaning before the meaning is prepared, out of love for that word and a passion for that name until it begins to drag the meaning to it and stick it to;”<sup>30</sup> This spoils knowledge and is harmful to the student, who will not reach clear and clear meanings, so things become confusing to him, terminology and concepts are formed on him, and he does not acquire anything from knowledge, so the entire educational process fails.

The profession of teaching is, above all, an industry of meaning, especially when it comes to teaching literature and what we call today the social and humanities, then it requires its practitioner, whatever his scientific specialization, to match the word in meaning and concept with the subject of knowledge. The word does not have a meaning outside the context, and accordingly, Al-Jahiz against digging through books in looking for words to transmit them mechanically and casually in contexts other than the one that produces them. This is what some teachers do today when they rely on memorizing books and conveying them in their lessons to their students without scrutiny and criticism. “In sum, every honorable or low meaning has a type of expression that is its right, its share, which it must not exceed or fall short of.

Whoever reads books of the rhetoricians and browses the collections of the wise men to benefit from the meanings, he will be on the right path, and whoever looks at them to benefit from the words, then he is on the wrong path. The loss here is in the weight of the profit since whomever seeks to extract words and be cautious about them and use them carelessly until he utilizes them before their time and in the wrong location.”<sup>31</sup> Then Al-Jahiz, like Ibn Al-Muqaffa and Miskawayh, ends up contributing to the formulation of the ethics of the profession: The teaching profession, adult education in particular, is what makes it suitable for every time and place, including our time, so that he warns against the consequences of dependence and negligence, and even plagiarism, which is manifested in copying the ideas of others,

<sup>26</sup> Op Cit., p. 200- 201.

<sup>27</sup> Laurence Olivier «Ne plus savoir quoi penser ? » , p. 30

<sup>28</sup> Abdullah Ibn Al-Muqaffa, Al-Adab Al-Kabīr and Al-Adab Al-Saghir, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Jahiz, Advice for Teachers, p.206.

<sup>30</sup> Op Cit., Same page.

<sup>31</sup> Op Cit., p. 207.

attributing them to himself, and passing them on to his students, “When he [the teacher] relies on ease, indifference and plagiarism, he will not gain any benefit, his tendency will be difficult for him, humiliation will size him, and bad habit will consume him. The bad side: When the teacher memorizes certain words from a specific book or from a man’s utterance, then he wants to prepare for those words their portion of meanings, this makes him a miser and a thief, reprehensible because of his words, grandiloquent for its meanings, disordered composition, disorganized. If his words pass by critics of words and scholars of meanings, they will underestimate his mind and disregard his knowledge. Then know that compulsion in everything is permissible, and wherever it occurs, it is reprehensible ..... And how good his condition is as long as the words are heard by himself, narrated in himself and not immortalized in his books”<sup>32</sup>.

The real teacher is diligent and passionate about knowledge and research, spends all his efforts to develop and enrich his knowledge, and relies only on himself and distances himself from appropriating and stealing the efforts of others. He must be honest and sincere in addition to quick-wittedness, humility, good nature, and distance from affectation. “He is of bad temper, slow in speech, blunt in sharpness, very arrogant, and in spite of that he is keen to be considered among the rhetoricians, severe in manners”<sup>33</sup>.

#### **4- Review the results of a field study about the professional prepare of the university professor: an example from Western University Teaching in France and Canada:**

One of the important field testimonies that draws the attention of every researcher in the characteristics of the profession of the university professor and what distinguishes it from other professions what given by Sophie Gélinas, a Canadian university professor touches on the differences she notes during her studies in the Canadian Francophone province of Québec and later in France between the two university teaching systems in each of France and this Canadian province related to the teaching profession and the pedagogical means that each of them aspires to. Her testimony appears in the form of a report she submitted in a book published in French entitled “Teaching the Social Sciences: Experiences in university pedagogy”<sup>34</sup>. Gélinas begins her report talking about her path in university attainment as a first-year student at the University of Quebec, where she is involved in university cooperation programs with France, and accordingly she moves to study at the Higher Institute of Political Studies to finish her fourth year of university before graduating. The author says “When I was asked to write down my notes about teaching in Quebec universities, French universities, and my understanding of the pedagogy of university teaching, I felt elated about the importance of that. It was founded seventeen years ago in the Canadian province of Quebec's educational system, which has its own rationale and procedures when compared to French institutions.. I am astonished by the differences between the two educational systems with regard to the methods followed by the university professor in each of both systems in conveying his message of knowledge, and thus his relationship with the student. I do not intend to say for sure which is better, but to approach university education in two ways that often seem to be at odds. Through my educational career in Quebec and France, I have come to develop some reflections and ideas related to the different approaches in university education that pertain to the relationship between students and professors.”<sup>35</sup>.

