# HERMENEUTICS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MUSLIM CULTURES IN THE WEST: FAITHFUL BUT REFORMED

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# Abstract

This dissertation is grounded in twenty years of personal and professional practice as an educator, both formally and informally and as a Muslim activist in the West. It is a historical and theoretical investigation of the religious and social relationship between the past and the present as they help in constructing a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education and Muslim cultures in changing circumstances and new Western contexts. It is intended that this understanding forms the foundation for helping Muslim communities in the West to integrate successfully by remaining faithful to basic religious principles while being reformed within new host societies.

The past matters. The past and the present are powerfully related and we cannot just step over our own shadows, as Gadamer suggests. However, we can live our traditions in different ways than our ancestors did by seeing tradition as the source for shaping or reshaping lives within a contemporary environment. This study analyzes the manner in which Muslims in the past have attempted to nurture, synthesize and implement prescriptions of the faith in fashioning their worldview in different contexts.

This dissertation identifies the ground upon which Muslim communities can build capacity by using *Ijtihad* or "individual reasoning" as a practical mechanism for ascertaining the position of Islamic law on educational and social issues. It describes how *Ijtihad* can be used as a method of legal reformation in Muslim communities in the West today.

The thesis is designed to form a whole chain of developmental elements to help in understanding the essence of Muslim religious principles and cultures, education, identity, leadership and possibilities of reform when the context is changed. Its culture should be grounded in teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, attempting to imbue educational and social institutions and cultural experimental activities with an Islamic character, while being flexible in the new contexts.

Finally, the study considers Muslims settling, reconciling and contributing in new contexts. It offers recommendations about how Muslims might proceed to transform their communities in the West through education and to build their relationships with new societies, creating a more cohesive environment.

**Keywords:** Assimilation; Hermeneutics; *Ijtihad*; Islamic education; Islamic formative principles; Isolation; Muslim intellectual heritage; Muslim Western cultures; Muslim identity; Muslim leadership; Reformation; Smart integration

# Dedication

To my dear daughters, Lejla and Emina. With great love and sincere hope that both of you follow in the intellectual footsteps of your parents.

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# CHAPTER 1:
# BEGINING OF UNDERSTANDING

## 1.1 Introduction

In modern Western societies where Muslim communities constitute visible minorities of the populations, Muslims search for a sound educational system based on the sources of their religion that would support them in building new Western Muslim cultures. This quest is greatly intensified by the process of globalization and reform that Muslim communities are experiencing everywhere.

Before implementing policies including the educational methods, curricula and reform, Muslims need to determine whether the present traditional materials and methods they use in leading their lives in the Western societies are still applicable in light of contemporary social needs. Muslims also need to ensure that these policies, in fact, do conform to the Islamic principles upon which Islamic education and Muslim cultures should be ideally founded.

Muslims in the West are discovering that they have distanced themselves from the original intent and goals they established when immigrated to the new homelands. Thus, Muslims are undertaking a re-examination of the current practices to determine whether these are truly based on Islamic principles or are cultural products of the places of their origins, as well as considering whether they will be able to meet their

contemporary needs in the Western modern and liberal societies more effectively by looking into new alternatives. Therefore, Muslims are concerned whether the re-examination of policies and practices, in order to facilitate accommodation in the West, is appropriate in terms of Islamic texts and concepts.

In Muslim communities in the West, as in other religious groups, there are instances in which idiosyncratic personal, cultural or political interpretations of religious matters have been accepted as formative principles and integrated into daily life of the individuals and their communities. Some of these practices may deviate from acceptable Islamic principles. For example, one of the issues greatly debated in the Muslim Western communities is related to integration of Muslims into the new Western societies. Muslim intellectuals in the West offer context suitable alternatives for integration of Muslims in these new societies, yet some Muslims choose to *isolate* themselves from the rest of the society, even though this is a minoritarian interpretation of the Islamic texts.

This re-definition and re-examination of the concepts of Islamic education and Muslim cultures in the West, includes suggestions for educational and cultural theories and policies that may not fully agree with the ones Muslims have brought from the countries of their origin. In order to develop educational and cultural policies for Muslims in the West, there is no alternative but to examine old policies and theories and compare them to sound Islamic principles to ensure that future educational and cultural policies adhere to these principles and do not prevent Muslims from progress in the Western societies which they have chosen as their new homelands.

The need for a re-evaluation of educational aims is expressed by many educational partners involved in modern educational systems. However, confusion about the aims of education in general still remains in spite of the efforts of many philosophers and educators to define them (Basheer, 1982; Al Attas, 1979). Given that a great deal of research is being conducted on the aims and moral aspects of education due to the growing concern about falling moral standards, this is a timely study. Using Islamic education as the focus of my research, I hope to increase understanding of the importance of moral education, integration of Muslims into new contexts and building new Muslim cultures in the West throughout the educational process in general.

The approach I offer in this study is not a cure-all for every educational environment and situation. Rather, I believe the principles developed in my dissertation can enhance educational institutions and offer solutions to the Muslims in settling efficiently in the new environments. I have developed this unique concept based on existing literature on the topic and my personal experience in the educational realm. My experience with theology, education and dealing with the educational aspects of society in praxis has helped contribute significantly to my dissertation. I hope to shed some light on the sometimes erroneous understanding of Muslim cultures and Islamic education, educational aims and the process of change within the context of modern industrial societies.

Booth, Colomb & Williams (1995) suggest that "a research problem is motivated by incomplete knowledge or flawed understanding" (p. 59). In recent history, there has been a great deal of misinformation and many misconceptions about Islam in general and the Islamic educational system and Muslim cultures in particular among non-Muslims as well as among the majority of Muslims. This study is motivated by the desire to shed light on the Islamic perspective of education and culture in the era of globalization,

when contemporary Muslim societies as well as non-Muslim societies in general, seek to better understand Muslim cultures and Islamic education and their implications from original sources – the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*.

The confusion over the aims of education in general still remains despite the efforts of many philosophers and educators to define them. Universal agreement on the aims of education is unrealistic even within the Muslim community because of the different political and cultural agendas of the Muslim societies. The secular approach towards the aims of education in Muslim societies has been heavily criticized by Al-Attas (1979) and Ashraf (1993) for not being a good agent of moral, spiritual and metaphysical dimensions in education. In Chapter II, "*Culture and Civilization*," of his book *Islam between East and West, Iz*etbegovic (1984) writes about education as not being a one-sided phenomenon involving only the intellect of students, but also the cultivation of ethics and the shaping of moral persons. Izetbegovic (1984) concludes:

> Today it is quite possible to imagine a young man who has passed through all educational degrees, from primary school to college, without ever having been told to be a good and honest man... He gathered a mass of facts and, at best, learned how to think. But, he was not enlightened (p.44).

Muslim critics such as Al-Attas (1979), Ashraf (1993), Basheer (1982) and Izetbegovic (1984) hold that the secular approach has succeeded in training the human resource needed for the different tasks in private and government institutions, but it has simultaneously contributed to corruption, nepotism and moral alienation.

## 1.2 Purpose

To the best of my knowledge, no attempt has yet been made to create a comprehensive study of Islamic education that combines conceptual and historical aspects in the context of challenges and changes in contemporary modern societies. It cannot be denied, however, that individual aspects, conceptual and historical, have been dealt with to a certain extent by various scholars with particular emphases and biases. What does exist seems to be written largely by authors who did not consider the critical relationship of texts and historical contexts.

My task in this study is to explore the framework of Islamic education including its aims, challenges, reforms and implications in the context of its inception, history, and modern times, and to consider how Islamic education should best respond to modern educational challenges while preserving and staying faithful to the formative principles. It is hoped that this study will determine the appropriate position of Islamic education as a foundation for building the Muslim cultures in the West within the context of Islamic sources and modern society. If not, it will at least clarify the position of Islamic sources and Muslims with regard to what constitutes its educational imperative, cultural alternatives Muslims have in the West, how reform could be brought about, the mechanism for this reform and the place of leadership in it.

The significance of this study lies in the potential for developing a theoretical framework in education, which relates to the aims of education and how it should be implemented. The theoretical framework seeks to recognize the historical patterns and principles that form the basis for contemporary conceptions of educational institutions. These historical patterns and principles contribute significantly when framing the purpose of

the educational institutions and the aims of education in contemporary Islamic educational systems.

This study is also a contribution to knowledge about the aims and purposes of Islamic education in terms of a faith perspective and a methodology. As far as the faith perspective is concerned, this study will provide a framework for the essentials of Islamic education and for a methodology this study will offer a mechanism that helped Muslims throughout history to settle in different contexts. The research question for this project rests on an underlying assumption, which is examined within the context of this study: An historical understanding of the practice and the theory of education within diverse Muslim cultures over time can provide the basis for the construction of a modern Islamic educational system.

Educational theories and policies in Islamic education that are at odds with the practice of current educational systems need to be revisited, revised and reformed because some of these policies are not applicable in new contexts. Furthermore, there is a need for Muslims to reform themselves within the contexts of Western societies because of the new educational, cultural, and religious challenges they face, however keeping at the same time the particular characteristics of their religious identity.

The central question that forms the guiding framework of my study is:

**How can Muslim education in the West and Muslim cultures preserve and remain faithful to formative Islamic principles as well as undergo necessary reform to fit into modern non-Islamic and diverse societies?**

This study scrutinizes Islamic theories on aims in education, reform, *Ijtihad* "independent reasoning" and leadership, then extracts the possible workable solutions that could be used by policymakers, and lastly focuses on creating a healthy environment in which education will focus on the whole person and breed a practical Muslim and a good citizen. With answers to several of these questions in this study, I will be able to offer some practical suggestions to educational theorists and policymakers in their struggles to redefine the aims of education in relation to modern challenges, while still upholding the foundational views and being faithful to the values of Islam as a way of life.

As will become evident later in the chapter, this process will be achieved by using hermeneutics as an approach of interpretive understanding. Hermeneutics permits the inner interpretation of the subject matter within its religious, social and cultural framework without isolating these realities from their local contexts.

## 1.3 Scope of the Study

My dissertation will provide an analysis of Islamic education, reform in Muslim communities, the mechanism of reform, and the role of leadership in the West. It also presents important features in general areas of Islamic education such as aims, ethics as the main ingredient and alternatives with some evaluation of the materials and ideas that are applicable to Muslims who live in the context of Western societies. The scope includes my own interpretation of the formative Islamic texts: the Qur'an and the Sunnah (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), as well as an analysis of the views on education of several contemporary scholars such as Al-Alwani, Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, and Ramadan.

A significant problem that continues to confront Muslims in the West is the process of integration into Western societies. Throughout the last four to five decades, numerous Muslim thinkers in the West, among whom the most influential are Al-Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman and Ramadan, have dedicated their intellectual work towards understanding the conditions of Muslims in the West and their educational opportunities. They have also sought to understand the needs of a selective integration that would allow alternatives that are the most suitable for Muslims in their new environments. Theories have been articulated and recommendations suggested. My study deals with some of the aforementioned Islamic scholars' ideas and recommendations that assist me to define the evidence that has emerged. This evidence tells the complex story of why Muslims in the West need to rethink education and cultural differences and place them within the context of the twenty first century and within the present Western circumstances. It also suggests ways that will allow Muslims to remain faithful to their religious sources and principles.

Earlier studies of Muslims and Islamic education in the West are approached from historical perspectives. These studies fail to address two important aspects: a) the multiple characteristics of Islamic education and the complex issues related to culture, reform and leadership of Muslims in relation to Western societies and b) the lack of a comprehensive approach that includes all aspects of Islamic education that are related to past and present conditions and possibilities for future plans.

This study attempts to present an idea of what Islamic education was in the past, what it is today in the West and what it could be in the future within changing democratic societies such as Canada. Within the scope of this study, I will address Gadamer's hermeneutics as the approach of interpretation that assists in making connections between the past and the

present, between then and now. In the process of interpretation, I anticipate sound and realistic ways to engage Muslims with their intellectual heritage, and how they might become integrated in the life of new societies so that they benefit themselves and others with whom they live.

To succeed in presenting some critical aspects of Muslim intellectual heritage, I search for evidence in Muslim history that allowed Muslims to live successfully during earlier centuries in different cultural contexts and try to determine which of these would help them to regain the same attitude towards knowledge and integration and thereby share it with others. I realize that this cannot be achieved without defining the goals of Islamic education, i.e., ethics being the essential ingredient, and what this education signifies in terms of the needs of individuals, the community and the whole of humanity. The focus of the study is mainly on Muslim education in the West, reform through education, the means of reform within Muslim communities in the West, educational leadership of Muslims in the West and the implications of the study and recommendations for implementation of these ideas for Muslim communities in the West and non-Muslim societies in general.

The scope of this study does not include all the details of the above-mentioned topics; however, it does shed some light on the most critical ones. It does not deal with contemporary educational institutions or educational leadership of the Muslims outside the West. It does not aim to criticize their educational institutions or Western educational institutions; rather it aims at creating a mode of understanding and acceptance of differences within new cultures for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It strives to remove existing misunderstandings and misconceptions that exist on both sides, among Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as creating a workable model that would benefit future generations of Muslims in the West and Muslim societies across the globe. While it is not a cure for all misunderstandings, it

is a modest beginning that may contribute to greater projects that could enable cohesion and understanding in the future between Muslims and other groups in the Western societies.

In short, the primary objective of the study, given the nature and areas of research, is to interpret the historical texts and the contemporary writings of Muslim scholars on education, leadership and reform with an evaluation of materials and ideas that are applicable to modern times and Western contexts. It also helps to develop a comprehensive understanding of Islamic education and Muslim intellectual tradition in the West. It is intended that this understanding will form the foundation for helping Muslim communities in the West to integrate successfully within the context of new societies by upholding their traditional values and religious identity. On the other hand, host societies need to acknowledge and accept a type of selective integration because it is vital to Muslims to maintain Islamic identity in all contexts.

The common problem with information related to Islam and Muslims is incorrect or inconsistent use of terminology, in particular use of the terms a) Islam as the name of the religion, b) Islamic as an adjective, and c) Muslim as a noun or adjective.

Douglass and Shaikh (2004) hold that incorrect usage of the terms creates misunderstanding and misconceptions about issues related to faith on one hand and those related to personal, cultural and political domains. The term Islam, as Douglass and Shaikh suggest connotes the faith as an ideal. It means a state of peace achieved through surrender to God. The term Muslim is used for an adherent of the Islamic faith. The term Islamic is accurately applied only to that which pertains to the faith and its doctrine such as principles and beliefs, Islamic worship, etc. One may examine the faith's

constructs, interpret its teachings and practices; however, one ought not to describe a person or any historical phenomenon as Islamic (p. 2). So simple solution to the problem is to use Islam and Islamic solely for what pertains to the religion, and to use the term Muslim judiciously as an adjective to denote the works and acts of Muslims and their institutions.

Another term in my study needs some clarification. The term "West or Western" has multiple meanings depending on its context. I use the term to refer to the Western developed countries in which the population of Muslims is growing rapidly. I do not position Islam and West as opposites; rather I see Islam and West as a source of new cultures for the Muslims who live in the West. The term West in this study is not used to mean the Christian lands.

All chapters are designed to form a whole chain of developmental elements that will promote understanding the importance of Muslim tradition, education, Muslim identity and the possibilities of continual reform as the context changes. For that reason the information presented in this study represents a unique available interpretation of current Islamic intellectuals in the West.

## 1.4 Approach

Qualitative research involves the use of qualitative data such as texts, documents, interviews and participant observation to understand and explain social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative researchers come from a broad range of disciplines and fields, and use a variety of approaches and techniques. Qualitative research methods are designed in such a way as to support researchers in understanding meanings, people and the social and cultural contexts within which they live.

This method of research fits well with the investigation that is the aim of this project, especially the hermeneutics of Gadamer (1989) because his hermeneutics attempts to look at past as a source of inspiration and a source of new possibilities. Moreover, Gadamer stresses the importance of tradition or background in ways of our understanding. Gadamer articulates three modes of hermeneutics, including understanding, interpretation, application, and the idea of "the fusion of tradition." All these three modes as well as the idea of the fusion of tradition are of great importance to my study because of my traditional, educational and cultural background and because of my fervent wish to bridge the existing gap in understanding the topics of Islamic education and Muslim cultures in contemporary times.

The term *hermeneutics* comes from the Greek language and means to interpret. The ancient Greeks developed this technique for interpretation of texts to better understand the legends of their gods. Hermeneutics helped them to find contemporary equivalents for texts and practices whose meaning had become obscure (Kneller 1984, p. 65). This technique was used later to interpret sacred religious texts. The definition was expanded in the nineteenth century by philosophers who argued that interpretation, as a concept, was applicable to a much broader range of texts "from teaching manuals to literary classics" (Kneller 1984, p. 66). Even though hermeneutics was developed in the West, it has a complex heritage and highly inclusive approach. This approach is appropriate for my study because it attempts to look at past as a source of inspiration. Hermeneutics is the interpretation of texts. The texts of my study are the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah,* and the writings of Islamic scholars and philosophers of medieval as well as modern times, such as Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, Tibawi, Ramadan and others.

Thus, in contemporary philosophy and social sciences, hermeneutics refers to the study of the process by which an individual arrives at the

meaning of the text, and that this "text" could refer not only to documents, but also to social customs, cultural myths, and anything else containing a message that could be read (Gall, Borg & Gall 1996, p.630).

Because hermeneutics is a dynamic philosophical approach to human understanding, it can be treated as an underlying philosophy as well as a specific mode of analysis (Bleicher, 1980). It also provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism. As a mode of analysis, it is a method of textual analysis that helps in a process of exposing hidden meanings (Kisiel, 1985). It also emphasizes socio-cultural and historical influences on inquiry. It is the science of reflecting on how a word or an event in a past time and culture may be understood and become existentially meaningful in our present situation (Braaten, 1966).

