



The Concept Of Moral Upbringing In The Works Of Ibn Sina

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the concept of moral education put forward in the works of Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037) on the basis of source study and comparative analysis. The theory of the faculties of the soul, the four cardinal virtues and the methods of child upbringing in the treatise "Tadbir al-manzil" are analyzed, the results are summarized in tables and diagrams, his views are compared with the teachings of al-Farabi, al-Biruni and Yusuf Khass Hajib, and the modern pedagogical significance of the concept is substantiated.

Keywords:

Ibn Sina, moral education, faculties of the soul, virtue, moderation, "Tadbir al-manzil", collective learning, individual approach, content analysis, comparative analysis

Introduction

At a time when establishing the foundation for a Third Renaissance in the New Uzbekistan has been set as a strategic goal, the in-depth study of the legacy of scholars from the First Eastern Renaissance takes on special significance. In his address to the Oliy Majlis, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, cited great ancestors such as Abu Ali ibn Sina and emphasized that their scientific courage should serve as a spiritual pillar for the new Renaissance [1]. Although Ibn Sina—who was born in the village of Afshona near Bukhara—is recognized globally primarily as a physician and philosopher, his legacy also encompasses a comprehensively developed concept of moral upbringing.

While Ibn Sina's medical and philosophical views have been extensively studied worldwide, there remains a pressing need for specific research into his pedagogical and ethical legacy—particularly the educational methodology outlined in his treatise *Tadbiri Manzil*—as a cohesive concept [8; 9]. The aim

of this study is to reconstruct the concept of moral upbringing found in the scholar's works based on primary sources, compare it with the views of contemporary thinkers, and substantiate its significance for modern education and upbringing.

Research methodology. The article employs the historical-comparative method, source analysis, a systems approach, and content analysis. The quantitative figures in the graphs were calculated by the author based on a content analysis of the thematic distribution of data found in the literature [2–12]; they are presented not as absolute statistics, but as an analytical-illustrative model.

1. The Life and Scientific-Pedagogical Legacy of Ibn Sina

Abu Ali Husayn ibn Abdullah ibn Sina was born in 980 in the village of Afshona, near Bukhara [10]. The future scholar received his early education in Bukhara, studying logic, geometry, and astronomy under Abu Abdullah Natili, while mastering medicine primarily through

independent study. A pivotal stage in his intellectual development occurred at the age of seventeen when, having treated the Samanid ruler Nuh ibn Mansur, he gained access to the royal library [4]. The vibrant intellectual environment of Bukhara at the time—with its libraries, madrasas, and scholarly circles—laid the foundation for the shaping of the young Ibn Sina's worldview.

Sources indicate that the scholar authored over 450 works, approximately 240 of which have survived to the present day [4; 10]. Alongside masterpieces such as **Al-Qanun fi-t-Tibb** (The Canon of Medicine), **Kitab ash-Shifa** (The Book

of Healing), **An-Najat** (The Book of Deliverance), and **Donishnoma** (Book of Knowledge), the treatises **Risala fi-l-Akhlaq** (Treatise on Ethics) and **Tadbir-i Manzil** (Management of the Household)—which directly address ethics and upbringing—hold a special place [3; 8]. The widespread international celebration of the scholar's 1000th anniversary in 1980 affirmed the status of his legacy as a universal human value [12]. The key stages of his life and their ethical-pedagogical significance are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

The key stages of Ibn Sina's life and their ethical-pedagogical content

Era	Incident	Ethical and pedagogical significance
Year 980	He was born in the village of Afshona, near Bukhara.	The beginnings of cultivating a love for knowledge and proper conduct within the family environment.
985–996	In Bukhara, he studied under Notiliy and other teachers, and engaged in independent study.	Etiquette of learning and an example of independent study
Around the year 997	After treating Amir Nuh ibn Mansur, he gained the right to use the palace library.	Directing knowledge toward goodness and service to humanity.
1002–1012	He moved to Gurganj and collaborated with the scholars of the Ma'mun Academy.	Culture of scientific dialogue, cooperation, and tolerance
1015–1024	He served as a minister in Hamadan and worked on <i>*The Canon of Medicine*</i> .	Professional duty, integrity in public service, and responsibility.
1024–1037	He completed <i>*Kitab al-Shifa*</i> in Isfahan; he died in Hamadan in 1037.	Dedicating one's life to knowledge and enlightenment until the very last moment.