In this way, the importance of Gélinas’ notes about the university professor's profession lies in their emanation from field practice and a comparison between two different educational systems, even contradictory ones, as she says, knowing that the comparison in general is what usually stands behind the development of skills in any field of education and science, whatever the nature of the profession is. Gélinas believes that pedagogy (the university teaching profession is an art), and perhaps it can be considered an invitation (Une Vocation), but teaching, before everything, is a profession that must be learned, skilled, practiced and constantly developed, so that there are no secrets that must be discerned to become a good pedagogue, and this is fortunate for the professor. There is nothing that hinders the professor’s imagination and his freedom in conveying his message or anything that hinders him from innovation, choice and thinking, which are among the basic characteristics that characterize human thought until it achieves its completeness. In this way, she suggests, through accurate examples drawn from her experience in Canada and France, to present the issue of university teaching and the pitfalls that impede it, considering that this teaching, from her point of view, is a method conveys knowledge and an exchange relationship: Any influence and affection between the teacher and the student,<sup>36</sup> and in order to do so, university teaching must be placed within the general context of university education in Canada and France, a context that, in fact, applies to most universities in the world.

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<sup>32</sup> Op Cit., p. 208.

<sup>33</sup> Op Cit., p. 206 – 207.

<sup>34</sup> Sophie Gélinas, « Apprentissage, pédagogie et enseignement : Perspectives québécoises et françaises » in *Enseigner les sciences sociales : Expériences de pédagogie universitaire*, p. 75

<sup>35</sup> The above reference is already mentioned with its full title authors, date of issuance, and the publishing house that issued it.

<sup>36</sup> Op Cit., p. 76.

**4.1 Relationship of University Education with the Market:** To delve into the matter of university teaching, Gélinas believes that it is necessary to recall the difficult conditions that education is going through in Canada and France because it is deeply affected by the values of neo-liberalism. There is no question that the rise of these new ideals and their incorporation into the educational system has a substantial influence on university curriculum, as well as the level of knowledge and specialties desired. Due to their policy of supervising university education and directly interfering in it, the two governments in Quebec and France find themselves are forced to allocate an important part of their budget to education. Accordingly, in order to reduce the huge expenditures on universities to spend them in other fields by the government, their officials seek to apply the logic of the market on the educational system, that makes the economic feasibility, efficiency and ability to compete are the conditions are adopted in judging any university with success or failure, which causes damage to institutions that do not respond to these conditions from a financial point of view, and this is negatively reflected on the entire educational process. Therefore, many universities that witness a significant deterioration in their financial capabilities resort to raise university registration fees - which is a burden on their students - and contract instructors and increase the number of assistant professors who lack experience and occasionally competency, and whose financial circumstances are problematic because they are paid on an hourly basis. What made matters worse is that these institutions, like the case in France, no longer have sufficient funds to purchase necessary equipment for students, such as media and scientific equipment. In summary, as Gélinas says, university education has become subject, little by little, to the law of supply and demand and to the will of economic companies. As a result of the scarcity of financial resources, universities that teach literary, linguistic, and social sciences majors find themselves in an unenviable position, negatively affecting the programs they teach, the number of students, and thus the profession of the university professor itself.<sup>37</sup>.

**4.2 University Teaching as a Way of Conveying Knowledge:** Gélinas considers that her move from Canada to France enables her to note multiple trends in the educational process and to develop her ideas on the topic of university teaching. The traditional way of considering pedagogy as a method of conveying knowledge and science, despite its relevance, as you say, remains incomplete because the concept of knowledge conveying requires that the process be linear in one direction from the teacher to the student, a process that turns out in practice to be more complex than we imagine.

The idea of transferring knowledge from the professor to the student must be accompanied by mental and intellectual processes necessary to represent and digest this knowledge. These processes consist of the means and methods that enable the student to have a good understanding of the quantity of information that the teacher conveys to him in its raw form. To clarify this, Gélinas brings up a representative comparison that she used to hear from her teacher in her primary school. This teacher considers that the student s like a carpenter who builds a house [from wood in Canada], this house is his knowledge acquisition, and therefore it considers it necessary to provide her student with the materials that enable him to build this house, which is the necessary knowledge in the educational process. But the most important thing is to provide them with the tools that they can stack one by one in the bag of each student in order to use what he needs from them in every stage of this construction, but the possession of these tools requires a great effort from every student: He must has the ability to think, criticize, doubt, question, infer, argue, write, edit, and compose, all of which are competencies necessary for learning<sup>38</sup>, and is obvious that the teacher in the educational process the main responsible party.