According to Gadamer (1989), the main task of hermeneutics is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but rather to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place:

> Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks (p.295).

Gadamer holds that we cannot step over our own shadows because we are in continuous touch with our past, our traditions, and our ancestors; past and present are firmly connected (p.264). Our historical position can never be distanced and left out of the account. It is shaped by the past, which has a considerable power over our understanding and defines the ground on which the interpreter stands. Anderson, Hughes & Sharrock (1986) hold that:

> Gadamer's conception of interpretive understanding is not that of reconstructing the past in the present but of mediating the past for the present. One's historical position can never be entirely held at a distance and left out of account. It is the given which shapes our experience. But our historical position is itself shaped by the past, so the past has a considerable power over our understanding. The past provides the tradition, which defines the ground on which the interpreter stands (p.73).

We live our tradition in a different way than our ancestors, but our tradition is still the source of who we are and how we shape our lives in contemporary societies. As Moules (2002) puts it:

> The echoes of history are always inadvertently and deliberately inviting us into both past and new ways of being in the present. We live in a world that recedes into the past and extends into the future, rather than pitting ourselves against history, and therefore we need to remember, recollect, and recall it. This is not an epistemological quest but an ontological one as we are historical. The address of tradition is not just something arching from before, for we are in tradition (p.1).

According to Gadamer, the goal of hermeneutics is to examine texts to discover their meanings. The meanings are grasped through a process of interpretation of texts and other relevant materials through which these meanings are located as the expression of a deeper, underlying, unifying perspective. He advocates a return to the problematization of understanding in general and the notion of interpretation that encompasses both what we strive to understand and what we already understand (Anderson, Hughes & Sharrock, 1986, p.72).

Thus, understanding is not merely a reproductive but a very productive process, and interpretation will always keep evolving. Just as interpretation works alongside understanding, so does application work along with understanding, according to Gadamer. Like understanding and

interpretation, application concurs with the other two hermeneutical activities so that three activities comprise, as Gadamer (1989) notes, "one unified process" (p.308). Application for Gadamer is what locates the interpreter and the text within the historical moment, so that application allows the interpreter to appropriate the understanding into the present historical situation.

Gadamer's hermeneutics supports mutuality of theory and practice or praxis in one's own time. The meaning of praxis is a holism of knowledge and action. In noting Gadamer's concept of understanding and a marriage between theory and practice, Grondin (1990) states:

> Gadamer is again inspired by the rhetorical tradition in stressing the role application plays in acquiring an understanding. To understand a text or a meaning is always to know how to apply it to our situation. The application, however, is not a process that begins after understanding. There is not first understanding and only later an application of what is understood to the present. To understand and to apply to one's own situation constitute, according to Gadamer, one and the same hermeneutic event (pp.51-52).

The basic purpose of hermeneutics centers on the meaning of the text (Radnitzky, 1970). Taylor (1976) explains that interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of the object of study. This object must, according to Taylor (1976), be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, and seemingly contradictory – in one way or another, unclear. Interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense (p.153). Anderson, Hughes & Sharrock (1986) hold the same view:

> A successful interpretation is one which brings out the sense, the rationale, the meaning that on the surface appears confused

> and fragmentary... We accept an interpretation when we can use it to see just how fully what was puzzling to the interpreter is clarified by the interpretation (p. 67).

Through hermeneutics, I lay the ground for another approach that is a complementary supplement to hermeneutics: ethnographic content analysis. Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) definition of ethnography helps me to incorporate the texts into the life of Muslims living in Western societies. They further argue that ethnography aims to describe or interpret the place of culture in human affairs (p. 852). It is because of our historical and cultural location that we can engage in interpretive understanding. It is our present understanding, our conceptions of life, that open the past to us so we can have knowledge of it (Anderson, Hughes & Sharrock, 1986, p. 72).

In my study, this approach will serve as a review of biographical, historical, and cultural information, in order to understand not only Islamic educational philosophy, but also the possible praxis of some aspects of Islamic education in the globalization era. Hermeneutics as an approach will work well when coupled with ethnographic content analysis. This combined approach will equip me with greater understanding of the texts in terms of their relationship with values cherished and affected by its textual information and the culture of the Muslim community. Al Zeera (2001) agrees that,

> Any research regarded from an Islamic perspective ought to be multidimensional and multileveled... Researchers have to be open and flexible to operate within different inquiry methods so as to be able to capture the complexity of the phenomena under study (p. 111).

Thus, this approach will allow me to interpret the texts that reveal the nature of knowledge in Muslim communities and the concept of knowledge

and its sources. Furthermore, the aims of Islamic education and the views of Muslim educators from early Islamic history up to modern times will be examined. A special emphasis will be placed upon the aims of education, ethics, reform, Ijtihad and leadership. I will extrapolate conclusions that can provide a framework for the development of modern Islamic education. This study can assist contemporary Muslim societies as well as non-Muslim societies in general, as the latter seek to better understand Islamic education and its implications from its original sources.

This will be possible by applying the intellectual endeavour called *Ijtihad* and including the intellectual elements of both the moments – past and present. The concept *Ijtihad* means "the effort to understand the meaning of the relevant text or precedent in the past, containing a rule, and to alter that rule by extending or restricting or otherwise modifying it in such a manner that a new situation can be subsumed under it by a new solution" (Rahman, 1982, p.8).

This is a policy related study. It is oriented towards the professional world to propose policy changes that are respectful of Islamic formative principles as well as adaptive to the standards of modern Western societies. The information that I will use in this study will come from several sources, including literary texts and scholarly research literature. These sources will produce two classes of information: primary and secondary. These classifications are similar to those proposed by Altheide (1996).

Examined historical texts include the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. The scholarly research literature includes contemporary works written by both Muslims and non-Muslims interested in Islamic educational philosophy and the aims of Islamic education in contemporary society. All of these

researchers assert that it is feasible to integrate many ideas from the primary sources into modern education because they are applicable, acceptable, and common among not only Muslims but non-Muslims as well.

The scholarly research literature includes resources that support the literary texts. However, these literary texts are not the main focus of my research. For the purpose of this study, scholarly research literature will include background information on the cultural, spiritual, and historical environments for Muslims that will help in exploring and understanding the content in the context in which it was produced. Altheide (1996) also cites Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) who mention a natural concern with the approach being used in this study:

> As with most research approaches, any attempt to look backward from a text toward the author's motivation is rich with problems, especially if the author lacks an awareness of and familiarity with the historical, cultural, and organizational context (p.8).

Several steps are involved in the data collection process in a qualitative study (Creswell 1998, pp.110, 111). The most important step is to identify the subject – people or places – as Creswell suggests (p.111). Once a researcher selects the sites or people, the need arises to define an appropriate data collection approach. I have identified the sources through which the subject is explored – the text of the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad's traditions, ideas of Al-Attas, Fazlur Rahman, Tibawi, Ramadan and Elmasri – and then searched for the appropriate methodology. This study will use an ethnographic content analysis guided by a hermeneutic approach to facilitate the proposed research. I will use these qualitative methods because they are particularly effective for examining and explaining how things are or how

they were. I will explain how the texts used in this study were collected, examined, and analyzed in terms of their relevance to the research questions.

The second step is to verify the reliability of the resource material. I have identified resources on Islamic education from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* and the material written by Muslim educationalists, as well as historical resources describing the different cultures of Muslim societies in different times. This study will include material from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* and writings of some contemporary educationalists such as Al-Attas, Al-Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, Tibawi, and Ramadan. This study will also focus on the social, cultural, and educational environment of Islamic education.

The next level of resources will include materials concerning Islamic ethics, culture or history in different time periods, leadership, *Ijtihad*, change and policies in the Muslim community for comparative purposes. Once the resources are selected, verified, and validated as authentic, I will collect the information by reviewing the resources, selecting relevant statements and categorizing the information according to topic and relevance to this study. After I have completed recording the information, I will evaluate and synthesize the material and organize the data for presentation. I will select this format to present my recommendations in order to show their relevance to Muslim policymakers in terms of their effort to enhance and improve education and its delivery particularly in Muslim communities in the West but also in Muslim and non-Muslim societies where such findings may have important implications for the educational institutions. My study argues that contemporary policymakers in Islamic education operate from the restrictive and componential version of hermeneutics and should attempt immediate reform.

## 1.5 The Role of the Researcher

Gadamer focuses on the significance of the researcher and the researcher's attempt to hermeneutically look at understanding, interpretation, application, and context (Palmer, 1969). According to Glesne and Pashkin (1992), one of the roles the qualitative methodology researcher plays is that of the data collector and analyst. During this process, as a researcher, I will try to do my best to define my biases so that they will minimize the effect of the data collection and analysis. Furthermore, I will do my utmost to collect the materials on Islamic education, reform, Ijtihad and leadership from the different sources. Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out that analysts bring biases, beliefs and assumptions to the research. However, the authors admit, "it is not possible to be completely free of bias" (p.97).

As a Muslim educator and a researcher, I have my own perspective and biases but will try to minimize them. Based on my experiences and readings, I expect to find different points of view about the issues with respect to the perspectives on Islamic education. As I embark on this process, I will follow the advice of Strauss and Corbin (1990) to keep some social and theoretical sensitivity and distance during the process of interpretation. Such attempts will force me to stop, check the data from time to time, and approach it critically so that my biases are minimized. This is a very important task for the study's reliability and validity.

My goal of situating this study in hermeneutics is to increase my understanding of how Muslims in the Western societies and how these societies on the other hand can reduce the gap of the existing misunderstanding. Hermeneutics in this study is concerned with interpretation of the sacred texts, the scholarly writings, and the struggle to understand the conflicts between varying worldviews and to reconcile the

differences. As a researcher, being raised as a Muslim in the West, I have had to learn to compare cultures, mentalities, attitudes, personalities, as well as different schools of thought and religions. In an attempt to understand the conflict among Muslims on the topic of Muslim living in the West and Islamic education on one side and the Western view of Muslims on the other, my two selves were in constant dialogue and often in a state of dispute.

My task as a researcher, who has a goal in mind, is to look for the ways that can help me keep the balance. My goal is to reconcile between the two selves and not to bring the conflict between them. Reconciliation as Al Zeera (2001) suggests, "... is not easy for everybody. It means reaching the deep level of understanding on behalf of myself as the researcher, an understanding that analyzes personal opinions and prejudice in the light of universal knowledge" (p. 142). It is not compromising, because it connotes, as Al Zeera writes, "giving up something willingly or unwillingly for the sake of getting something else..." (p. 143).

## 1.6 Limitations

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) assert that all research is interpretive. According to them, research is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Some of these beliefs may be taken for granted, may be invisible and only assumed, while others are highly visible and controversial. For Denzin and Lincoln, each interpretive paradigm makes particular demands on the researcher (p. 33). The use of text review by its nature has some inherent weaknesses as a data collection method. One potential limitation is that the data may be open to multiple interpretations due to cultural differences (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.135).

I expect that there is a grey area and potential difficulty in interpretation of Islamic teachings due to differences between those who hold moderate views and those who hold more literal views on education combined with the various experiences of Muslims living in Western societies. Those who hold rigid views are the ones who make literal interpretation without taking into account the spirit of the law. Interpretational differences are due in part to the different cultures, times and places in which Muslims have lived and live. Nasr (2002) explains:

> In trying to understand Islamic civilization, it is essential to remember not only the diversity of the arts and the sciences, but also the diversity of the theological and philosophical interpretations of Islamic doctrines and even the Islamic Law *(Shari'ah)*. There is nothing more erroneous than thinking that Islam is a monolithic reality and that Islamic civilization did not allow the creation or subsistence of diversity. Although a sense of unity has at all times dominated everything Islamic, there has always existed a diversity of interpretations of the religion itself as well as various aspects of Islamic thought and culture (p.xxii).

To address differences in interpretations among the authors on Islamic education and Muslim cultures, this study will attempt to compare Muslim scholars' writings to the Qur'an and the Sunnah so to understand better the reasons behind their views on education, culture and life in general. It is also understood that certain issues raised in Islamic literature are ambiguous in their addressing of "grey areas." These areas are open to interpretation, such as the study of art and music. I also acknowledge that accurate data interpretation depends on the reliability and integrity of the sources of material reviewed – both those of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as well as those of scholars and philosophers on Islamic education.

## 1.7 Conclusion

In the first part of the chapter, I introduced the study, background, purpose and significance. The second part of the chapter focused on the description of the process of hermeneutics and ethnographic content analysis that I use to gather and interpret the data in this study. The investigation of documentation from an historical perspective involves working with extant material (Aldridge, 1998). For this study, the existing data consists primarily of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the writings of contemporary scholars offering their interpretation of Islamic education, culture, *Ijtihad,* reform and leadership based on the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah.* Using the conceptual template of the social, cultural, and spiritual climate of Islamic education through different eras, I intend to discuss and explain the meaning of Islamic education. In general, the aim of Islamic education, the policies that support these aims and the process of reform in the Muslim community will be a focus of this research. I will also consider the place of leadership in this endeavour with implications from the historical perspective for our era of globalization. I will lastly formulate conclusions and recommendations on the basis of the given information.

## 1.8 Organization of the Study

Chapter I provides an introduction, outlining the background of the study, its purpose and significance, and the research approach. It explains the steps in the data/information collection, the role of the researcher, and limitations of the study. It concludes with the organization of the study. Chapter II outlines the historical and cultural perspectives of Islamic education, its aims and sources, moral education as the essential ingredient of it, the theoretical orientation of the study as well as the content analysis.

In Chapter III, the dissertation examines Islamic intellectual traditions, the notion of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and the place of reformers in Islamic intellectual heritage. This chapter also provides critical reflection on the notion of change and reform in the Muslim community which exists within the context of Western society. It further discusses the Islamic paradigm for Muslim leadership in contemporary society and the most important traits that leadership should exhibit. In Chapter IV, I reflect on topics of identity, culture, reform, obstacles on the path of their reform and the possible alternatives that Muslims have in the West, as interpreted by scholars who live in the West. Chapter V focuses on the potential impact, implications and recommendations of Islamic education, construction of Muslim cultures in the West, reform and leadership for contemporary Muslim as well as non-Muslim educational systems, Muslim communities and Western societies in general. Altogether, my dissertation consists of five chapters in the order set forth in the previous paragraph. For the purposes of clarity, I present it according to the following sequence:

Chapter 1: Beginning of Understanding

Chapter 2: Historical and Cultural Contexts of Education: An Islamic Theoretical Perspective

Chapter 3: Intellectual Heritage of Educational and Cultural Reform of Muslim Western Communities

Chapter 4: Muslims in the West: Contemporary Educational and Cultural Strategies

Chapter 5: Settling, Reconciling and Contributing: Implications and Recommendations for Muslim Educational Reform and Leadership Policies in the West

# CHAPTER 2:
# HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF EDUCATION: AN ISLAMIC THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

## 2.1 Introduction

The second chapter of this study will be dedicated to the philosophical and conceptual framework of Islamic education. I systematically explore historical and cultural perspectives on education by scrutinizing several terms used by Muslims for education. My intention is to formulate a definition of Islamic education in order to bring into focus the aims and objectives of Islamic education.

My challenges will centre on morality as the essential ingredient of Islamic education. This includes a discussion of the role it plays in society, both for individuals and the whole society. Some thoughts of Western and Muslim educational philosophers are compared on the topic of morality and educational aims. Through this exploration, I will attempt to establish the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the Islamic educational system in ways that are consistent with Western views so that some gaps can be bridged.

The review of the literature includes mostly English resources. There are several areas of literature relevant to this chapter and they are significantly interrelated. I have carefully reviewed many articles, books, and

dissertations concerning Islamic education and its aims. I will especially consider moral education as an important aspect of education and discuss several important contributions that have been made to the topic. The authors' focus on the materials, however, has been mostly from the historical perspective and organizational aspect of educational institutions in classical Islam in Muslim countries.

I address the two areas of research that are of particular interest to all modern researchers: the history of Islamic institutions of learning such as the mosque and the *madrasah*, and the rise of intellectual movements during medieval times. Among the most important works in this field are two books: George Makdisi's (1981) *The Rise of Colleges and Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* and Tibawi's (1972) *Islamic Education.* Boyle (2004) confirms such statements in her book *Qur'anic Schools: Agents of Preservation and Change.* She writes that while there is a great deal of historical information available on Islamic education and its structure, there is less information on contemporary Islamic education (p. 18). Indeed, very little research has been done concerning Islamic education and its aims in the modern context and its implications for contemporary educational thought.

In short, the Islamic context of modern education has not been clearly envisaged by Muslims despite the striking emphasis placed by Islamic religious sources on the subject. This is partly due to the insufficiency of independent classical literature devoted to the theories, philosophy, concepts, principles and goals of Islamic education. Unlike other subjects, such as legal science and scholasticism, which have become unique fields of study in their own right, references to education are found in isolated utterances scattered through or subsumed under the writings of legal sciences, theology and philosophy. In other words, educational thought based on theological,

psychological and epistemological concepts has not been an independent science, and therefore a comprehensive and ordered educational doctrine has not adequately evolved.

This fact, however, does not at all deny the existence of a few classical Muslim literary testimonies pertaining to a more practical aspect of educational themes. Among the most important of these works are *Adab al-Mu'allimin* by Ibn Suhnun, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* by Burhan al-Din al-Zurnuji and *Ihya 'ulum al-Din* (especially in the *Kitab al-'Ilm*) by Al-Ghazzali. Most of these writings concentrate on juristic aspects of education, since most of these writers were jurists. The writings include family education, ethics of learning and teaching, moral conduct of the teacher and the student and the acquisition of knowledge, and the classification of the sciences. Even though these references in literature fail to explicate systematic educational doctrine, the wide range of topics that they cover clearly shows that education in all aspects of life is an important concern in Islam.