Note on the table. The table demonstrates that the scholar's life path serves as a practical embodiment of the educational ideas he championed: steadfastness in the pursuit of knowledge, the application of knowledge for the public good, and professional integrity are all exemplified in his person. In this respect, his path parallels that of Beruni; both scholars persisted in their scientific endeavors

despite challenging political circumstances. The distinction lies in the fact that Ibn Sina systematized his views on education within his theoretical legacy, presenting them in the form of a dedicated treatise.

2. Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Moral Education

The theoretical foundation of Ibn Sina's ethical doctrine is the theory of the soul (psychic

faculties): distinguishing between the vegetative, animal, and rational souls, the scholar held that human perfection lies in the rational soul's reasoned governance over the faculties of anger and desire [3; 9]. An analysis of the sources allows for the identification of the following core ideas within this concept.

The four cardinal virtues and the principle of moderation. The scholar regarded wisdom (the virtue of the rational faculty), courage (moderation of the faculty of anger), temperance (moderation of the faculty of desire), and justice (the harmonious balance of the three faculties) as the pillars of ethics [3; 8]. Each virtue represents a "golden mean" between two vices—excess (*ifrat*) and deficiency (*tafrit*); for instance, courage lies between cowardice and recklessness. This approach necessitates maintaining moderation in upbringing and fostering a balanced character in the child.

The unity of knowledge and action. In Ibn Sina's view, ethical knowledge acquires value only when translated into action: virtues become habits through repeated practice and evolve into stable character traits [3]. Therefore, upbringing is not a matter of one-time advice, but a continuous process of practice and habituation. The ultimate goal of perfection is felicity—that is, the happiness attained through the harmony of knowledge, virtuous deeds, and spiritual maturity. [9].

Health is the natural foundation of upbringing. In *The Laws of Medicine*, the scholar interprets a child's sleep, nutrition, and physical exercise regimens as essential prerequisites for moral development: a healthy body fosters a stable psyche and an aptitude for learning [2]. The key concepts of the framework are presented in Table 2, while their thematic representation across the works is illustrated in Graph 1.

Table 2

Key concepts of Ibn Sina's theory of moral education

Concept	Its meaning as interpreted by Ibn Sina	The basis in the works	Modern pedagogical interpretation
Spiritual perfection of the self	The rational soul's reasoned governance over the faculties of anger and desire.	"Kitob ash-shifo", "An-Najot" [3]	Self-management, emotional intelligence
Wisdom	The virtue of the intellectual faculty: knowing the truth and reasoning correctly.	"Donishnoma", "Al-Ishorat" [3; 9]	Critical and independent thinking
Courage	Moderation of the faculty of anger: the midpoint between cowardice and recklessness.	"Risola fi-l-axloq" [3]	Willpower, responsible courage
Chastity	Moderation of sexual energy: restraining desire and observing moderation.	"Risola fi-l-axloq" [3]	Self-control, healthy lifestyle
Justice	The harmonious balance of the three powers — the culmination of virtues.	"Ash-shifo", "Tadbiri manzil" [3; 8]	Integrity, a sense of social justice
Happiness	Happiness found in the harmony of knowledge,	"An-Najot" [9]	Self-realization

Concept	Its meaning as interpreted by Ibn Sina	The basis in the works	Modern pedagogical interpretation
	noble deeds, and spiritual maturity.		

Comparative commentary on the table. The system of virtues presented in the table is conceptually aligned with the doctrine of virtue found in Al-Farabi's work *"The Virtuous City"* [5]. A significant distinction, however, is that while Al-Farabi interprets virtues within a socio-political framework—focusing on the construction of a virtuous society—Ibn Sina brings them down to the level of individual upbringing and practical measures within the family; in this sense, it is appropriate to describe the scholar's concept as a bridge between philosophical ethics and practical pedagogy.