According to Gélinas, the teacher must be passionate about his profession and love the major the teaches to attract the interest of the student, and the issue of passion and attachment to the major is indispensable, and it is the cornerstone on which his entire profession is built. Here, the teacher's task is not to perform a show or to win over and impress the audience, but simply to be active and energetic. A good teacher is not necessarily the one who possesses extraordinary rhetorical abilities, but rather the one who is able to motivate his students to work and persevere in an intelligent and effective manner without making them feel tired and bored.

Teaching is certainly not a process of entertainment or self-recreation, but it must take place in conditions of calm, comfort, and complete harmony between the teacher and his students so that they can understand and acquire the information that the teacher conveys to in the best way. Hence, Gélinas does not feel any embarrassment in criticizing the university education system of France as she has experienced, and she wonders about the pedagogical foundations of what is called in France "public lessons" (Les cours magistraux) which are the lessons that form the backbone of education in French universities, as these lessons are usually held in large amphitheatres - theaters called "amphi-théâtres" - in which the number of students in one class sometimes exceeds one thousand, which makes it is difficult to avoid the chaos and noise that is generated from side-talks and the late commers in groups and alone.

All these aspects that Gélinas notices in the public lessons in French universities breaches the mutual respect between the professor and his students and limit his prestige and his control over matters, which affects the entire educational process. However, the most important criticism is the one directed by some French university professors themselves during her

<sup>37</sup> Op Cit., p. 77-78.

<sup>38</sup> Op Cit., p. 79.



experience. Those who act with pride and superiority resulting, according to her belief, from a sense of preference: The preference of scientists over the general public is a French feature par excellence,<sup>39</sup> and this is what she noticed at the Higher Institute for Political Studies, in which studied; it is a behavior that greatly hinders the process of positive exchange between the teacher and the student, which is a necessary process for cognitive achievement. Although she acknowledges that such behavior is not a common phenomenon in French universities, and the same may happen in Canadian universities, she expresses her astonishment at what she saw in many corridors of the aggression of some professors towards students who were behaving in good faith and asking legitimate questions about some issues or ideas that seemed ambiguous to them, by using offensive and unacceptable words that did not help the educational process proceed in the best way<sup>40</sup>. The misunderstanding is not in remarking on a student's mistake, but in commenting on a teacher's mistake.

The student's mistake, provided that it is not repeated, is an integral part of the learning process, and what the professor considers a mistake can be another way of approaching a phenomenon, especially in the humanities. It is necessary for the student to possess a certain level of self-confidence to learn how to solve the problems which he encounters and not to be satisfied with repeating what the teacher teaches him, and it is a trust that his teacher is supposed to help him gain and not on the contrary by frustrating him and being a barrier between him. The professor's encouragement of the student and respectful comment on the ideas he presents crowns the educational with success.

What is the benefit of the educational process at the university? this Canadian researcher and university wonders. What shall we teach the future elite? Let the purpose of a class discussion be for the student to show his intelligence and defend his view of the truth? Hence, the professor's refusal of the student with arrogance and harshness or mocking him [this may happen in any university in the world] puts barriers in front of the educational process, as it is assumed that each of the students individually and the whole group in one class can develop their mental and scientific abilities<sup>41</sup>.

Intellectual and scientific integrity is the pivot upon which the entire educational process revolves, as it establishes mutual respect between the professor and his students. And since in the humanities and social sciences, there are many interpretations of a single phenomenon, and it is not usually a single truth that is fixed and humbled by a universal consensus around it, the professor must not claim the possession of this truth. In this case, it is better for the professor to explain to his students that he is in the process of analyzing a particular phenomenon from a specific point of view, and to show them other points of view, and not to hide his inclination to one of them. In this way, motivating students to ask questions becomes necessary to turn from being consumers and passive receivers of the knowledge that the professor provides to, to participants in crystallizing it by thinking and searching for solutions, which ultimately makes them participants in its production.

Accordingly, multiple questions can pop up at any moment in the classroom, and the professor is not able to answer them. Gélinas sees that the professor, in this case, instead of involving himself in a wrong answer or avoiding the answer to escape from the situation, he breaches the principle of scientific integrity here, which strips him of the credibility and confidence of his students in. He must simply answer "I don't know," and this is not a mistake or a weakness, as anyone might think. On the contrary, it could be a position of strength before his students, who are sure of his integrity and respect for them. As an ideal university professor in this case must complete his answer with "I do not know" by opening pathways for his students from which they start to look for an answer or answers that satisfy(s) them. In summary, Gélinas believes that the relationship between the professor and the student must be based on appreciating the other and giving him the position, he deserves as an equal and partner in the educational process, and that he has a degree of intelligence and intellectual power that enables him to criticize and express his opinion in politeness and respect. Respecting and appreciating the dignity of the other party does not mean that the student or professor has no right to doubt the ideas and facts proven by the other party.