## 2.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts of Islamic Education

The history of Islamic education provides insight into how and why the system developed and progressed as it did, while also revealing underlying social and moral aims. This section briefly outlines education in Islam in the historical and cultural settings in which its theory, system, aims and purpose evolved.

As early as its dawning in the beginning of seventh century C.E., Muslims considered education to be a life-long process within Islam. The *Qur'an* stresses the importance of knowledge (*'ilm*) more than 750 times

(Anees & Athar, 1980), ranking it as the third most used term after the word *Allah* (God) used 2,800 times and the word *Rabb* (Lord) used 950 times. This fact testifies to the importance of the term in Islamic intellectual tradition (Rosenthal, 1970). The first word of the *Qur'an* (91:1) revealed to Prophet Muhammad was *iqra,* which means *read* and *recite* (Baalbaki & Baalbaki, 1998, pp. 854-855). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged Muslims towards education as evidenced in the *Sunnah* (customary practices and sayings of the Prophet): "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" (Yousif, 1985, p. 2711), for "it is an obligation on every Muslim (male and female)" (Ibn Majah).

Pedersen (1984) explains that education in the Islamic context means "the whole world of the intellect" that engages the interest of Muslims more than anything else in their communities (p. 37). Wilds (1959) describes the importance of education in early Muslim societies and how the basic education in such societies became almost universal:

> It was this great literality that they [the Muslims] displayed in educating their people in the schools which was one of the most potent factors in the brilliant and rapid growth of their civilization. Education was so universally diffused that it was said to be difficult to find a Muslim who could not read or write (p. 216).

During the time of Prophet Muhammad and that of his four successors (*Khulafa*), the essential foundation of Islamic education was established in the mosque (*Masjid*), which played a very important role in the spread of education in early Islamic communities. The basic format of mosque education was the study circle, better known in Islamic pedagogy as *Halaqat al-'Ilm,* or in brief, *Halaqah.* The term is transliterated *Halqa* in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and defined as "a gathering of people seated in a

circle", or "gathering of students around a teacher" (Galsse, 2002, p. 95). For this reason, "the mosque is considered the first and the oldest institution of learning par excellence and a natural development of the *masjid*" (Makdisi, 1981, pp. 10, 27). Makdisi identifies two types of mosques. The first type is the congregational or *jami'* mosque, which had *halaqahs* (study circles) (p. 17), during which, as Makdisi points out, "various Islamic sciences were taught" (p. 120). The second type of mosque functioned as an Islamic college (p. 21). Such mosques, which belonged mostly to the period 800 to 900 C.E., were used for teaching and learning of Islamic sciences and their ancillaries, including grammar, philology and literature. This was before the advent of the *madrasah* (p. 22).

The nucleus and the basic format of mosque education is portrayed by the Prophet's companions who used to sit around him listening to his exposition of the sacred texts and scriptures. The term that designated such an assembly was *halaqah* (Munir ud-Din, 1968, pp. 52-55). Tibawi (1972) discusses the place of mosques in the early stage of Islam. He suggests that mosques were the "first schools in Islam" and claims the following: "In the circles of learned men, usually held in mosques discourse, questions and answers were the received method" (p. 27). Tibawi also writes about the mosque: "on its floor sat preachers and teachers surrounded by adults and children seeking learning and instruction" (p. 24).

It is fair to say that the *Qur'an* was the first textbook of Islamic education. The association of the two – the *Qur'an* and the mosque – remained one of the most influential characteristics of Islamic education throughout history. Shalaby (1954) also points out that in these mosques, critical interpretation – what he refers to as "exegesis" – of the Qur'an and Sunnah became the order of the day (p.53). According to Shalaby (1954), in a *halaqah* "the teacher usually seated himself on a cushion against a wall or

pillar while the audience formed a circle in front of him" (p. 216). The mosque, besides being a place for worship, was the main centre of learning for both men and women throughout early Islamic history (Rosenthal, 1970).

Whenever or wherever Islam was established, mosques were established simultaneously and basic education was initiated. Such mosques were developed into places of learning, often with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of students. This was the case with Cordoba Mosque and University in Spain, founded in 785 C.E.; the Qarawiyyin Mosque and University in *Fez*, Morocco, founded in 859 C. E.; Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, founded in 972 C.E.; and many other similar Islamic institutions throughout Asia, Africa, the Middle East and parts of Europe (Salah, 2002).

Pedersen (1984) explains the impact of the mosque circles on the community in the following way: "The life that evolved in the mosques spread outward to put its marks upon influential circles everywhere" (p. 37). In the early Islamic era, the mosque was used for the teaching of one or more of the Islamic sciences and literary arts. After the mid-ninth century however, more and more of these early educational institutions came to be devoted to the legal sciences as was the case with Cordoba Mosque, the Qarawiyyin and Al-Azhar. Thus, the mosques continued to be used as a place of teaching well into the third century of Islam (the ninth century C.E.).

The subjects taught were also expanded beyond the study of scriptural texts to include philosophy and grammar as well as intellectual sciences such as chemistry, physics, arithmetic, algebra and geometry. The mosque, which contained such study circles, played a leading role as the first educational institution in Islam. This tradition set the pattern for educational instruction

during the subsequent centuries. Naturally, this process led to the gradual transformation of Islamic educational institutions using a simple study circle to the growth of *madaris* (singular *madrasah*) at the end of the fourth A.H/tenth century C.E. and flourished in 1100 C.E. (Makdisi, 1981, pp. 20, 27, 28).

The changing world brought new challenges. To meet these challenges and their intellectual demand, Muslims opened the *madrasah* – higher and more organized system of learning. It should be noted that in spite of the evolution of m*adrasah*, for a long time, there was much overlapping of the *halaqahs* and the *madrasah*. Even after the appearance of *madrasah* and other Islamic educational institutions in the course of Islamic history, this phenomenon did not deprive the mosque of its educational function. This remains so even in modern times.

## 2.3 Disputation of Aims in Education

Confusion about the aims of education is not something new. Indeed, it remains in spite of the efforts of many philosophers to define them. Even during the time of Aristotle this confusion was present as he noted:

> For mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Nor is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principles we should proceed. Should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all these opinions have been entertained (1965, p. 59).

If this happened in Aristotle's time, imagine the challenges of modern times. In an age like ours, an age of industrial, material, and technical complexity, we can only expect more confusion about the aims of education, and consequently about morality.

More recently, various post-modern scholars stress that educational institutions merely fill the students' heads with data and information, without knowledge in the classical sense, including training and disciplining the mind, preparing students for practical life and raising their intellectual level (Estava & Prakash, 1998; Illich, 1998; Prakash, 1993; Gajardo, 1993).

Some contemporary scholars, such as Berry (1992), explain the intent of education from the post-modern viewpoint. Smith interviewed this post-modern writer and questioned him on his view of today's educational aims and concerns. Berry responds:

> My approach to education would be like my approach to everything else. I'd change the standard. I would make the standard that of community health rather than career of the student. You see, if you make the standard the health of the community that would change everything. Once you begin to ask what would be the best thing for our community, what's the best thing that we can do here for our community, you can rule out any kind of knowledge (In Smith, 2000, p. 13).

Berry concludes by saying "we are teaching as if the purpose of knowledge is to help people have careers or to make them better employees, and that's a great and tragic mistake" (in Smith, 2000, p. 14). Islamic perspectives on this issue are similar to those of Berry. The Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali, who lived in eleventh century C.E., encouraged students to seek knowledge in order to contribute to the entire community, not just for personal gain (quoted in Faris, 1991, p. 202).

In this light, researchers might reasonably inquire whether today's educational institutions in the West are more oriented towards preparing students for successful careers or towards fulfilling both the students' career goals and the community's health. Gionatti's views (2000) coincide with the Al-Ghazali's approach to the issue. He mentions Al-Ghazali's philosophy as one that acknowledges that the ultimate goal of learning and knowledge should be to consider the welfare of the community. This was the original intent of today's educational institutions, which Gionatti states were "built to educate emerging professionals and leaders" but which have "degenerated into something of an ego factory, encouraging scholars to be more concerned with their publication record, grant applications, and public notoriety than mentoring their students and serving the wider non-academic community" (p. 3).

## 2.4 Aims of Islamic Education and the Role it Serves for Individuals, Society and Humanity

Islamic education aims at serious goals and social responsibilities. Muslim and non-Muslim philosophers have exerted great effort in explicating them. Yet, they have had different viewpoints regarding the definition of these goals and responsibilities. Some regard the spiritual as important while others focus on the material, yet others see the social goals as the most important in education. A fourth group prioritizes individual growth and personal development. Berry points out that:

> Education is a continuous process of transmitting knowledge and values in order to promote the intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical development of the pupils enabling them to cope with challenges of modern society and grow up as balanced and motivated individuals. It is about the harmonious development of mind, body and soul. On the one hand, education helps

> equipping human beings with the required skills and experiences needed to meet challenges of a competitive society; on the other hand, it prepares them how to live as caring human beings in a diverse society. With effective dissemination of these roles they attain peace in life and pleasure of God (1992, p. 5).

Muslims primarily use three terms to describe education. Each differs in connotation but embodies the various dimensions of the educational process as perceived by the main sources of Islam – the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. On the surface, each of these terms would be sufficient to convey the meaning of education as accepted by general understanding. However, a detailed etymological study of the terms may present an instructive cross section of the various views they denote and may differentiate and refine the meanings of each term. The examination of each term offers precision of meaning, which subsequently will contribute to a proper conceptual order concerning the definition of Islamic education. Undoubtedly, such a definition is indispensable in offering the correct interpretation of educational approaches and ideas in different times and contexts, and thus helps in the formulation of a system of education and its practical implication.

The first word widely used in a formal sense is the word *ta'lim,* stemming from the root *'alima* which means to know, to be aware, to perceive or to learn, relating to knowledge being sought or imparted through instruction and teaching (Bernard Lewis et al, 1987, vol. III). *Ta'lim* refers to that kind of instruction which involves mental activities, and results in knowledge which the learner did not previously possess (Bin Omar, 1993, pp. 5-10). It could be defined as the process of transmitting or imparting knowledge to a person that will help in training his or her mind and developing reasoning powers. Thus, *ta'lim* implies the process of instilling knowledge in somebody so that this knowledge provides meaning and value to human life, to existence and to all human activities.

The second word *tarbiyah* comes from the root word *raba* which means to increase, to grow or to nourish, to perform the gradual process of bringing or growing of something to the stage of completeness or maturity (Al-Attas, 1979). In contemporary Arabic usage, the word *tarbiyah* is used to denote education. It is a matter of putting affairs into a right and proper state or order. At this level, the term applies to the growth process of humans, plants and animals (Ibn Manzur, 2000, vol.1). Among Muslim educators, *tarbiyah* is perceived as the educational process by which the human personality is brought up from one stage to another until it reaches the stage of complete maturity in human development. In short, as Bin Omar (1993) suggests, Tarbiyah refers to education in its broadest sense, meaning the development of the human personality and the nurturing and rearing aspects of education (pp. 5-10).

Both terms *ta'lim* and *tarbiyah* are used in contemporary administrative affairs particularly in the Muslim societies (Nasr, 1987, p. 141). *Tarbiyah* is distinct from *ta'lim* in that the latter has a close semantic relation to *'ilm* – which means knowledge which is generally understood to be the result of education. *Tarbiyah* for Nasr (1987), but not so for Al Attas, is the highest level of education that aims at the education of the whole being.

The third term used in Islamic education is *ta'dib*. It comes from the root *adaba* which means to be cultured, refined or well mannered, disciplined and trained in mind and soul (Ibn Manzur, 2000, vol.1). It suggests the social dimensions of a person's development. It is a process by which the good qualities and attributes of the mind and soul in terms of proper behaviour or ethical conduct are acquired (Bin Omar, 1993, pp. 5-10). It is the rationale of Islamic education that manifested itself historically in educational process through mosques and *madaris*. Al Attas (1985) defines *adab* as the highest level of education that aims at the development of the whole being:

> ... discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgement of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potentials... (It) involves action to discipline the mind and soul (pp. 182, 185).

This means that in Islam, education can never be separated from *adab* in its most profound sense, because *adab* encompasses the spiritual level of human awareness. The emphasis on *adab*, which includes action (*'amal*) in education and the educational process, ensures that *'ilm* (knowledge) is being put to good use in society, as Al Attas suggests (1979, p. 25).

Modern Muslim scholars have seen Islamic education as a process that involves the complete person *(insan kamil, complete personality)*, including the rational, spiritual, and social dimensions of the person (Al-Attas, 1979, p. 158). The comprehensive and integrated approach to Islamic education strives to produce a morally good, well-rounded person. It aims at the balanced growth of the total personality through training of the spirit, the intellect, the rational self, the person's feelings and bodily senses. This approach is supported by the Islamic educational theory in which the general objective of gaining knowledge is the actualization and perfection of all dimensions of a human being, as suggested by Al Attas (1979, p. 158).

If the goal of education in Islam is the balanced growth of the human character, the soul should receive attention equal to that given to the intellect. Ashraf warns that separation of the spiritual development of the human being from the rational temporal aspects of the same person is the main cause for the degeneration of human personality (1993, p. 2).

Education in Islam is thus a twofold process, involving acquisition of intellectual knowledge as well as spiritual experience. Therefore, education of the intellect in Islam is inseparable from the cultivation of the spiritual life of

the human being. According to the educational philosophy of Al Attas and other Islamic educationalists such as Al Faruqi, Rahman and Ramadan, an equal provision must be made for both aspects: intellectual and spiritual. This also means that acquiring knowledge in Islam is not supposed to be an end in and of itself, but a means to stimulate a more elevated moral and spiritual consciousness, leading to one's becoming a more balanced human being (1979, p. 157).

Education is not a mere destination but a life-long journey. It is the art of properly dealing with human nature at various levels, in different situations and under different conditions, thus ensuring a person's balanced growth, upbringing and shaping of his or her identity within the framework of the society that he or she lives in. With this in mind, it could be noticed that education is not only for the individual's benefit, but also for the benefit of society. Lerner urges that:

> Education must aim at persons who are fulfilling and fulfilled, in a society while they thereby nourish and strengthen. Unless education is thus a fertilizing ground for the whole life cycle in the whole civilization, it will not have explored its true aim ((1976, p. 82).

As it can be observed, education in Islam refers to much more than formal schooling; it is a life-long process. The Islamic perspective is echoed in Illich (1998) and other post-modernists' theories about "de-schooling" or acknowledging that education takes place all the time, and not just in the classroom. This insight is evident in the words *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah,* and *ta'dib*, all of which refer to different aspect of the process of education.

These three terms are interrelated in their concern for individuals, the environment, and society as a whole, and represents the scope of education in

Islam, both formal and informal (Abdullah, 1982; Al-Afendi and Baloch, 1979; Cook, 1999; Erfan & Valie, 1995; Bin Omar, 1993). Thus, the entire world becomes the classroom – the theatre in which one's journey to moral perfection and intellectual excellence is considered the benefit for everyone.

## 2.5 History of Moral Education and its Sources in Islamic Intellectual Tradition

In this new era when many youth face moral crises, parents, educators, and religious leaders call for a more effective moral education of today's children, especially so, as these children will become tomorrow's parents. Islamic educational frameworks, which are derived from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, should be combined with empirical elements of psychology and sociology. Religious and moral elements are seriously considered in Islamic society as the basis of Islamic education. Therefore, all the experts who establish an Islamic educational theory, besides having knowledge about contemporary theories on education, must possess a good knowledge of the Qur'an and the Sunnah in order to draw philosophical, psychological, sociological, historical and educational conclusions that can guide their research (Smock, 2004).

Islam is the guiding principle for developing an educational framework and influencing the process of education in a Muslim community. This creates a wider moral environment and consequently provides a moral basis for education in which Islamic values implicit in the whole process of education are explicitly recognized and rationally defended.

In this chapter, Islamic moral education was discussed on the basis of the work of several Islamic educators and philosophers. Islamic moral

education is based on two sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Educational institutions in Islam, regardless of whether they are public or private, such as *the BC Muslim School, BC, Canada,* are expected to operate within the Islamic framework of morality. In the Islamic educational system, the standards of moral education cannot vary drastically from one institution to another, as these standards spring from the same source. However, different cultural interpretations often result in skewed understandings, and bring confusion into the minds of the Muslim learners in Western society in particular.

In the context of the community I work in, to define these aims is much easier because the whole Muslim community, irrespective of the individual's place of origin, language, or social status still has the same framework for a belief system, morals, ethics, standards of conduct, principles of spirituality, family values, and so on. That is the reason why the mission of Muslim educational institutions is focused on the whole personality of its youth growing up in the Western society, at this stage in history. In the statement of purpose and goals of the BC Muslim School, it is very clearly stated that:

> The BC Muslim School offers a unique environment in which to educate today's young Muslims maturing, developing, and growing up in North America... It is the school's aim to produce Muslims of character who are able to succeed academically, professionally, socially, and spiritually in North America (School's Manual, 2001, p. 2).

Muslims have a strong belief that the cultivation of moral virtues is achieved by way of continuous moral education that starts from the cradle and extends to the time of death. This is taught by the Prophet whose whole mission was to establish the perfect moral system. His educational vision and mission were for the purpose of moral enlightenment, as he once summarized

it in the following words: "I have been sent only for the purpose of perfecting good morals" (Al Bukhari, 1999, No.274, p. 126). John Dewey (1897) in his "My Pedagogical Creed" holds that:

> ...the process of education begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, framing his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions (p. 1).