Figure 1. Proportion of ethical and educational themes in the works of Ibn Sina (author's compilation based on content analysis of sources [2–12])

Note on the chart. The largest share is attributed to intellectual development and the ethics of acquiring knowledge (23%)—reflecting the scholar's rationalist approach, which regarded the intellect as the benchmark of perfection—while the share of moral virtues (21%) stems from the significant volume of his treatises on ethics. The notable emphasis placed on physical education (15%) distinguishes Ibn Sina from other thinkers; as a physician, he viewed upbringing as inextricably linked to health. By comparison, such a medico-pedagogical dimension is virtually absent from the legacy of Al-Farabi.

3. Child Upbringing and Educational Methodology at "Tadbiri Manzil"

The practical-methodological aspect of the concept is outlined in the treatise *"Tadbiri Manzil"* (Management of the Household), which examines family ethics, child-rearing, and the etiquette of household management as an integrated system [3; 8]. The scholar advocates starting a child's upbringing at an early age—before bad habits can take root—and sets high standards for the teacher: they must be

intelligent, conscientious, and ethical, possess the skills to interact effectively with children, and be a composed, virtuous individual. One of Ibn Sina's most significant contributions to the history of pedagogy is his justification of the benefits of group education: he believed that when children study together, they learn from one another; mutual competition fosters enthusiasm; interaction develops speech and social etiquette; and a sense of friendship and community is cultivated [8]. At the same time, the scholar supports an individualized approach: the nature and aptitude of each child should be assessed to select a suitable vocation, and education should proceed in stages—starting with literacy and language, followed by ethics, and then vocational training. In upbringing, encouragement is prioritized over punishment, while physical education, labor, and vocational training are considered essential prerequisites for preparing the child for independent life [2; 8]. The components of child-rearing are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Composition of child-rearing areas within the "Tadbiri Manzil" initiative (author's design based on content analysis of sources).

Explanation of the chart: The leading role of moral education (30%) is explained by the treatise's primary objective—the formation of a virtuous individual—while the shares of intellectual education (26%) and physical education (20%) demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the scholar's approach. From a comparative perspective, themes of upbringing also feature prominently in Yusuf Khass Hajib's *"Kutadgu Bilig"*, yet physical and labor education are not addressed there in such a systematic manner; meanwhile, Ibn Sina, as a physician, viewed intellectual, moral, and physical development as a unified process.

4. A Comparative Analysis of the Views of Ibn Sina and Contemporary Thinkers

To determine the historical significance of the concept, it is appropriate to compare it with the views of prominent figures of the Eastern Renaissance: Abu Nasr al-Farabi (873–950), Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048), and Yusuf Khass Hajib (11th century). All four thinkers regarded knowledge and enlightenment as the benchmarks of humanity and exalted the ideals of justice, integrity, and self-perfection; however, they differed in their methods and areas of emphasis: al-Farabi provided a

philosophical foundation for ethics within the framework of the theory of a virtuous society [5], al-Biruni demonstrated scholarly integrity and diligence through his own personal example [6], and Yusuf Khass Hajib conveyed educational ideas to the public in an artistic-didactic form—specifically through the epic poem **Kutadgu Bilig** [7]. Ibn Sina's distinctiveness lies in his integration of philosophical theory, medical knowledge, and practical methodology into a unified concept of upbringing. The results of this comparison are systematized in Table 3.

Table 3

A Comparative Analysis of the Educational Views of Ibn Sina and Contemporary Thinkers

Criterion of comparison	Ibn Sino	Forobiy	Beruniy	Yusuf Xos Hojib
Period in which they lived	980–1037	873–950	973–1048	11th century; the work was written in 1069–1070.
Primary field of research	Medicine, philosophy	Philosophy, logic, politics	Natural sciences, history	Literature and the etiquette of statecraft
The foundation of moral education	Theory of the faculties of the soul, moderation	The Doctrine of the Virtuous Society and Virtues	Ethics of scientific inquiry, labor	The tradition of didactic teaching
Central idea	Happiness — the unity of knowledge and virtuous action.	Happiness is attained in the virtuous city.	Commitment to the truth, impartiality	The harmony of justice, state, reason, and contentment.
Major work	“Tadbiri manzil”, “Ash-shifo”	“The City of Virtuous People”	“Monuments left by ancient peoples”	“Qutadg'u bilig”
Upbringing method	A blend of individual approach and group learning	Upbringing through the social environment	Observation, experiment, comparison	Influence through artistic imagery and moral counsel

Comparative commentary on the table. The analysis reveals that the legacies of these four thinkers do not contradict one another; rather, they constitute a cohesive system of Eastern educational thought: Al-Farabi established its

socio-philosophical foundation; Al-Biruni, its scientific-methodological basis; Yusuf Khass Hajib, its artistic-didactic framework; and Ibn Sina, its practical-pedagogical foundation. Ibn Sina's distinctive contribution lies in the fact that he did not limit himself to the theoretical

substantiation of upbringing but transformed it into a system of concrete recommendations designed for practical application in the family and school. Expert assessments across these four dimensions are presented in Graph 3.