According to the researchers, intellectual freedom is the basis of the educational and scientific<sup>42</sup> processes, and at that time the professor and the university environment in general must work on developing it in the mind and personality of the student. Conditions must be created so that the discussion between the professor and the student and between the students themselves in the classroom - under the supervision and guidance of the professor - is productive and always leads to practical results. In other words, the student gets through the discussion a benefit in the progression in cognitive achievement by acquiring important new information and knowing facts in his major that he is not exposed to. To prove the correctness of her pedagogical approach and her view of the successful educational process, Gélinas gives a live example that she draws from a typical theoretical lesson conducted by an experienced university professor at the University of Quebec in Canada, with the aim of training his new university colleagues on making successful lessons. She describes this lesson, saying "Since the first minutes of the lesson, the statements and notes of the professor on the

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<sup>39</sup> Op Cit., p. 79-80.

<sup>40</sup> Op Cit., p. 82.

<sup>41</sup> Op Cit., p. 82-83.

<sup>42</sup> Op Cit., p. 82-83.

students provoked a discussion did not end until the end of the class. All students participated in this discussion, without exception, with great interest, activity, and vitality. The professor contented himself with guidance, counseling, briefing his students, organizing, and facilitating the discussion. He occasionally opened tracks for thought and addressed questions about the topics discussed in class. At the end of the session, the fundamental parts of the lesson that the professor had planned ahead of time for himself and the students were evident to us, but in a more lively and richer form than the usual classical explanations that rely on memorization and dictation, in which students suffice with passive acceptance only, as is the case in the general lessons that we mentioned above<sup>43</sup>.

Thus, Gélinas, along with her novice university colleagues, concludes after this typical lesson that the students acquired and represented the knowledge in the best way and in depth, and everyone became convinced that this method adopted by the professor was the most effective method, and that group thinking was much richer than individual thinking. Here, we must recall this fact, which is represented in the fact that the effective educational process requires great efforts, which must be accompanied above all by a feeling of joy of discovery<sup>44</sup>.

There is another issue with which Gélinas concludes her vision of the profession of a university professor through her experience as a student and a professor through a comparison between the French and Canadian university systems in Quebec, which is the issue of evaluation: Evaluation of the work of students according to which they rise in the levels of knowledge and progression in the ladder of university education, which is considered a reward for the student similar to the wage that the employee or worker receives for his work.

At this level, the Canadian systems in Quebec and the French are very different. In most French universities, the evaluation takes place after taking an exam at the end of the semester. The aim of this exam is for the student to score 10 out of 20 points to pass to the higher level, and scoring more points is a good thing all the students seek to, and scoring the highest points is the great success which all students dream of. Gélinas recounts, while recalling her study in France, that she asked a professor the following question “Could you explain why it is impossible for a student to get the highest score?”<sup>45</sup> He responded by noting that her asking in this manner demonstrates that she is no less brilliant than him and that she, like him, is capable of teaching at the university level. Gélinas identifies the shortcomings of this evaluation method of students' capabilities, and she says that the evaluation causes them severe tension and, accordingly, paralyzes their cognitive abilities and from acquiring knowledge and demonstrating their acquisition of.

This is what often drives them, according to their own terminology, during the exam period to “stuff their brains” and memorize the information provided to them in the lessons without examining its contents and in a period not exceeding two weeks to prepare themselves for the exams. This is in addition to creating a framework for competition among the students, which often leads to tension in the relationships among them and enhances the spirit of individualism in them instead of enhancing the collective tendency among them. On the contrary, Gélinas notes that the method of the province of Quebec and most of its universities and programs are different from the French method. This method belongs to a university that makes the evaluation system a half agreement between the professor and his students, which makes the exam not exceed 50% of the final grade assigned to the student.

Therefore, the evaluation scales are fixed in a consensual way gradually over the course of the semester of the academic year, and then the final grade assigned to the student shall be realized in stages, and the student in this case can obtain the maximum degree as a culmination of his efforts. In this case, the professor accepts that the student who is not satisfied with the degree assigned to him can spend more effort to enrich his work and correct and rectify his mistakes. In this way, the professor's acknowledgment of the student's right to make a mistake and giving him an opportunity to rectify it becomes a praiseworthy matter and an important part of the successful and effective educational method that helps the student to assimilate knowledge, enrich it and base it on solid foundations that makes him to avoid tension and a sense of frustration, and his hole destiny is determined by his mental presence in a short period, i.e. during the preparation period for the exams or in the briefest period during the exam itself in which a person is honored or humiliated, since his assessment is carried out in stages and it is a fairer assessment for him<sup>46</sup>.