## 2.6 Moral Education: The Essential Ingredient of Islamic Education

The Muslims represent a new and growing community in the pluralistic society of the West, and as such can make positive contributions in dealing with some challenges and problems that Western society faces. For Muslims, Islam is a way of life. It has a great impact on every aspect of Muslim society in general, and naturally, therefore, on the educational system of that society in particular. Islam is at the heart of the entire Muslim educational system. It guides the whole process of Islamic education and its reform.

Thus, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* became the core of the Islamic education system. From the starting point of the revelation of the *Qur'an*, Muslims have cherished the cultivation of moral character as a focal point in human life and, consequently, education. For Muslim philosophers and educationalists, moral upbringing is the central theme of our being in this world. Al Attas (1979) defines that goal in the following words: "the aim of education is to produce a good human being" (p. 1). Moral education has thus been seen as the very core of the Islamic educational process. It helps in creating an environment in which learners can ponder their relationship with

the world and with the Creator and evaluate the consequences of human actions on the basis of moral standards.

Al Attas (1979) and Basheer (1982) believe that even today after becoming modernized in terms of technology, Islamic education should still maintain its centuries-old aspiration of nurturing the "whole person," striving to cultivate people who are sound in body, mind, and soul; people who are respectful of honest work, having a deep sense of social responsibility, and being imbued with the independent spirit needed to become contributors to the local community and the global village.

Moral education, according to the Islamic philosophy of education, is not only the responsibility of the home or school, but also rests with the local community and society at large. It is an imperative of the Islamic society that all its institutions operate according to the moral codes whose aims are outlined by the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Thus what goes on in the home and what goes on in the school, as far as moral education is concerned, is supported and continued by that which goes on in the society as a whole. Basheer (1982) explains this notion in the following words:

> In Islamic society, there is a unity which sets a lasting harmony between the home, the school and the society at large. The outcome of this harmony is that the moral values of the individual are to be the same as those of the society. To educate the individual in the Islamic values without educating the society in the same values makes it very difficult, almost impossible, for the individual to adhere to the values in which s/he is educated (p. 1).

Islamic moral education is very centralized and comprehensive. The *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* provide a very clear framework of all standards of morality. This framework is clear and well defined but it allows individuals

to deal with novel situations. The best example, in the area of alternatives given by Islam, is the analogy used by Basheer (1982) who says:

> If we could imagine *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) to be a stretch of a river, then although this river is set for Muslims and they have no other alternative or choice, they are urged to deepen the river as far as they can, provided they are still within the framework of the river (p. 57).

Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) provides broad principles for Islam that can be interpreted flexibly to suit the present time without losing their force and being weakened by individual decisions or social and economic powers. *Shari'ah* provides broad and flexible rules to serve two purposes. Firstly, they guide society towards a definite goal. Secondly, they save us the time and the trouble of controversy over changing issues. All this is not done at the expense of our freedom and rationality, nor without consideration of the change that must be made to allow rules to be practiced according to their spirit, in different situations and eras. The rules still allow the individual to exercise personal perception because they are intentionally set up to equip individuals to deal with novel situations.

Islamic education has a different approach to educational aims and problems from that of religious or theocratic education. The primary aim of the Islamic educational system is in some ways different from that of other educational systems in our post-modern times. Most of the non-Islamic educational systems are similar in that they aim at the preparation of a good citizen in a given society. But since each country has its own measure and specific concept and definition of a good citizen, the education imparted on this basis tends to be parochial and therefore, narrow in scope.

Islam, on the other hand, takes a much broader view, which Islamic educationalists have called "ideal educational aims" (Ashraf, 1979, p. 44). Preparation for citizenship in a given society is only one aspect of the educational endeavour. Islamic education aims at the mental, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social development of an individual. It involves wholeness and holiness at the same time. It may be pointed out that the Islamic educational theory is quite insistent on the individual's spiritual development. Muslim educator Ashraf (1979) holds that education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of a human being. Ashraf describes it in the following words:

> Education should therefore cater for the growth of man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually and collectively and perfection (of morality) (p. 44).

Many verses of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* emphasize human potential. The *Qur'an* again and again draws attention to humans' accountability in leading a moral life, acquiring knowledge and maintaining a status of equilibrium in self-actualization. It is accurate to say that Islamic moral education is to be achieved through the whole conduct of education, in the school as well as in the family institution, and in society at large.

## 2.7 Conclusion

The institution of Islamic education started with a simple learning circle in the mosque. Although in the very beginning, its objective was mainly religious, the expansion of the Muslim empire as well as the emergence of Muslim governments and the encounter with the new cultures and religions called for the revision of general goals of Islamic education in conjunction

with the evolvement of Islamic educational institution. Nevertheless, the eventual establishment of the *madrasah*, as we have seen, did not abandon the major aims of Islamic education. Rather, it broadened the curriculum to include several branches of the Islamic science.

All mentioned terms *ta'lim*, *tarbiyah* and *adab* are interrelated, and unless all their meanings are combined, a true and comprehensive meaning of education in Islam is impossible to arrive at. I suggest that the definition of education be broadened to include the full range of the terms discussed in the chapter. Based on this discussion, Islamic education may be defined as the process of imparting knowledge to a person, the training of mind and body, the formation of character and the cultivation of the spiritual being so that it leads the educated person to a stage of human perfection. Thus, the teacher is at the same time *mu'allim* (the instructor or transmitter of knowledge), *murabbi* (the educator) and *mu'addib* (the trainer of personality and soul).

Moral education, as the essential ingredient of Islamic education, is highly centralized and comprehensive. Traditional guidelines from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* on moral education provide a very clear framework for all standards of morality. This education is not just taught as a subject in the Muslim educational institutions, but is implemented through all school activities. In short, the Islamic educational system combines both procedures and content, thus producing an effective moral education.

This chapter has been concerned with the historical context of Islamic education and its aims. This theoretical background could be understood only if it is seen through the prism of Islamic intellectual heritage and feasible tools that could help it be reformed in different contexts. The following

chapter sheds some light on Islamic intellectual capital and how *Ijtihad*, being a practical mechanism for ascertaining Islamic law's opinions on education and social issues, can help Muslims integrate selectively and smartly in new societies.

# CHAPTER 3:
# THE CONCEPT, METHOD, AND PRACTICE OF REFORM IN ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes Islamic intellectual history with a view to identify past "intellectual capital" which might aid in modern Muslim educational reform. In particular, it explores the notion of *Ijtihad or* "individual reasoning" in Islam as a means of determining judicial judgments when Muslims live in the context of new times and places. In general, I wish to present *Ijtihad* as a practical approach for ascertaining the position of Islamic law on educational and social issues and to indicate how *Ijtihad* could be used as a method of legal reformation in Muslim communities today.

This chapter draws on Islamic intellectual history to explore the notion of Islamic scholarship and leadership in the emerging Muslim communities in the West. It analyses the adaptation of reformers as individuals in unique contexts and possibilities of unlearning the past and relearning from the new environments in order to create improved policies. The policies are based on original Islamic thought and texts such as the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and reflect the needs and realities of Muslim communities in new homelands.

My critical approach in this chapter is based on the following assumptions of the existing intellectual heritage: a) past intellectual capital

needs to be acknowledged, but not ignored or reproduced entirely; b) human intellectual production is the result of interpretations; c) interpretations are affected by a variety of factors, including the personal experiences of the interpreters and the historical context; d) interpreters must know the sources of Islamic intellectual tradition as well as the context in which they live; e) every generation must therefore reevaluate inherited knowledge in light of changing circumstances; f) Islamic knowledge has a base in the *Qur'an* which provides guidance in this ongoing process of reevaluation and is the criteria by which to judge whether or not something is truly Islamic; and g) Muslims in the West need to look for alternatives that allow them to remain faithful to Islamic principles, as articulated in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* yet reformed within the context of modern societies.

All of the assumptions are characteristic of an interpretative method presently under much discussion by Muslims, referred to by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars as *Ijtihad or neo-Ijtihad* (Al-Alwani, 1993, 1993b; Haddad & Stowasser, 2004; Hallaq, 1984, 1995, 1997; Iqbal, 1962; Kamali 1998, 2002; Fazlur Rahman, 1984; Ramadan 2002, 2004; Said, 1961; Smock, 2004; Weiss 1978, 1998). Developed as a method of Islamic jurisprudence, *Ijtihad* became the basis of widespread reevaluation of traditional Islamic teachings (Al-Alwani, 1993, Kamali, 2002). The assumptions indicate the source in Islamic hermeneutics. Our modern time, especially for Muslims in the West, is marked by increasing discussions among reformist Muslim scholars and leaders about the need to exercise *Ijtihad* as a means for reevaluating Muslims' lives in light of changing circumstances (Al-Alwani, 1993, Fazlur Rahman, 1984, Ramadan 2002, 2004), while simultaneously being guided by the Qur'anic calls for social justice. This interpretative method grows in popularity, and most modern Muslim reformers draw on it (Kamali, 2002, Ramadan, 2004).

Those who do not accept *Ijtihad* as a legal mechanism for the reevaluation of Islamic tradition, but follow *taqlid,* "imitation" of the existing law, are not a focus of this study. *Shari'ah* in general and other sources of Islamic law such as *Ijma'* and *Qiyas* are not the focus of this study as well. The concept of collective *Ijtihad* or *Ijtihad Jami'i* (Al-Alwani, 1993, Al-Amidi, 1966, Al-Bazdawi, 1973, Al-Haj, Khudari, 1983) will not be discussed in this study either.

## 3.2 *Ijtihad*: Its Importance

Why is it important for this project to study *Ijtihad*? The argument that Islamic law guides the daily life of millions of people all over the world alone is enough to justify an interest in the subject. Moreover, Islam, Islamic law and Muslims have especially after the tragedy of the eleventh of September in 2001 become the subject of gross misinterpretation and misunderstanding in the Western media. Accurate knowledge on the subject of the tools for reformation in Muslim communities in the West is therefore vitally needed.

During my research for the dissertation, I have realized that no tool of reformation of Islamic law is as potentially powerful as *Ijtihad*. The fact that it has been constantly debated since early Islam (Ramadan, 2004) validates the importance of *Ijtihad*. While striving to preserve the fundamental principles and ethics of Islam, *Ijtihad* facilitates the transformation of legal applications (Kamali, 2002). It also allows for human knowledge to be a source of law in a legal system based on divine revelation. The latter is arguably the most interesting, and also the most complex question about *Ijtihad*.

As the historical context changes so does human knowledge. Knowledge about *Ijtihad* is a means of understanding the modern world and how Muslim institutions should operate in it (Al-Alwani, 1993, Ramadan, 2002, 2004). As the world becomes one global entity, questions that previously concerned Muslims only geographically and mentally far away from them, become actually closer to their everyday life (Ramadan, 2002, 2004).

## 3.3 *Ijtihad*: Historical meaning and Purpose

In order to understand the historical concept of *Ijtihad*, we have to place the different understandings in specific time periods. The original and the most narrow common meaning of *Ijtihad* dates back to the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime (Kamali, 2002, Ramadan, 2002). The use of *Ijtihad* was recorded in the *Hadiths*, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Particularly the use of *Ijtihad* is derived primarily from the *Hadith* of Mu'adh Ibn Jabal. Upon departure of Mu'adh to Yemen to undertake a judicial post, the Prophet questioned Mu'adh regarding the sources on which he would rely in making his decisions. In reply Mu'adh referred first to the Qur'an and then to *Sunnah*, adding that if he did not find the necessary guidance in these sources, he would then carry out his own *Ijtihad*: *"Then I will exert myself to form my own judgment"* (Sunan Abi Daud, Vol. 3, p. 303).

These words of Mu'adh Ibn Jabal have been understood in many different ways. Fryzee (1955) has translated the passage as "Then I shall interpret with my reason" (p. 12). Said Ramadan (1961), the translator of the mentioned *Hadith*, points out that there can be no exertion of own judgment without a given scope of free thought and individual opinion (p. 65). Schacht (1950) explains that the use of *Ijtihad* in the Madinah period was not in the

general sense of exercising one's own opinion but was used in the more specialized sense of "technical estimate, discretion of the expert" (p. 116). Bravmann (1972) refutes this narrow definition of I*jtihad* in the Madinah period, arguing that the exercise of *Ijtihad* must be understood in its context and that the original meaning of *Ijtihad* as used in the context of legal decisions means to exert oneself by the use of one's intellectual faculties on behalf of the Muslim community or Islam (p. 198).

Both Schacht and Bravmann find a strong connection to individual opinion (*ra'y*) and investigation (*nazar*), when defining *Ijtihad* in the Madinah period. Individual opinion (*Ijtihad al-ra'y*) is an expression that occurs frequently in the early period of Islam. This expression stands in contrast to knowledge (*'ilm*) in the traditional sense, as explained by Haddad (1995, p. 178). And when the law was not quite clear there could be no knowledge (*'ilm*) about it. Only through engagement in *Ijtihad*, the qualified jurist could find what was "present but not yet self-evident" (Weiss 1978, p. 200).

According to Bravmann's study, the original meaning of *Ijtihad* is the intellectual exercise of investigating and expressing opinion on behalf of Muslim communities and Islam. His approach of linking *Ijtihad* not only to the knowledge of a scholar, but also the scholars' solicitude for the Muslim communities and Islam, explains the complexity of the role of the scholars. Their concerns do not only rest on providing wise and practical opinions, but rather they have to consider the religious context the law is part of. As could be noted, there is a very close relationship and a constant interaction between the scholar, the text and the Muslim community.

By the end of the seventh century the Umayyad period begun. It is during this period that a *qadi*, a special kind of administrative judge, appears. The *qadi* was a delegate of the regional governor and was often appointed among locals to uphold the administrative regulations and to apply the local laws. Each *qadi* had freedom to exercise his personal opinion (*ra'y*). This led to a great diversity in legal application within the Muslim communities. *Ijtihad* became a methodology by which the *qadi* added his personal opinion (*ra'y*) to, rather than deducted his findings from, the sources (Glenn, 2000, p. 161).

In 750 C.E., the Abbasids came to power and took a religious approach to law that was much of a reaction to the pragmatic Umayyad position (Waines, 1995, p. 46). During this period the *Sunnah* was developed as a common doctrine (Glenn, 2004, p. 161) and subsequently two trends appeared. First, the personal opinion (*ra'y*) was substituted by *Ijma* (consensus) making legal doctrine more systematic and coherent. Furthermore, the *ra'y* as a method was substituted by *qiyas,* a formal analogical deduction. And secondly, the emphasis on the *Sunnah* grew stronger and developed into a system of legitimacy of references to pious persons (Coulson, 1964, p. 75). With this development, the methodology of *Ijtihad* became restricted to *Istihsan* or preference (Waines, 1995, p. 64).

By the ninth century, *Ijtihad* was disassociated from *ra'y* and the first one to break away from it theoretically was Muhammad ibn Idris ash-Shafi'i (d. 821.C.E.), who adopted *Ijtihad* as a methodology of legal reasoning synonymous with *qiyas,* the drawing of juristic conclusions through the method of analogy (Coulson, 1964, pp. 53-61). Ash-Shafi'i saw *Ijtihad* as a source of the law in addition to the *Qur'an,* the *Sunnah* and *Ijma* (consensus). In the Shafi'i legal theory mentioned in the book *al-Risalah* (1939), *Ijtihad* is interpreted to mean *qiyas* (analogical deducting), "the two have different

names which are the same thing" (p. 476), and the connotations of *ra'y* (personal opinion) thus became dissociated.

In practical terms *Ijtihad* was carried out by the *Mujtahid* (the learned jurist scholar) by first seeking a solution to the legal problem in the revealed law of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* (Calder, 1993, p. 164, Hallaq, 1997, pp. 117-123, 144-147, and Weiss, 1998, p. 128). These findings were, if necessary, extended by analogical reasoning to cover the new cases. In this manner, *Ijma* became in the classical juristic theory the central doctrine, since it legitimized and systematized the application of the revealed law (Calder, 1993, p. 198, Glenn, 2000, p. 173, and Schacht, 1950, p. 138).

By the ninth century, the use of *Ijtihad* declined due to the importance of a function of *Ijma* (consensus). Some scholars like Schacht (1959, 1972) and Coulson (1964) argue that there is a common understanding in the Sunni Muslim world that there was a restriction on the usage of *Ijtihad* which was replaced with *taqlid*, "imitation" (Schacht, 1950, 1964 & Coulson, 1964). This has become one of the most debatable issues in Islamic law, and not all have arrived at the same opinion (Coulson, 1964, pp. 80-82).

Scholars like Schacht and Coulson argue that there is no *Ijtihad* after the ninth century, while others (Al-Alwani, 1993, Fazlur Rahman, 1984, Haddad, 2004, Hallaq, 1984, 1985, Ramadan, 2004) argue that there was *Ijtihad* in some shape or form at all times throughout Muslim history. Scholars like Coulson (1964) define post ninth century *Ijtihad* as "neo-*Ijtihad*" indicating a return to a previous position.

Kamali (2002) holds that Islamic scholarship of the subsequent periods was dominated by imitation (*taqlid*) and a strict conformity to the heritage of

the past (p. 625). The renewed demand for the revival of *Ijtihad* was articulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by Jamal al-Din Afghani (d.1898), Muhammad 'Abduh (d.1905), and Muhammad Rashid Rida (d.1935). This fresh demand, Kamali argues, "won an increasing number of supporters and became more emphatic in the succeeding decades of the twentieth century" (p. 625).

Such a response towards the dominance of imitative scholarship became more evident among Western Muslim scholars who articulated the need of *Ijtihad* not only in legal issues but in every aspect of Muslim's life in the West. Al-Alwani (1993) agrees that unless the call for *Ijtihad* becomes a widespread intellectual trend today, there is little hope that Muslims will be able to make any contribution to world civilization, correct its direction, build its own culture or reform the society (p. 236). For that to happen, Muslims need to undertake a new reading of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, study their past, analyze the present and, by means of these, ensure the future.