Figure 3. Comparative assessment of the emphasis placed on aspects of moral education in the legacy of thinkers (1–5 point scale; author's own design)

Note on the graph: The assessment was conducted on a 5-point scale based on the priority areas of each thinker's legacy as reflected in source materials (5 — the area constitutes the core of the legacy; 1 — it is barely reflected). Ibn Sina achieved the maximum score (5 points) in the areas of philosophical-theoretical foundations and natural sciences (health), and also received a high rating (4 points) in practical methodology—a score linked to his work **Tadbiri Manzil**. Al-Farabi leads in the philosophical foundation category, while Yusuf Khash Hajib is the leader in the artistic-didactic

approach. The convergence of these three areas within a single thinker's legacy clearly demonstrates the comprehensive nature of Ibn Sina's conceptual framework.

5. The Significance of the Concept in the Modern Education and Upbringing System

Many of the ideas put forward by Ibn Sina align remarkably well with modern pedagogical principles: the concept of collective education is reflected in today's collaborative learning technologies; the requirement for an individual approach is embodied in the concept of learner-centered education; and the integration of intellectual, moral, and physical upbringing is found in the ideal of a well-rounded generation [8; 11]. Educational and medical institutions named after the scholar, as well as the memorial complex in Afshona, serve as educational centers that transmit this legacy to the younger generation. Approaches to implementing this concept within the educational process are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Directions for applying Ibn Sina's ideas to the modern education and upbringing system

Idea (value)	Area of application in education and upbringing	Expected result
Community education advantage	Collaborative learning, group project work, and peer assessment techniques.	Communication culture, healthy competition, and teamwork skills
Individual approach	A system for early identification of talent and guidance toward a profession suited to one's abilities.	Making an informed career choice and fully realizing one's talent
The unity of intellectual, moral, and physical education	Integrated curricula, healthy lifestyle lessons	A well-rounded individual who is physically healthy and spiritually mature.
High expectations for the teacher	Standards for the training of pedagogical personnel, codes of ethics for educators	Improving the quality of education and strengthening the prestige of teachers
Labor and vocational education	Vocational education, practical skills-oriented training	Economic independence, a sense of respect for labor

Note on the table. The approaches outlined in the table aim to ensure continuity

between a millennium of historical experience and contemporary educational needs. Notably,

the scholar's recommendations—such as collaborative learning, guidance based on aptitude, and the primacy of encouragement—align conceptually with modern pedagogical principles like interactive learning, differentiated approaches, and positive motivation, thereby affirming the universal nature of national educational traditions.

Conclusion

The conducted research has led to the following conclusions. First, in the works of Ibn Sina, moral education is developed as a holistic concept, with its theoretical foundation resting on the doctrine of the faculties of the soul, the four cardinal virtues, and the principle of moderation. Second, the practical aspect of this concept is articulated in **Tadbir-i Manzil** through a system of methodological principles—such as early upbringing, high standards for educators, the advantages of collective learning, individualized approaches, and the priority of positive reinforcement. Third, approaching the subject as a physician, the scholar viewed intellectual, moral, and physical education as an integrated process, thereby introducing a comprehensive approach to educational theory.

Fourth, comparative analysis demonstrates that the legacies of Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Al-Biruni, and Yusuf Khass Hajib represent complementary strands of Eastern educational thought, with Ibn Sina standing out as a unique thinker who synthesized philosophical theory, medical knowledge, and practical methodology. Fifth, the scholar's ideas regarding collective learning, individualized approaches, and holistic personal development align with modern pedagogical technologies and can be effectively applied in contemporary educational practice. Future prospects include the production of a scholarly, annotated translation of **Tadbir-i Manzil** and the integration of the scholar's legacy into educational curricula.

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