## **5- Conclusion: Profession of the University professor between the ancient legacy and the requirements of educational modernity**

We see that the profession of university professor as it is today intersects with the ancient legacy, which is best represented by the educational philosophy of Socrates, as confirmed by Western academics who focus on the aspects of this profession and its history; this Socratic legacy, which we find similar in the ancient Arab-Islamic thought through the writings of

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<sup>43</sup> Op Cit., p. 83-84.

<sup>44</sup> Op Cit., p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> Op Cit., p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Op Cit., p. 85.

Ibn Al-Muqaffa, Al-Jahiz, and Miskawayh in the level of educational and general educational fundamentals on which their vision of adult education is based, i.e. the equivalent of university students today, which we can summarize in the high rank of the university professor, who can use all methods, including restraining orders, to push his students to reach the attainment of knowledge that they desperately need, and these are methods that are still used in modern universities, and the best evidence for that is the French university, as witnessed by the researcher and the Canadian university Gélinas, who criticizes it and considers it a violation of professional ethics, and in contrast with the modern pedagogical methods.

Of course, Gélinas proceeds from a modernist position that is almost completely at odds with the classical epistemological system, which still has a great influence on the philosophy of university education to this day, as it almost calls for equality in everything between the teacher and the student, which in turn disrupts the educational process, which assumes, in principle, that the professor is in the position of decision and authority, and the student is in the position of responding to this authority, otherwise the situation will be confused and the roles have been upside down, so the teacher becomes a student and the student becomes a teacher, and this is what disrupts the educational process and undermines it from its principles.

This does not mean that most of the ideas brought forward by Gélinas are wrong. Mutual respect between the professor and the student is something praiseworthy and must be available, just as working on involving the student in the lesson, motivating him to research alone, and giving him self-confidence is necessary. Of course, the era in which the adult teacher possessed the absolute truth, as in the era of Socrates or in the era of Miskawayh, has passed, and he may resort to the most severe methods to teach his students, such methods have passed, and they really establish a relationship of complete submission of the student to his teacher.

However, stripping the professor of his authority in a kind of liberal exaggeration, to make him equal to his students, may push towards chaos and complete dissolution of university education, especially in societies where the students are not psychologically and culturally prepared for such a role from professor. In fact, good things are in the middle, so there is neither excess nor negligence, so that this hierarchy is preserved, which puts the professor in the position of the one in whose hand is the solution and the link, but without arbitrariness and predominance, provided that he, of course, enjoys the scientific and moral qualifications enacted by the ancient thinkers of education such as encouraging students to question (Ibn Al-Muqaffa), deduce (Al-Jahiz) and to take learning seriously (Miskawayh) and with all the qualifications that Gélinas elaborates on in her modernization theory, which does not contradict in many places with what the ancient sages of humanity, including Arabs and Muslims, thought. However, as Stéphane La Blanche and Lawrence Olivier point out in their introduction to the book “Social Science Education: Experiments in University Pedagogy” (in French), as they assert, is the only book of its kind in this language that raises an issue of “University pedagogy” (La pédagogie universitaire).

It is shocking to note that, to this day, there is no established and organized pedagogical development for university professors who constitute the future elites in our universities [Western universities]; All professors of social sciences - they add - have started their careers as professors at the university in the following way: Universities employ post graduate students in their departments because their salaries are lower than the salaries of the experienced professors, therefore those post graduate students often find themselves lack experience for the first time in their lives in front of twenty or fifty students, and sometimes their number may reach one hundred and fifty students, which makes them confused, which is usual in the university community, and more than that is considered normal<sup>47</sup>.

These two researchers toll danger bills regarding the absence of a clear plan for training university professors on the principles of the profession in Western universities in general, and especially those in France and Canada, especially in the beginnings of their career at the university, and their observations may be withdrawn without being certain about most universities in the world. Therefore, thinking about developing a plan of this kind and ensuring its implementation is one of the most urgent needs for the advancement of the profession so that it is compatible with the needs of the contemporary world whose technologies are constantly being renewed and accelerated, requiring the professor to keep up with it and be familiar with, so that he can practice his profession in the best way.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict regarding the publication of this paper.

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<sup>47</sup> Stéphane La Branche et L Olivier, « La pédagogie à L’université : Un tabou enfin levé ? à *Enseigner les sciences sociales à L’université : Expériences de pédagogie universitaire* », p.8

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