## 3.4 *Ijtihad*: Individual Reasoning

In early Muslim communities, general rules were sought in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. However, within a short period of time, with the spread of Islam into other societies, Muslims faced many complex issues and challenges including new cultures, politics, religions, and educational systems.

With these new challenges, Muslim scholars, as exemplified in the previously mentioned case of Mu'adh ibn Jabal in Yemen, put their efforts to formulating their own rulings within these new cultural and ethnic contexts so that Muslims could practice Islamic teachings at all times and contexts.

These scholars were aware of the fact that in the absence of textual references, they were called to formulate regulations and bring answers in tune with this new time and place, fulfilling a condition of not betraying the traditions and spirit of the fundamental sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Fazlur Rahman, 1982, p. 19, Ramadan 2004, p. 17).

These diverse responses to new issues and challenges made by the scholars on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, however, were adapted within specific regional contexts. Their rulings remained Islamic as long as they upheld general principles established by the sources of Islamic law and were accepted by the majority of scholars and Muslim population. The scholars responded to these new challenges of different societies and times by taking into account their social, economic and political realities. Such is the case of Imam Ash-Shafi'i in offering divergent answers to the varied contexts of Baghdad and Cairo at two different times.

Following the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 C.E. and for at least the first three centuries of Islam, there was a wide variety of opinions and schools of thought on almost every issue and question. Muslim societies were growing and with their growth unique challenges, in terms of various religious views and cultural, political and educational systems, were encountered. To respond to these challenges and to the changing needs of Muslim societies, Islamic scholars developed a method known as *Ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* was used to understand and apply the message of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* to varying societal needs and conditions (Hallaq, 1995, 1997, Haddad, 2004, Fazlur Rahman, 1984, Kamali, 2002, Ramadan, 2002). This process is not only based on the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, but also on reason, deduction and prioritization.

To explain more clearly the meaning of *Ijtihad* let me illustrate it with an example. I first heard about this example while attending my early religious education in Bosnia. To illustrate *Ijtihad* and the need for *Ijtihad,* a professor of Islamic law at the Islamic University in Sarajevo gave as an example one of the founders of Islamic jurisprudence, Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafi'i, who once gave a certain legal opinion in Baghdad. One year later, he moved to Cairo, and in response to the same question, he gave a different opinion. When questioned, "O Imam! Last year in Baghdad you gave a different answer on the same question," he replied, "that was in Baghdad and this is in Cairo. That was last year and this is now." His reply indicated clearly that the realities of Baghdad were different to those of Cairo and that rulings which were valid in one place were not necessarily so in the other.

In other words, as Ramadan (2002) suggests, "He (ash-Shafi'i) conveyed the fact that if the letter of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* are one, their concrete application is plural and supposes an adaptation" (p. 17). To understand better this task of adaptation and the whole process of change in the Muslim communities in the West in general and Canada in particular, I need to provide an operational definition of *Ijtihad* and suggest its practicality in the modern context.

## 3.5 Definition and Practicality of *Ijtihad*

*Ijtihad* literally means "striving, self-exertion, make every effort and work hard in doing something" (Baalbaki & Baalbaki, 1998, p. 38). It appears that scholars have encompassed all of these meanings in their definitions of *Ijtihad* in legal usage. Al-Amidi (1966) defines *Ijtihad* as "to spare no effort in the quest of discovering the supposed rules of the *Shari'ah* in the sense that the *Mujtahid* leaves no stone unturned" (p. 144). Similarly, Al-Haj (1895)

defines it as "the exertion of the *Mujtahid's* whole effort in his attempt to establish anticipated rules of the *Shari'ah*" (p. 291). Al-Shawkani (1979), Al-Subki (1982) and Al-Bazdawi (1973) define it as "to spare no effort in the quest of knowing the rules of the *Shari'ah*." It may also be defined as a creative but disciplined and comprehensive intellectual effort to derive rulings, in the absence of clear texts from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, on given issues in the context of the existing conditions of the Muslim community (Kamali 2002, p. 623).

Al-Alwani (1993, 1993b) writes that *Ijtihad* is not limited to legal matters, but is a methodology for dealing with all aspects of life (p. 236). For him, "*Ijtihad* is more of a methodology of thought" (pp. 134, 235). Thus, the definition incorporates the conventional definition of *Ijtihad* but adds emphasis on two important aspects: creative thinking and the prevailing conditions of society (Kamali, 2002, p. 623).

*Ijtihad* is considered by the majority of scholars as one of the most important sources of Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) next to the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* (Al-Alwani, 1993, Haddad 2004, Esposito and Voll, 2001, Fazlur Rahman, 1984, Kamali, 2002, Ramadan, 2002, 2004, Schacht, 1991). It is the source in which all other so-called supplementary sources of Shari'ah are founded. *Ijtihad* has been the important interpretive method in Islamic law throughout history. It has helped in re-evaluating Islamic traditions in light of changing circumstances, guided by the Qur'an's insistent calls for social justice. It also could be viewed as a form of legal tool, legal reasoning and a creative impulse. Kamali (2002) explains:

> The various sources of Islamic law that feature next to the Qur'an and the Sunnah are all manifestations of *Ijtihad*, albeit with the differences that are largely procedural in character. In

> this way, consensus of opinions of scholars (*Ijma'*), analogy (*Qiyas*), juristic preference, considerations of public interest, etc., are all inter-related not only under the main heading of *Ijtihad*, but via the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* (p. 366).

The main difference between *Ijtihad* and the revealed sources – the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* – lies in the fact that *Ijtihad* is a continuous process of development (Kamali, 2002, p. 624). It is the essential tool in relating the message to the changing conditions of the Muslim community in its quest for development, truth and continuity. Muslim scholars of the early period clearly understood this fact just as they understood that society is a living organism and subject to ceaseless change. Islamic law regulates the affairs of society in dynamic conditions and therefore cannot remain static (Al-Sayed 1982, p. 8).

As noted, *Ijtihad* operates within the framework of Islamic sources and is used as a vehicle of reform in Muslim communities and as such is always dominated by its dual concern: faithfulness to the sources on the one hand, and keeping pace with the realities of social change on the other (Kamali, 2002 and Ramadan, 2004). Thus, *Ijtihad* is an extension or interpolation of meaning of the Islamic texts. One determines to the best of one's ability, while taking into account both traditional knowledge and ever new ways of understanding – the meaning of the revealed text in its own historic context. One then determines how to act in accordance with that meaning in changed circumstances.

This intellectual endeavor or *Jihad (Fazlur Rahman, 1982, Kamali, 2002, Al-Alwani, 1993)*, including the intellectual elements of both the moments – past and present – is the most meaningful *Jihad* that has remained for Muslims because of its constructive engagement in addressing the issues of modern societies. According to Al-Alwani (1993), this type of

understanding of *Ijtihad* would allow a Muslim mind to participate in an intellectual *Jihad* with the aim of generating ideas and building a new Muslim identity, mentality, and personality (p. 235). This intellectual endeavor for Fazlur Rahman (1982) means:

> ...the effort to understand the meaning of a relevant text or precedent in the past, containing a rule, and to alter that rule by extending or restricting or otherwise modifying it in such a manner that a new situation can be subsumed under it by a new situation. This definition itself implies that a text or precedent can be generalized as a principle and that the principle can then be formulated as a new rule. This implies that the meaning of a past text or precedent, the present situation, and the intervening tradition can be fairly objectively brought under the judgment of the normative meaning of the past under whose impact the tradition arose. (p. 8).

This approach to religion and life in general has references within the history. The companions of the Prophet, in their effort to find solutions for dilemmas, would consult the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. If they did not find the answer for the new problems, they would exercise their own judgment and use *Ijtihad* in accordance with their understanding of the Islamic sources. This was a sound method and an adequate approach that received approval by the Prophet himself, as it can be understood from the renowned tradition of the Prophet, narrated by Mu'adh ibn Jabal: *"Then I will exert myself to form my own judgment"* (Said, 1961, p. 64). Ramadan (2004) defines Mu'adh's approach as *Ijtihad* in the following words:

> Mu'adh put all his energy into his own judgment in cases where he could find no guidance in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This personal effort undertaken by the jurist in order to understand the source and deduce the rules or, in the absence of a clear textual guidance, formulate independent judgments is what is called *Ijtihad* (p. 43).

As can be noted by this example, the conditions in Muslim societies started changing when Muslims encountered other cultures and traditions. New and more complex problems, in the areas of culture and educational systems, needed to be addressed. This continues to be one of the major problems that Muslims face. The reason for having this problem according to Ramadan (2001) is that Muslims often either mistake the spirit of the Qur'anic injunctions with the sense that a particular jurist had given to them in the first period of Islam, or find it very hard to anticipate a legislation which is drawn from the fundamental sources but which is at the same time really in tune with the modern age (p. 17).

A general opinion of scholars has been that the right to exercise independent judgment was gradually restricted by approximately the tenth century, in what they have described as "the closing of the door of *Ijtihad*" (Schacht 1964, pp. 80-81). Schacht (1991) asserts that Islamic law is no longer relevant to modern life because of its inflexibility and consequent inability to meet the constant changes in modern times (p. 70).

The classical legal scholars found a remedy in *Ijtihad* for this inflexibility and inability to meet the constant changes in the society. The tool of *Ijtihad* contributed to easing the law's firm foundations by serving as a dynamic device to suit the application of Islamic law to the relevancies of life. This tool, however, has been abandoned by the jurists, which led to the claim that the gate of Ijtihad has been closed during the middle of the ninth century and from this moment onwards, the period of *Taqlid* (imitation) begins (Schacht 1964, pp. 70-71). This assertion was then echoed by many scholars, especially the Orientalists (Anderson 1976, p. 7; Khadduri 1961, p. 7; Gibb 1970, p. 104; Coulson 1964, p. 81).

The expression was only used as a majority view among Islamic scholars. There was also another opinion among Islamic scholars that claimed that the idea of the closing of the door of *Ijtihad (insidad bab al-ijtihad)* was wrong and that scholars who are qualified, those who possess knowledge and understanding of their society, must have the right to perform *Ijtihad* at all times. Contemporary scholars such as Hallaq (1984) and Watt (1974) suggest that *Ijtihad* always functioned in Islamic jurisprudence. Hallaq (1984) argues that "such views on the history of *Ijtihad* (that is, about its abandonment) after the second/eighth century are entirely baseless and inaccurate" (p. 4). Hallaq believes that in one way or other the principle of *Ijtihad* has been applied from the dawn of Islam to the present day. He concedes, however, that from the sixth century onwards the *Ijtihad* principle was not generally used and certainly not widespread, and that the number of *Mujtahids* dropped considerably (pp. 3-41).

In his article *"Was the Gate of Ijtihad closed,"* Hallaq (1984) proves that the scholars had never abandoned the notion of *Ijtihad*, neither in theory nor in practice (pp. 3-41). After analyzing the relevant sources on the topic of *Ijtihad* dating from the fourth/tenth century onward, he concluded that his findings contradicted the theory suggested by Schacht and echoed by others. He claims in his findings that Islamic law had witnessed a number of scholars who had reached the level of *Ijtihad* and had practiced such. So any argument based on the notion of total closure of *Ijtihad* is simply not supportable.

Despite this, some scholars date the closure of *Ijtihad* back to the fourth/eleventh century. The claim that there was a scholarly consensus regarding such a closure seems unlikely, given the subsequent books written by scholars who called for or believed in it (Hallag, 1984, pp. 3-41). Ibn Abd Al-Barr (d. 463 A.H./1070 C.E.) for example, devoted a whole chapter in his

writings to the refutation of *taqlid,* and called for eligible scholars to undertake *Ijtihad* (1994). Al-Mawardi (1971) made the same plea and further insisted that eligible ones for *Ijtihad* must apply the results of their own *Ijtihad* even though it may disagree with pre-existing *Ijtihad,* which they are not bound to follow (pp. 269-273). These scholars clearly called for *Mujtahids* to practice *Ijtihad* and refute *Taqlid,* and thus there is a clear continuity into the present in the use of *Ijtihad* as a fundamental juristic method of adaptation.

If *Ijtihad* is seen in this light, it would steer a new course in Islamic law and consequently the Muslim community; a course that stays within the boundaries of the Islamic sources, while at the same time avoiding the blindness of simple adherence or imitating the earliest scholars (*taqlid*) and the cultures of origin without consideration of the changing conditions of society. In other words, for reformists, *Ijtihad* is a prerequisite for any intellectual contribution and the survival of Islamic tradition in contemporary societies in contemporary times particularly for those Muslim communities that are in the process of establishing themselves in Western societies. Al-Alwani (1993a) holds that *taqlid* leads to the paralysis of creative abilities of the Muslim mind and calls on Muslim intellectuals to create an atmosphere of creative and *Ijtihad*-like thought,

> Unless the call to *Ijtihad* becomes a widespread intellectual trend, there is little hope that the Ummah (Muslim community) will be able to make any useful contribution to world civilization (p. 234)

*Ijtihad* in modern times differs both in respect of its complexity and its scope. In the earlier times, *Mujtahids* did not experience such rapid social change as is the case today. Social reality was quite different then because a *Mujtahid* was able to engage in *Ijtihad* with a degree of probability which is

no longer the case today. Kamali (2002) suggests that due to the accelerated pace of social change and the complexities it generates, *Ijtihad* ought now to be multi-disciplinary and should not be inhibited by fear of departing from the earlier formulations of Islamic law (p. 627). The existing legacy of Islamic law is largely a product of Ijtihad of the earlier scholars and just as the earlier scholars made their own judgments in their particular times and circumstances, Muslim scholars of the subsequent ages are also entitled to interpret Islam in the light of their own experiences and the existing conditions of life. According to Muhamad Iqbal (1962), a great Indo-Pakistani reformer,

> The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems (p. 164).

*Ijtihad*, in educational spheres, is a resolute effort, as Kamali (2002) argues, to upgrade the state of education at all levels, from fighting illiteracy to modernizing educational facilities and programs, to promulgating knowledge of the *Qur'an* and integrating its values in schools and universities. Anyone who exerts oneself in this cause with sincerity to serve God and the Muslim community would have advanced the cause of the greater Jihad of our modern era. The process of *Ijtihad* enables Muslims to be flexible and to learn from other cultures and civilizations.

## 3.6 Reformers and Reform in the Past: The Source of Self-Renewal for the Future

Naqvi and Siddique (2005)suggest six phases in the historical development of Islamic thought: a) learning and practical commitment to the

universal message of Islam from 610 to 633 C.E; b) spread of Islamic message beyond the Arabian peninsula from 634 to 662 C.E; c) consolidation of Muslim influence – renaissance of Islamic intellectual tradition – from 663 to 1492 C.E; d) decline of Islamic thought and fall to colonialism from 1492 to 1857 C.E; e) reform and freedom movements in Muslim societies from 1857 to 1945 C.E; and f) modern Islamic thought and contemporary movements since 1945 C.E.

As previously noted, this study is interested in reform movements and the approach of the reformers in contemporary times with special focus on the life of Muslims in Western societies. This reform dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The reformers of that time are classified by Naqvi and Siddique (2005) as rejectionists, accommodationists, and re-assertionists (p. 43). These reformers in one way or another provide a foundation for the reform that is happening in Muslim communities in Diaspora. Islamic intellectuals in the West utilized the ideas of the reformers of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth century to build a base for the reform of Muslims in Western societies.

All groups of reformers were driven by different circumstances towards the reformistic ideas. The first group, the rejectionists, is represented by Sayyid Ahmed Shahid (1830-1859) of India, Sayyid Muhammad al-Mahdi (1848-1885) of Sudan, Shaikh as-Sanusi (1787-1859) of Libya, and many others. They aimed to resist oppression and injustice of the colonizers. However, the reformers of this group accepted all beneficial knowledge – science, technological, or knowledge of any sort – if the transfer or exchange occurred without either partly having to lose their dignity, land and freedom (Naqvi and Siddique 2005, p. 43). The circumstances defined the goals of their reform just as it is the case with other groups of reformers in Islamic tradition.

The second group, the accommodationalist reformers, came forward after witnessing the defeat of their people at the hands of the colonialists. Some of these reformers include Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) of India; Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) of Afghanistan; Muhammed 'Abduh (1849-1905) of Egypt; Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) of Syria and later Egypt; Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) of India; and others. Ideologically, these reformers varied from committed traditionalists to pseudo-secularists, yet they all utilized Islamic identity to gain the support of Muslim peoples (Naqvi and Siddique, 2005, p. 43).

The third group of reformers is the re-assertionists, represented by Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). Like most of the accommodationists, they wanted to revive the tradition of *Ijtihad* to thaw frozen theology and incorporate modern scientific and technological knowledge within an Islamic framework (Naqvi and Siddique, 2005, p. 45). Thus, they were able to enrich the areas of modern education with a more inclusive comparative view. Such a perspective of various systems of beliefs, cultures, values, education and patterns of governance led these reformers to appreciate and reassert the lasting, comprehensive and balanced nature of Islam, which guarantees peace with justice for all through civil discourse and mutual sharing without imposition (p. 45).

## 3.7 A Scholar's Place in Islamic Intellectual Tradition and Reform

Muslim communities in the West face numerous challenges, particularly in the spheres of education, politics and social activities. In the last few decades of the Muslim presence in the West, they have met many

challenges by employing methods limited to either living though the heritage of Islam's past generations or by assimilation in the new societies.

Let me begin this important segment of the chapter exploring the involvement of the Muslim intelligentsia in the discourse of the Western contexts. With the phenomenal growth of the Muslim population in the West, demand for Islamic scholars and leadership is growing, although not, in my view, in proportion to the real need for them. The issue of scholarship of Western Muslims is essential as Muslims try to understand their faith, practices and identity in the new contexts of Western societies.

Muslim organizations in the West tend to import scholars from the countries of origin whose influence on the activities of Muslims in the new societies is enormous. For mainstream Muslims, this kind of external authority is not as relevant as it needs to be, because many of the imported leaders do not understand the conditions in which Muslims live in the West. For that reason, since they are not well equipped, they are unable to solve the problems of their congregations. Therefore, Muslims, as Smith (2002) suggests, seek new kinds of scholarly training and new sources of authority formed locally in order to produce leaders who are knowledgeable about traditional Islamic sciences, western cultures and civilization (p. 12). Given the lack of appropriately prepared scholarship, Smith concludes that relevant training of Islamic scholars and leaders is a matter of priority in the immediate future (p. 12).

Muslim scholars and leaders who have been trained in institutions of Muslim countries and arrive in the West to assume leadership positions in Muslim organizations, often, as Smith (2002) argues, "know little of the societies into which they are thrown" (p. 12). These Muslim leaders in the

new contexts, Smith continues, "suffer not only from a lack of understanding of the new cultures but also from not being well trained in the language of the country in which they find themselves" (p. 12).

Such conditions of Muslim leadership in the West often lead to tensions within Muslim communities, especially since many Muslim communities in the West are now composed of second or third generations who already accustomed to the West. There is a huge gap between the current leadership and the grassroots Muslim communities in the West. This indicates that the sphere of communication between the two groups does not exist or if it exists, then it is only with a small number of Muslims or on a few occasions mostly from the first generation immigrants. Smith argues that many young Muslims feel restless with such leadership whom they see as programmed to try to replicate the interpretation of Islam from the countries of origin. Many see it as a version of their faith that is culturally bound to life in a foreign country, rather than in the West (p. 12).

Muslim leadership in the West is being called on to facilitate understanding of Islam among Muslims and non-Muslims. Smith holds that Muslim leaders need to assume the role of priests and pastors, but they are not prepared for it (p. 12). Admittedly, they have attained knowledge about Islamic traditional sciences, however, they are not trained for the new contexts and the new challenges that Muslims face in the West.

## 3.8 Muslim Leadership in the West: Understanding the Past and the Present

Islamic intellectual heritage, like intellectual heritage of other religious traditions in the world, is rich in history and content. It has a long

record of valuing and preparing its scholarship and leadership to settle in unfamiliar lands by applying the basic philosophy of the tradition's sources of staying faithful to the principles of Islamic tradition, however reformed within the new contexts. A good understanding of Islamic scholarship and leadership requires an understanding of the background of Islamic tradition and its basic founding principles.

The duty of Muslim intellectuals in the West is to draw upon Islamic intellectual heritage to confront the issues that Muslims face in the new societies, rather than remaining limited to the same old interpretations of the issues. Al-Attas (1974) claims that the import of ideas recognizing local conditions and need, are welcomed, simply transplanting them in different cultures without assessing the local conditions will cripple creativity (p. 695). Al-Alwani (1993) is concerned about a present generation who might assume that narrow interpretations presented are the true and real Islam, which they must follow. He writes critically about the present conditions of Muslim scholarship that are applicable especially to those who live in the West,

> If the Islamic scholars (*'Ulama*) prove incapable of pioneering a comprehensive and realistic understanding of Islam (sources) and society (context), then the least they can do is to refrain from imposing narrow interpretations of the texts (p. 30).

Al-Alwani then cautions Muslim contemporary scholars not to regard the past Muslim heritage as self-sufficient for the present and the future directions. He emphasizes that *Ijtihad* is an absolute necessity in modern times and that without this mechanism it will not be possible for Muslims to investigate their intellectual heritage critically. Al-Alwani writes,

> It is through *Ijtihad* that Muslims will be able to construct a new specific methodological infrastructure capable of addressing

> the crisis of Islamic thought and so, propose alternatives for the many problems of the contemporary world (p. 31).

Like Al-Faruqi (1982, 1987), Fazlur Rahman (1984), Ramadan (2004), and Al-Alwani (1993), Mawdudi (1991) also raises the questions of a fresh interpretation of the sacred texts and the role of leadership in modern contexts. Thus, he identifies the need to develop a revised methodology of Islamic thought. He observes,

> The world has changed beyond recognition. The conditions prevailing in the world, its views, trends and theories have entirely changed. The social problems and issues have taken many a turn, but our religious leaders are still living in the same old conditions five or six centuries back... If their leadership fails to guide them in the ever new intellectual, academic and practical issues and problems, then it is quite natural that their followers discard their leadership (pp. 180, 181).

Barth (2001) has said it quite clearly that the illiterate of the twenty first century will not be those who cannot "read and write," but those who cannot "learn, unlearn, and relearn" (p. 23). Muslim scholars and policy makers, in addition to learning, may need to "unlearn" and "relearn" in order to create new educational policies that reflect the needs of the community and the realities of that community which are based on original Islamic thought and texts. The concept of unlearning and relearning as well as re-examining existing processes and policies to ensure relevance to our future needs is not a recent discovery. This consideration of Islamic references such as the sacred texts and scholarly writings to inspire continual growth within the contemporary educational system is a process that has been known and in use since the beginning of Islam.

The possibility of reconciliation between the Islamic message in general and social activities and education in particular within modern societies and their educational institutions is quite feasible. Through reading and/or re-reading of the sources in light of the Western context, Muslim scholars can provide an innovative vision of how Islam can be fully lived in modern Western societies, and how religion in modern times can be reconciled with social change without living in the past.

## 3.9 Muslim Scholars: A Fresh Interpretation

Who is qualified to exercise *Ijtihad*? If it can be used for reforming Islamic law, what are the limits and the requisites for doing so? Smock (2004) writes about the panel discussion on *Ijtihad* by four prominent Muslim leaders in the United States. These four presenters are all experts on Islamic law and interpretation and occupy prominent positions in the North American Muslim communities. They are Muzammil Siddique, a member of the *Fiqh* Council of North America and a teacher and Chaplain at California State University; Imam Hassan Qazwani, Director of the Islamic Center of America, based in Detroit; Muneer Fareed, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Wayne State University; and Ingrid Mattson, Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of Islamic Chaplaincy at Hartford Seminary. In their discussion, they focused on how the sacred texts of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* can be reinterpreted to take into account contemporary realities and to promote greater peace, justice, and progress within Muslim communities and societies and in their relations with the non-Muslim societies (Smock, pp. 1-8).

The right to engage in *Ijtihad* belongs to individuals who are recognized experts on Islamic law and are qualified to derive Islamic law

from the original sources of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. This requires expertise in Islamic law, commentary on the *Qur'an*, *Hadiths* (sayings of Muhammad), Arabic grammar and eloquence, and logic. In addition to the above mentioned knowledge, Islamic scholars of today are in need of knowledge of philosophy, economics and sociology as well as qualities of piety and moral integrity as well as knowledge about the dynamics of the society. In his discussion, as mentioned in the report, Siddique asserts that it is known fact that most Muslim scholars are well versed in the classical sources; however many of them do not use tools of linguistics, logic and semantics in their interpretations (Smack, p. 4).

Another important point raised during the discussion was *freedom of expression*. Siddique points out that there cannot be true *Ijtihad* unless scholars are free to express their opinions and other scholars are free to criticize them if they make errors. Freedom of expression, Siddique continues, is inherent in the concept and practice of *Ijtihad* (Smack, p. 5).

The last important point from the discussion dealt with *Ijtihad* being a collective endeavor (*Ijtihad Jama'i*). Siddique holds that *Shari'ah* experts, both men and women, should be members of these councils. Further, membership should not be limited only to *Shari'ah* experts; experts from the fields of medicine, astronomy, economics, social and political sciences, and law should also be included as consultants and advisors. Even non-Muslim scholars who are sympathetic and objective should be invited to contribute (Smack, p. 5).

## 3.10 Conclusion

Muslim scholars and leaders should seek a return to the sources of Islam with an aim to discover the spirit or the objectives of the *Qur'anic* and *Prophetic* teachings rather than mechanically holding to their literal meaning. These reformers should also assert the need to revive the Muslim community through the process of reinterpretation or reformulation of their tradition in the light of the modern world. They are the pioneers who plant the seed for the acceptance of change and are ready to continue accepting the challenges of new times and societies in general and the educational system in particular. In meeting this aim, these reformers employ the workable tool named *Ijtihad* that gives Muslims an opportunity to explain themselves and their traditions within the contexts in which they live.

How to translate the theory from the third chapter and use the mechanism of *Ijtihad* into day-to-day life of Muslims in the Western contexts is what follows in the next chapter in which I will address the issues relevant to lives of Muslims in new societies. In chapter four, I will consider educational perspectives and alternatives as well as the process of reform of Muslim communities and its smart integration into new environments as opposed to assimilation and isolation.

# CHAPTER 4:
# MUSLIMS IN THE WEST: CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

## 4.1 Introduction

In my endeavour to deepen understanding of Islamic education and Muslim communities in the West, among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, I reflect in this chapter on the sources of Islamic tradition, as interpreted by Muslim intellectuals who live in the West and have confronted and analysed the local social and cultural Western dynamics. This approach is both deeply classical by being faithful to the sources of Islamic tradition and at the same time radically new by having a reformist nature in being guided by ideas of Al-Alwani (1993), Al-Faruqi (1982, 1987), Fazlur Rahman (1984), Ramadan (2004) and Elmasri (2005).

This approach helps in reading and/or rereading the sources, in light of current realities that Muslims face in their day-to-day activities in the new society, and finding the best alternatives for themselves. Therefore, I believe that the understanding of Muslims in the West and Islamic education would be incomplete without understanding the notion of culture, religion and identity in the West, the obstacles on the path of their reform, the process of education in the Muslim community and possible educational alternatives that Muslims have in the West.

## 4.2 Muslims in the West: Culture and Identity

When Muslims started emigrating to the West, they made a move towards reform by simply participating in Western societies. Islamic teachings have not stood in the way of reform for Muslims, no matter where they chose to live or during which time they live. On the contrary, the Muslim intelligentsia encouraged Muslims to face challenges and live an Islamic lifestyle within the contexts of the new societies. Ramadan (2004) supports this notion by saying that Islam stands as a civilization due to the fact that it was able to express its universal and fundamental principles through time and place while integrating diversity and taking on the customs, tastes and styles that belonged to the various cultural contexts (p. 214).

Muslims' integration within the Western cultural context in general is a part of their mission in creating Muslim Western cultures that are founded on the principles of faithfulness to the sources of Islamic intellectual tradition – the Qur'an and the Sunnah – although reshaped within the Western cultural contexts. This phenomenon of creating new cultures can be explained by the fact that many Muslims who emigrated to the West brought with them the concept of Islam along with their individual cultural heritage. For many Muslims, to remain faithful to Islam meant to stay faithful to their culture of origin rather then a foundational Islam. Ramadan (2004) explains this experience eloquently:

> They tried without really being aware of it, to continue to be Pakistani Muslims in Britain and the United States, Moroccan and Algerian Muslims in France, Turkish Muslims in Germany, and so on. It is with the emergence of the second generation that problems appeared and the questions arose: parents who saw their children losing, or no longer recognizing themselves as part of, their Pakistani, Arab, or Turkish cultures seem to think that they were losing their religious identity at the same time.

> However, this was far from being the case. Many young Muslims, by studying their religion, claimed total allegiance to Islam while distancing themselves from their cultures of origin (p. 215).

This brings us to the notion of change and the need for Muslims to accept change and, while not abandoning their formative Islamic principles, construct new Muslim cultures in the West just as they did previously when settling in different contexts. This will help them reconcile their Islamic principles without losing their identity. A fact of life that Muslims must accept is that they live in quite a new environment in the West. To that they must bring a new dimension of reading, or rereading, of the texts and sources of Islamic tradition, and as Ramadan puts it, "with the aim of recovering forgotten principles or discovering a horizon as yet unknown" (p. 216).

Islamic identity is not, as many believe, narrow-minded and confined to rigid and inflexible principles. Indeed, it is based on a constant dialectical and dynamic movement between the sources of Islam and the environment, whose aim is to find a way of living harmoniously within the context of new societies. The elements that define Muslim identity, perceived in the light of Islamic principles of integration, appear to be open and in constant interaction with society. This allows Muslim communities to settle into different cultural contexts as long as they remain faithful to their religious sources. Ramadan (2004) suggests that:

> A return to the scriptural sources allows us to establish a distinction between the religious principles that define the identity of Muslims and the cultural trappings that these principles necessarily take on according to the societies in which individuals live... the elements of Muslim identity that are based on religious principles allow Muslims to live in any environment (p. 78).

As long as the sources and the principles derived from them are respected, Muslims have been faithful to the principles no matter what kind of an environment and what historical era they live in. Islam, as a Muslim way of life, did not prevent Muslims from achieving success during medieval times and will not prevent them in achieving this success in modern times. Islamic teachings encourage acceptance of other cultures as long as they do not contradict fundamental Islamic principles. Ramadan supports the idea of integration of all matters that are "*good*" in nature. He urges that:

> Islam teaches us to integrate everything that is not against an established principle and to consider it as our own. This is, after all, the true universality of Islam: it consists in this principle of integrating the good, from wherever it may come, which has made it possible for Muslims to settle in, and make their own, without contradiction, almost all the cultures of the countries in which they have established themselves, from South America to Asia, through West and North Africa. It should not be otherwise in the West (p. 54)

Ramadan further elaborates on the significance of Muslim identity by discussing its four fundamental pillars and their specific dimensions. The first and the most important element of Muslim identity is *faith* in the Creator – Almighty God. Faith in God is not merely an internal belief; rather, it is embodied in Muslims religious *practice* as well. The immediate consequence of these two is the fundamental dimension of *spirituality* that keeps Muslims' faith alive. This spirituality intensifies and reinforces our faith. The inner dimension of faith, our religious practice and its inherent spirituality, are the light by which life and the world are perceived. The second pivot of Islamic identity rests on an *attitude of intellect that marries an understanding of the texts and an understanding of the context* in which the texts are practiced. It guides Muslims in relation to themselves and in relation to the environment. In other words, Muslims cannot truly live as Muslims if they are in a state of ignorance of the marriage between texts and

the context in which they live. The third pivot of Muslim identity, being a broader circle, is an open and constantly active expression of this faith. Being a Muslim is defined by the action of *educating and transmitting this faith.* Educating and transmitting make it possible to hand down the teachings of Islam as a gift to our children and to pass on the message of Islam to a broader community. The last pivot of Muslim identity, even the broader context, is the outward expression of our faith. Through the demonstration of this faith in *action and participation* via the way one treats oneself, others, and all of Creation (pp. 79-82).

It becomes apparent from Ramadan's reasoning, then, that to be Muslim is to act according to the teachings of Islam regardless of the surrounding environment and not in contradiction with it. There is nothing in Islam that commands Muslims to withdraw from society in order to be closer to God. Muslims need to exercise a choice to practice Islamic teachings in a Western context in order to be in harmony with their identity. At the same time, they must consciously develop this image of their Western identity for the present and the future.

The nature of Muslim identity, according to Ramadan, can only be something open and dynamic, founded, of course, on basic principles but being in constant interaction with the environment (pp. 83, 85). It is about being a good individual and a good citizen. It is about being useful to all as the Prophet said, "The best people are those who benefit others" (Daud, p. 12). The prophet did not qualify in this tradition "people" as being Muslims or believers but simply said "people", including all.

By exploring the Islamic sources regarding the notion of identity and considerations of living in the West at the same time, we can see that there is

no contradiction in Muslims' attitude of taking up full citizenship within Western societies and considering them their own countries. In fact, this is the only way for Muslims to build a place for themselves and for their future generations in the West, as they did in the past in often non-Muslim societies. As confident, assertive and engaged citizens Muslims can continue to help shape Western societies and be of service to them.

## 4.3 Alternatives: Choosing Smart

Western Muslims, because of their new experience in societies they have emigrated to and those born in the Western societies, need to go to the foundation of their tradition and study their religious points of reference as well as to study their conceptions of how a society should function. Ramadan (2004) suggests that they need to do this in order to delineate and distinguish what, in their religion, is unchangeable (*thabit*) from what is subject to change (*mutaghayyir*), and to measure, from the inside, what they have achieved and what they have lost by being in the West (p. 9). To start from somewhere, the first encounters of Muslims with Western cultures opened for their intellectual elite the issue of the relationship between Islam as a worldview of Muslims and Western cultures, the novelties that were faced in the new societies and the alternatives that they have before them.

Muslims of today who live in Canada and Western societies have three broad alternatives before them: assimilation, isolation, or smart integration. In the beginning of Muslims' establishment in the West, most took either assimilation or a rejectionist position – isolation – when settling in the new societies of the West. The first group did not consider the religious points of reference as important since they were in a new context. The other group refused to become integrated in these new societies out of fear of what

happened to the first group. In response, they segregated themselves into their own small world *safe zones* by fully ignoring and rejecting any integration into new societies. Elmasri (2005) cautions:

> The choice between assimilation and isolation is a problem experienced by all minorities, especially those singled out within their own countries by negative media stereotyping, and suffer from resulting discrimination in the workplace, in the educational system, and in virtually all contacts with government services. They become the "other"—people who are disliked and ridiculed because of their accent, religion, skin colour, hair, clothing, or mannerisms are different from the norm (p. 3).

Both of these positions – assimilation and isolation – are equally dangerous because they do not offer any contribution to any of the parties, Muslims in general or the new societies. They cripple both in the process of living. I believe that the third alternative, integration by selective choice, is the only alternative that will help Muslims live their tradition in the context of modern time and Western societies. Integration by selective choice, as Ramadan (2004) defines this alternative, is the most practical, efficient, and useful choice because of its reformist attitude and outcome. Selective adoption of Western cultures was, therefore, gradually developed by the representatives of enlightened Muslim intellectuals. Elmasri (2005) urges Muslims to choose a balanced approach in the Canadian society – "smart integration":

> Although it is difficult scientifically to define it, smart integration promotes the preservation of one's identity in matters of religion, culture, language and heritage, while simultaneously encouraging full participation in the country's political square, and promoting both individual and collective contributions in all fields of its well-being. This positive hybrid model follows the ancient wisdom which recognizes that as minorities adapt, countries should adapt (p. 3).

The smart integration model gives an opportunity to a minority to be considered an asset (Elmasri, 2005, p. 4), thereby leading towards contributions that will have greater positive impact on the well-being of the country than if they work through either the assimilation or isolation model. Elmasri agrees with this notion of integration that brings benefits to all:

> The smart integration model is optimal, as it requires overall less effort in terms of maximum benefits to the individual, the community and the country. It allows individuals to be proud of their heritage – all essential ingredients to foster a sense of purpose and direction. Smartly integrated individuals would not try to hide their ethnicity or religion, nor would they feel inferior as compared to their fellow citizens. In sum, they would not feel restricted or handicapped by their identity (p. 4).

In fact, smart integration is the only way for Muslims to build a place for themselves and for their future generations in the West, as they did in the past in different parts of the world. As confident, assertive and engaged citizens, Muslims can continue to help shape Western societies and be of service to them as well as to themselves.

The most prominent Muslim scholars and educational theorists are Al-Alwani, Al-Faruqi, Elmasri, Fazlur Rahman, and Ramadan. This chapter discusses some of their ideas on reform. The main focus however, is on Ramadan's approach to reform, identity and culture and the process of education. All these scholars hold the position that Muslims in the West should adhere to the ideas of Islam as well as openness towards Western cultures. Each of them, according to the challenges of their own time and circumstances, was a reformer who built an intellectual foundation for those who were to follow. Fazlur Rahman continued working on the revivalist movement started at the beginning of the twentieth century that distinguishes between religious and secular knowledge as it attempted to

revive traditional Islamic knowledge and ethics. Al-Faruqi attempts to eliminate this dichotomy in his writings on the Islamization of knowledge and education in the West. Ramadan (2004) stands in the middle ground between Rahman and Al Faruqi. He advocates reform, however, one that would respect the principles of the sources of Islamic tradition and allow Muslims to live in their own time:

> Reformist thinking has a principle not to change Muslims of today into imitators of Muslims of yesterday. Faithful to the principles, they must find out how to live within their own time (p. 222).

On the basis of the mentioned views of Fazlur Rahman, Al Faruqi, Ramadan and Elmasri, I argue that there is no need for reforming Islam. Muslims need to reform themselves within the framework of an Islamic worldview in the Western context. This process of reform, however, needs to satisfy aforementioned conditions: staying faithful to the principles of the Islamic belief system while accommodating the various cultures of Western societies within their own lives. Remaining a true Muslim in the West means staying faithful to the basic principles and worldview of Islam while being reformed within its framework in the context of time and place. In other words, there is a need for Muslims to reform themselves in the West and keep at the same time the particular characteristics of their religious identity. Muslim intellectuals should promote reform that would respect the past, although not be totally dependent on it; learn from it, but not imitate it.

## 4.4 The Obstacle on the Path of Reform: Captive Minds

According to contemporary Muslim thinkers, the philosophical shortcomings and policies of most modern systems of education in Muslim communities do not reflect the fundamental aims and objectives of Islamic traditional education. Contemporary policy makers are simply products of the other cosmopolitan educational systems that are adapted and translated word-for-word into the context of modern Muslim society. Ali (1984) argues that "Systems of education in our [*contemporary Muslim societies*] schools, colleges and universities are mostly imported; these are not our own systems; they are fashioned after the outlook and model of the Western Educational System" (p. 52). As such, these imported systems do not represent the values of the community in which they are implanted and do fail in educating the whole person. According to Ali (1984), "these new imported systems have been totally cut off from the spiritual root" (p. 52).

Al Attas (1974) blames these imported educational systems on what he calls "captive minds." Having been students in Western institutions, these policy makers in Muslim societies do not consider the local conditions, cultures, economies and politics when importing other systems to their own countries. Rather, they do "a mere transplantation of thoughts." Al-Attas explains further that this does not mean a simple adaptation of techniques and methodologies but of the conceptual apparatus, systems of analysis, and selection of problems (p. 695). Al-Attas continues:

> The captive mind does not consider another possible alternative, that is, methodological non-alignment. One can, after all, choose one's own problems independently; develop methodology according to local needs, without being dictated by external forces (p. 695)

The same could be argued about individuals who have chosen to live in the West and still suffer from a syndrome of this captivity. Confining ourselves to the Western context, in my view and in the context of Al-Attas's description of the term "captive mind", it possesses the following characteristics: a captive mind is uncreative and incapable in raising original problems; it is incapable of devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes; it is fragmented in outlook; it is alienated from the major issues of society; and it is unconscious of its own captivity and the conditioning factors making it what it is (p. 691). Al-Attas further explains that "a captive mind is not merely an uncritical and imitative mind. It is an uncritical and imitative mind dominated by external sources, whose thinking has defected from an independent perspective" (p. 692).

What in reality defines the captive mind, as Al-Attas concludes, is the state of intellectual bondage and a dependence on an external group (p. 692). As new members of Western societies, Muslims in general do not pose new problems or offer innovative solutions; instead, many see the world to be either white or black. There is no middle ground. It is this attitude, more than anything else, which explains why such individuals have not succeeded in reconciling the cultures of their origin and those of the new societies. It is this attitude that needs to be changed so that new aspirations and progress can be brought into Western Muslim communities. This could be achieved through education and participation that would give Muslims their rightful place in modern Western societies.

## 4.5 The Process of Education in the Muslim community: Reforming Islam or Muslims?

For most Muslims, Islam is a comprehensive system of life. It does not divide the world artificially and arbitrarily into sacred and profane or religious and secular. In Islam, all aspects of life are one organic unity that coheres into an undifferentiated social and political unity. As Al Faruqi (1982) points out in his book *Tawhid*:

> The *Ummah* [Islamic community] is like an organic body whose parts are mutually and severally interdependent with one another. For the part to work for itself is for itself to work for each of the other parts as well as for the whole, and for the whole to work for itself, is for itself to work for each of the parts. (p. 153)

Given the organic nature of the Muslim community, the appropriate framework for analyzing its educational phenomena is to place parts within a wider context. The aims of Islamic education cannot be understood as a separate entity without understanding the nature of knowledge in Islam as defined by Muslims, the importance of ethics, Islamization and modernization of knowledge and the dissemination and sharing of knowledge. Simply, the aims of Islamic education cannot be understood unless they are placed within the wider context of religious, social and cultural spheres of the community in which Muslims live.

What is important to Muslim educators and educational researchers is to establish educational principles that explain and justify, for instance, why children learn, schools develop, social education spreads and what the ultimate aims of education are. In Muslim societies this can be done by encouraging the scholars of various fields of knowledge to make use of their expertise within the framework of Islam in the formation of educational

principles. In other words, it could be said that educational principles are the outcome of the building together of elements taken from different specialist fields, with Islam providing comprehensively the Islamic framework and guidance to the specialists. This means that educational principles cannot be formed by stressing the importance of psychology and sociology recognized as empirical sciences, at the expense of religious, moral, and philosophical issues as Basheer points out (1982, p. 53).

For Muslims in the twenty first century, there is no escape from planning for the future and fostering changes in the Islamic educational system just as they did in medieval times. If Muslims desire an Islamic social order in general and an Islamic educational system in particular in a non-Muslim society, then they must re-examine every aspect of modern life from the perspective of Islam. As well, they must re-examine the condition of their own existing social order and educational system and make the necessary changes. Muhathir (1989) claims that Muslims, in the discipline of education, must aim to develop an awareness of the future educational challenges. Future Islamic perceptions must relate to the teachings of Islam as well as embrace current problems to meet the coming challenges of the future developments (p. 24). For him, having such a perception means "being able to analyze modern educational problems and challenges in the light of the Islamic sources and the current conditions of the time" (p. 24).

In order for an Islamic educational system to hold and protect some of the religious values, it has to re-examine some policies that are seen as Islamic but, in fact, are general principles shared by others. As well, Muslims must reject contemporary policies that go against basic Islamic principles such as faith and ethics without compromising their participation in a pluralistic society. The policy makers need to be equipped with a solid understanding of Islamic traditions and culture, and the challenges and

realities of the time they live in. Muslim scholars need to have an intellectual courage. Al-Attas (1974), when elaborating on the nature of the educational crises in Muslim communities, explains that one of the reasons for such crises is that Muslims "have deviated from the Islamic intellectual tradition in the course of our intellectual history" (p. 1).

Change is inevitable in human life and societies. In the event of constant change, can religion and religious law remain unchanged? Does Islamic mean something static? Does Islam permit renewal in social domains including education? Is the Islamic traditional system of education unchangeable or can it evolve? It is true that many are horrified by the very mention of change in educational systems. Many others argue that change is inevitable in the contemporary era in order for Muslims to achieve the goals of Islamic education. There are certain religious principles within Islam, such as those related to faith in God, compulsory prayers, fasting during Ramadan in the Islamic lunar calendar, and so on, that cannot be changed. These principles are related to the belief system and worship. As far as social activities in general and educational issues in particular are concerned, Islamic sources encourage change as long as the basic principles are not invalidated. The Qur'an stresses this very seriously: "Indeed, God will not change conditions of people until they change it by themselves" (Yusuf Ali, 13: 12). This change, which the Qur'an stresses, addresses the spiritual change, moral change, as well as the educational and everyday issues that a human being faces in day-to-day life.

Among all religious groups, including Muslims, there are three approaches to looking into responses to novel situations in the global era. Alexander (2001) argues that there are three kinds of responses made by religions affected by the Enlightenment: liberalism, fundamentalism, and traditionalism (p. 139).

Firstly, liberalism is the attempt to adapt received religion to the various challenges posed by the revolutions. For Muslims, this is the experience of secularism. The secular approach to education in Islamic society means transplantation of educational systems of others into Muslim societies without looking into local conditions or needs. Secondly, fundamentalism or ultra-orthodoxy is a literal and uncompromising appeal to the authoritativeness of a sacred text or texts and an insistence upon the limitations of the scope and validity of critical reason. For Muslims, this is the unwillingness to respond to modernity outside of Islam. And lastly, traditionalism or neo-orthodoxy is a "middle way" between the two other responses. For Muslims, this is the moderate position of accepting course that does not go against fundamental Islamic principles.

Since educational policies are not sacred or divine revelations, they can be changed and adapted to the circumstances, if these policies meet mentioned conditions of faithfulness to the Islamic sources and accommodation of the various cultures of Western societies. They are tools, means or lines of action that aim to provide a reasonable course of action to find solutions for certain new problems or challenges. Educational policies help us to manage and improve our institutions, systems, or life in general. If our policies fail to do this, then changing them is not only necessary, but should be basic common sense. Dewey (1916) mentions a notion of renewal, as a notable distinction between living and unanimated things, in the following:

> The most notable distinction between living and unanimated things is that the former maintain themselves by renewal... If it cannot do so, it does not just split into smaller pieces (at least in the higher forms of life), but loses its identity as a living thing (p. 1).

Today, global trends greatly influence education in many communities including the Muslim community. Worldwide ability to share information on virtually any subject has afforded access to the latest educational trends and philosophies to everyone. Educational systems support one another such that new information is shared. A necessary factor for implementing new ideas or allowing others' ideas to enter the Islamic educational system is to *Islamize* the information or educational materials. This process of filtering and choosing only what is compatible with existing educational values of Islam is called Islamization, which is the integration of Islam with another, non-Islamic concept (Ashraf, 1985).

## 4.6 The Possible Alternative: Islamization as a Theoretical Background

Al-Faruqi (1987) argues that the rejuvenation of Muslim society is contingent on the integration of the Islamic and the secular sciences – in a word, on ending duality in education: "The present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and secular system, must be removed and abolished once and for all. The two systems must be united and integrated" (p. 9). This task of integration, Al-Faruqi continues, is not an eclectic mixing of classical Islamic and modern Western knowledge. It is rather a systematic reorientation and restructuring of the entire field of human knowledge in accordance with a specific set of criteria and categories derived from and based on the Islamic worldview (p. 15).

This task is called Islamization. It is a movement that emerged recently among the modern Muslim intelligentsia such as Al Faruqi and Al-Alwani, as a response to modernity with which they aspire to imbue all forms of knowledge with traditional Islamic values. Islamization can be seen as a

movement to make Islam a relevant source for social order in general and an educational system in particular. Islamization is the movement that could be defined as an effort to make Islam a complete and comprehensive way of life, a well-integrated system of rituals, beliefs, behaviors, etc. In this context education plays a major role in reproducing Islamic culture as well as being a means of allowing Islamic values to be shared among Muslims and non-Muslim peoples.

This movement of Islamization differs significantly from the revivalist movements of the early twentieth century led by Afgani, Abduh and Rida, that clearly distinguished between religious and secular forms of knowledge as they attempted to revive traditional Islamic knowledge and ethics. The recent movement of Islamization, as Talbani (1996) points out, by contrast, "attempts to eliminate that dichotomy and reconstruct social discourse within the eschatological worldview of Islam" (p. 76).

While acknowledging that the non-Islamic educational system has a great deal of valuable information to offer, the Islamic educational system could re-examine the areas where these influences conflict with Islamic tradition and adopt it only if they conform to Islamic principles. What the Muslim community needs in the contemporary Islamic educational system is a modern Al-Ghazali to ensure that Islamization continues (Esposito & Voll, 2001), just as happened during medieval times when Islamic civilization acknowledged the past intellectual traditions, nurtured them and delivered them successfully to the new generations and civilizations to come.

Before Islamization can take place, there is a need to master the Islamic legacy (Mohamed, 1994) and re-examine some policies in existing Islamic educational systems in the light of teachings of Islam since some of

the policies do not reflect true Islamic thought and do not fit the context. One aspect of mastering the Islamic legacy is to acknowledge and communicate the Islamic contributions to world civilization (Golshani, 2000 & Roald, 1994).

Another aspect of Islamization is to filter influences that come from outside of the Islamic educational system. Davutoglu (2000) asserts that the existing Euro-centric orientation now means that "an educated Chinese knows more of Plato than of Confucius, and an educated Muslim knows more of St. Thomas Aquinas than that of Al Ghazali". Therefore, re-examining classical Islamic literature and going back to the core of Islam is a necessary part of Islamization within the global era. This would establish a good foundation for another aspect of Islamization and that is adopting foreign concepts so long as they do not conflict with Islam. The third aspect of Islamization is sharing knowledge, which is one of the basic Islamic obligations not only towards Muslims but also towards the whole humanity. This critical aspect of Islamization cannot be fulfilled if the previous two are not established.

## 4.7 Islamic Schools vs./or/and Public Schools: Practical Alternatives

In order to *save* their children's Islamic identity, many Muslims in the West think that the only solution is *the Islamic School.* However, several questions arise: do Islamic schools accommodate the majority or the whole Muslim population in the West or just a small number of the population; do they meet the criteria of the successful schools academically and administratively; and do they prepare Muslim children in the West to maintain pride in their identity while still successfully facing the challenges of the West. Islamic schools in the West have been existed for more than

twenty years. In reality, these schools take in only a small percentage of Muslim children and so in this sense, as Ramadan puts it, "they cannot be regarded as 'the solution' for Islamic education in the West" (p. 131). A second reason is that these "artificially Islamic" closed spaces are created in the West; they are, in many cases, often completely cut off from the social-political and cultural character of the surrounding society. Ramadan explains:

> Some Islamic schools are in the West but apart from the compulsory disciplines, live in another dimension: while being not completely 'here,' neither are they completely 'there,' and one would like the child to know who he is... (p. 131).

Although Islamic education in the West has the responsibility of passing on knowledge of the sources of Islam to the next generations, it also is acutely concerned with providing a very deep knowledge of the cultural and social environment, of history of human beings and more broadly, as Ramadan suggests, "mastering the general disciplines and sciences that will give Muslims the means of living at home in their environment" (p. 133).

The best mode to achieve this goal is through education and transmission by fulfilling two conditions: faithfulness to the religious sources and reform in the context of the society Muslims live in. Would Muslims in the West settle with any Islamic school just for the sake of having one? My research and personal experience tell me that Muslims in Western societies have several possible alternatives to choose from. This study does not discuss the whole scope of the alternatives but delivers information and analysis so that readers understand the topic more clearly. However, only two of the alternatives could help Western Muslims define for their future generations' goals that would be in tune with the principles of the Islamic sources reformed in the contexts of new environments. The first alternative is to have

successful Islamic schools that meet the following criteria: openness to new approaches, the means to carry out educational programs, and more contextualized teaching in step with society and with a culture that is Western and not imported from the East.

This alternative just like others needs to be more systematically researched and some evidence presented. Why? Simply, the field that deals with Muslims in the West and Islamic education lacks the necessary empirical and field research to provide accurate data and reliable knowledge (Malkawi, 57). When reading about issues related to Muslims in the West, I notice quite often the words "many," "most," "majority," "in a few cases," "some of them," and "a number of them." Researchers have to resort to such expressions as an option to more definite figures and percentages, which are not available.

Ramadan questions the first alternative's ability to offer a comprehensive education to Muslim children born in the West. He writes boldly on the topic and asks openly whether Muslims in the West have a means to carry out such a program:

> Do they have financial resources, and are they yet competent enough in a contextualized approach to the Islamic sources, an in-depth understanding of Western societies, and scientific development to put forward a completely autonomous alternative educational plan, thought from within the Western world, for the Western world? Apart from the question of deciding whether a totally separate parallel system is itself desirable, it is appropriate to work out whether, on the basis of their own intellectual and human resources, Muslims have the means to achieve these ambitions, as some people hope' (p. 134).

I tend to agree with him on almost every aspect, however, I believe that if Muslims meet the conditions for successful Islamic schools, they would

have a chance to build a strong foundation for Muslim youth to know their tradition in the context of the West. If at this point in time it is not possible, another practical alternative would be to give Muslim children a solid Islamic and academic education in Elementary Islamic schools (Kindergarten to Grade Eight), and thereafter the doors of the public schools will be open for them. Muslim children will be ready by then to enter High School and stand for their identity and at the same time become contributing members of the Western societies.

This alternative must adhere to the requirements mentioned previously for successful Islamic schools in the West. If these Islamic schools fail to meet the qualifying criteria then the second alternative – public school system –, which Ramadan recommends, is the most appropriate alternative for Muslims, since the majority of Muslim children are already attending the public school system in Western societies, which are well-equipped with academic resources.

Ramadan holds that a public school system is the best alternative for Muslims in the West. To succeed with this alternative, he suggests that Muslims need to work on a double initiative: on the one hand, to build the framework of a complementary, not parallel, educational approach, and on the other hand, to concentrate on establishing connections as active as possible between the education provided in the West and the overall philosophy of the Islamic message (p. 134). I agree with him on the importance of the alternative; however I believe that this choice is one that must be taken into consideration as far as Muslims in the West are concerned. This alternative, I believe, if researched and compared with the option of successful Islamic schools in the West, will not pass as the first and only solution for Muslims because there are successful Muslim schools in the West that, within the last two decades, have made great achievements in

both goals: transmitting traditional knowledge to the children as well as meeting the challenges and new educational trends in the West.

When proposing this alternative, Ramadan asks important questions: Why should we reinvent what the public school system already provides? Why should we invest so much money and energy in setting up, in most subjects, the same programs with the same outcomes and leading to the same examination? (p. 134). For him, the difference is the framework that some Muslims, who defend every Islamic school project, hold as sufficient justification for the creation of this type of school. Ramadan refutes this notion, arguing that it is not only a school environment that frames children and their behavior. Children are influenced more by the social environment than by the atmosphere that the schools provide (p. 244).

Ramadan suggests "the complementary plan" between what the Western societies provide for all children and what Muslims want to pass on to their own. This approach gives Muslims several advantages. Firstly, it is advantageous in terms of resources that could be used to reach significantly more young Muslims. Secondly, this approach will allow children to interact with an environment in a natural manner. For him, this is even more important than the first one. Lastly, Ramadan sees in this approach the need to study in depth the society in which Muslims live, "even if," as he points out "to find out what it has arrived at, and how" (p. 134).

For "the complementary plan" to be successful, Muslims are required to get involved in the life of public schools in various ways. Muslims need to envelope themselves in studying the existing program for to further understanding and better cooperation with the creation of Muslim after-school schools. Another aspect of the involvement is parents' interest in all

facets of schools life: contact with teachers, other parents, participation in children's activities and so on. When Muslims get involved and take interest in the public school system, it will require them to take part in the discussion on the subjects that are relevant in society. Ramadan confirms it in the following words: "Being interested in one's children's school also means being concerned about it" (p. 135).

To make his point, Ramadan shares an experience of Sabbir Mansuri, founder of the Council of Islamic Education (CIE) in California, who after being informed by his child about information that was shared in the classroom about Islam, devoted himself to the study of history and geography programs in order to remove misconceptions about Islam and Muslims and to suggest alternative programs. His thesis proposed a paradigm shift in the study of these two subjects as well as a revision of the existing Eurocentric and Western-oriented approach. This work was done in cooperation with a solid team of specialists from various fields who came up with very interesting studies on the presentation of the world history, particularly concerning the Chinese, Islamic, and African civilizations. Ramadan observes of Mansuri's experience that:

> Today, thanks to the seriousness of his work, official scholarly bodies in his state and from across the country consult his organization, and the editors of the school textbooks submit them before publication. The interest in the public school system and the inevitable consequent involvement is an important prerequisite for thinking about a complementary education, because the starting point must be the realities lived by young people (pp. 135-136).

Once these approaches are understood, Ramadan proposes that Muslims revise and reform their whole perspective about Islamic education around the school by listening to young people and analyzing their

expectations, needs and the challenges encountered, as Muslims, in Western societies. Muslim organizations and educational institutions need to realize that this task with education means working with hearts and minds and it needs to, if after-school schools are created, take into consideration discussions with youth, their age, school programs and life patterns of new societies. In short, this program, according to Ramadan, needs a lot of serious thinking at various levels, because it should be a development fully adapted to the environment (p. 136).

If Muslims work on all mentioned alternatives, they will be able to establish educational institutions that will help Muslim youth in the West to learn about their tradition while not being strangers in their own land. If not, then they have to seriously look into the alternative that is the most suitable for the education of the Muslims in the West.

## 4.8 Conclusion

The Muslim intellectual elite in the West have urged Muslims to become part of their host societies by selective adaptation or smart integration and to avoid assimilation and isolation because both of these choices are digressive, negative and dangerous in nature. Being Muslims in the West, for Muslim reformers, means facing reality with all its challenges. It means reforming themselves in the contexts of the Western societies, while remaining faithful to the basic religious principles that define the core of their identity. By so doing, Western Muslims can live in harmony with their new environments and be contributors to the well being of themselves and others.

Choosing the alternative of mere transplantation of the cultures or thoughts from the places of origin would make Muslims uncreative, incapable of solving original problems or devising an analytical method independent of current stereotypes. It would also make Muslims fragmented in outlook, alienated from the major issues of the society, and unaware of their true identity in the context of the time and place they live.

Avoidance of this transplantation of cultures and thoughts could be possible by creating educational institutions and leadership of Muslims in the West that would transmit knowledge and skills to the younger generations of Muslims within the parameters of new environments that they are part of. Muslims in the West should not be tending to import the methods from the countries of origin because these methods often do not meet the criteria of the new societies or are in a direct or an indirect conflict with the cultures or educational norms of these new societies. This could be achieved by having these institutions led by Muslim leaders who are well versed in Islamic teachings and equipped with a full understanding of the contexts in which they live and operate; leaders who are faithful to the principles of Islam but ready to face challenges and reform themselves within the modern context, as it was explained in the previous chapter.

The following chapter of the dissertation, built on the material in the previous four chapters, looks into possible implications and recommendations to the contemporary educational system of Muslim communities within the West as well as the Western societies as a whole. It aids in establishing the notion of export and import of knowledge. It also identifies recommendations related to the life of Muslims in the West and alternatives they can choose from in the process of developing and establishing themselves in the new societies they have chosen for their homeland.

# CHAPTER 5:
# SETTLING, RECONCILING AND CONTRIBUTING: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MUSLIM EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND LEADERSHIP POLICIES IN THE WEST

## 5.1 Introduction

This final chapter is built on the material in the previous four chapters. It focuses on possible implications and recommendations to the contemporary educational system of Muslim communities within the West as well as the Western societies as a whole. Suggestions for future studies in the field will also be made.

In the light of my research, there remains a further opportunity to evaluate and extend the theories of Islamic scholars on ethics, aims in education, reform and *Ijtihad*, and leadership's role in life of Muslims in the West, in order to address the contemporary social and educational environments. It is unrealistic to accept the assertions of some Islamic scholars who believe that Islamic education can be salvaged by simply implementing ideas from the past into today's Islamic educational system (Ali 1995, p. 4). This is simply not appropriate (Bonomran 1983, p. 2). Some educational ideas from previous centuries contradict foundational Islamic teachings due to different cultural interpretations. Two examples are women's education and *Ijtihad* in Muslim communities. However, this does not mean that we can ignore the past.

In this chapter I will first address implications of the study for Muslims education and leadership in the West. Then I will identify recommendations related to the life of Muslims in the West and alternatives they can choose from in the process of developing and establishing themselves in the new societies they have chosen for their homeland. Lastly, I will make several recommendations for future studies and research on Islamic education, reform and leadership.

## 5.2 Implications for Muslims in the West

The results of this study offer three leadership and educational reform implications for Muslims who live in Western societies. First, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, Muslim educators, scholars, and leaders need to realize that dialogue and compromise in education are a necessity. Second, Muslims need to engage in constructive dialogue concerning the divisive issues in Islamic education, reform, and leadership so that they can narrow the gap between the diverse points of view. Third, the teachings of Islam are adaptable as long as Muslims remain faithful to the formative sources of Islam.

Today, global perspectives influence education and life in general in most societies, including those of Muslims. The worldwide ability to share information on virtually any subject has afforded access to the latest educational trends and philosophies to almost everyone. Educators seeking an updated approach are implementing some of these concepts in their educational goals, particularly in the cases of less developed nations adapting the ideas of more developed nations. For example, educational systems in Canada, the United States, England, Denmark and many other European countries are held in high esteem by many developing countries. Policy

developments implemented in these developed countries are frequently incorporated into other nations, even though results remain to be proven.

The key to implementing new ideas and policies into Muslim life and education is to Islamize fresh information to ensure a smart and successful integration into the lives of Muslims and their educational systems. Islamization is the integration of non-Islamic concepts with Islamic concepts as long as these concepts respect Islamic formative principles and sources as defined earlier in chapter three and four (Ashraf 1985, Golshani 2000, Ramadan 2004, Roald 1994).

## 5.3 Recommendations for Muslim Communities in the West

This dissertation provides some recommendations for Muslim and Western educational institutions at a time when a great deal of research is being conducted on the aims and moral aspect of education due to the growing concerns about changing moral standards. There is a general awareness of the importance of moral education in the overall educational process. This is also a timely study because of the many misconceptions present in the West about Muslims and their education and leadership.

The development of Islamic education and Islamic communities, within the context of Western societies, is contingent upon many factors. These exist within the confines of Muslim communities and extraneous to it. The nature of understanding reform, the orientation of Muslim leadership in the context of the new challenges, as well as the level of development and socio-cultural ethos of Muslim communities will help shape the contents and contours of Islamic education in Muslim communities in the West.

There are a few studies on Islamic moral education that attempt to give insight of Islamic education within other cultures. Historic and recent experience in Islamic moral education can offer Western societies and their educational institutions some recommendations that could be considered when attempting to develop worthy citizens for these societies. Islamic education aims to preserve traditional values and transmit them to the next generation, while at the same time it searches to adapt selectively from other systems as long as basic religious principles are respected.

Often the philosophical foundation of Islamic education is introduced to other cultures with some distortion because of current world events as well as cultural and religious misunderstandings in the new homelands. Islamic moral education, however, can give meaningful suggestions to the Western educational system which often faces moral confusion in terms of its aims and purposes. Islamic moral education, as has been noted, is highly centralized. A central function of moral education, as understood by Muslim scholars from the formative Islamic period, is to help develop one's personality and to transmit established religious values to each person in his or her community.

The close ties between family, school, and society in terms of values are critical for Islamic moral education. Consequently, Islamic moral education in the context of educational institutions is an extension or a reinforcement of family and community values. Therefore, without moral education at home, as well as a healthy moral education in the schools, Western educational institutions will cease to function adequately. In fact, the Islamic perspective on this issue is obvious: the family is the first school through which children become aware of morality, ethical frameworks, and standards. In his essay "Ethical Principles Underlying Education," Dewey (1972) begins by declaring that there "cannot be two sets of ethical principles... one for life in the school, and another for life outside of school" (p. 54). I believe that by "the life outside

of school," Dewey meant family life and the environment of the society in which we live. This is particularly so in Muslim communities where there is a great synergy and harmony between the home, the school, and society.

Although the real key to building a moral society may be in the family, moral instruction in school is indispensable. The Islamic perspective is that the role of moral education in schools is to re-enforce social virtues acquired at home so that children can apply them in school and then within society. The goals of moral education cannot be attained by artificial or imposed methods such as indoctrination. Morality learned in a genuine setting will be retained with positive feelings. There should not be a fundamental difference between the family and school in terms of education for moral development. I believe that the notion of family is the key to resolving most social problems of youth in a pragmatic way. It seems that the primary cause of moral decline in modern society does not lie in moral education per se but in the decline of the family foundation and structure.

Therefore, the aim of education in Islamic society is to initiate people into worthwhile activities, with these activities being defined by Islamic moral judgments. The aim is to produce virtuous human beings who can live an honourable life and contribute to the well-being of others. This aim would impact the entire process of education and thus create ideal conditions for moral education in the Muslim community.

To assess how well Islamic education meets the needs of Muslim communities in the West, I recommend a thorough review of existing policies on interpretation of the sacred texts, sources of education, aims and purpose of education, reform, *Ijtihad*, ethics and leadership, with the intent to update them to meet the contemporary needs of Muslims and their communities.

Policy makers and Muslim scholars need to examine the educational and social issues that Muslims face in the West in much the same way scholars of historical note have done. They must examine others' ideas in terms of both context and culture and Islamize them if necessary, before incorporating them into an Islamic educational system. These policy makers may have to surrender some of their cultural beliefs about Islamic education. Some of their views, for example, about the education of women and reform in Islam will likely not be constructive within the modern context of education as they lack a base in Islamic religious sources or are embedded in a particular cultural setting of the past which may not apply in modern society. While some basic Islamic principles are unchangeable, other principles can be re-examined and transformed when circumstances and contexts evolve. Also, while acknowledging that Western education has a great deal of valuable information to offer, Muslim communities in the West need to re-examine the areas which may be unsuitable for Muslim tradition and ensure that the materials do not contradict Islamic principles.

One aspect of Islamization is adapting others' concepts as long as they do not conflict with Islamic principles. Disagreeing with all the educational concepts of others and considering them un-Islamic is not consistent with Islamic intellectual tradition and Islamic attitudes towards education, cooperation, and reform. Muslim scholars and educators throughout history acknowledge that there are components of others' teachings that were and are valuable and that Islam incorporated and imported these ideas into its educational system.

On the other hand, however, it is unrealistic for policy makers to state that Muslims can follow only that which was implemented in an Islamic education system during the initial stages of its inception (i.e. during the time of the first generation of Muslims and later during the time of the

Islamic scholar and educator Al-Ghazali), and that the manner in which things were done then are the only ways Islamic systems need to operate in other times and contexts to achieve success. While that curriculum was valid in the middle ages, there have been many updated methods discovered in later times. One of the most obvious methods in modern times is the use of computers and internet technology. Neither of these were available previously, but have been successfully incorporated and integrated into Islamic educational systems and the life of Muslims in general in today's modern times.

Although Islamic educational systems do consider the notion of importing educational ideas from educational systems of other societies, there is a great need, especially for Muslims living in the West, to return to the educational roots of our Islamic tradition in terms of culture, attitude, vocabulary, and history.

This would include a comprehensive examination of a variety of key contributors to Islamic education throughout history. One of these is Islamic scholarship. To depend on only one scholar or a single school of thought as the basis for establishing a foundation for Islamic education is misleading. Other Islamic scholars and schools of thought need to be considered as well.

The existing condition of the majority of Muslim communities in the West is that there are different schools of thought and equally many social trends. The process of social and educational progress and reform is made difficult due to little or no collaboration or cooperation. I believe that this is largely due, not to lack of differing opinions but, rather, due to the lack of cooperation and understanding of scholars and leaders in the West. For that reason, my recommendation is that the local, Western born or grown and

educated not imported, Muslim leaders take the opportunity to cooperate so as to provide Muslims with a relevant and practical approach for life in Western societies.

Some of the practices that are present in Muslim communities in the West regarding education, i.e. women's education or the place of reform in Muslim communities and education, do not in fact reflect foundational Islamic teachings, yet these practices have been implemented in the specific Muslim cultures for centuries. There are a number of approaches that could advance and reform the lives of Muslims in general and education in particular in the West.

First, I propose an increase in the publications of contemporary Islamic writings, like those from the International Institute of Islamic Thought, United States, with a hermeneutic re-examination and updating of the ideas on education in terms of foundational Islamic principles. Second, there is a need to establish institutions to support the education of Western Muslims and to share that knowledge with others. Third, opportunities should be provided in various media for Muslims in the West to express their ideas and to communicate their concerns about education and Islam in general so as to educate others about foundational Islamic teachings. This way Muslims can educate Muslim citizens of the Western societies as well as non-Muslims in a supportive environment. The current environment fosters much misunderstanding and many misconceptions about Islam and Muslims because of the lack of Muslim participation in these societies.

At the same time, there is another need in the West as far as Islamic education is concerned. Since many Western countries are multicultural, I recommend that Muslim communities provide a package on Islam and

Islamic education to the Ministries of Education of the West, because it is in the interest of these countries that all citizens learn and know about Muslim attitudes towards education and society. Canada, as a leading multicultural society, is a good example in this regard.

My research also includes a suggestion of a course to be taught in Western educational institutions to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This would explore the relevant topics of Islamic tradition and how Islam can be lived today in new contexts.

## 5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

The perceptions of Muslims regarding life in general in the West and education in particular are quite varied. There is no doubt that some issues remain controversial and need to be re-examined in light of the foundational sources of Islam however, those who will re-examine them need to consider two conditions: a) remaining faithful to the sources of Islam and b) respecting the context of Western societies.

Since Muslims live in such a variety of social circumstances, future studies should focus on the possibilities of Islamic education in the West and how that may bring a greater understanding to these societies and help to build bridges of dialogue, understanding, cooperation, tolerance, harmony and peace.

The following are six recommendations for future research on Islamic education and leadership within Muslim communities in Western societies:

First, research is needed in the area of Islamic education in the West in order to contribute to the ongoing debate of whether the current educational system and theories Muslims use in their educational institutions in the West are still relevant and can these institutions help Muslims in the modern contexts to meet ongoing challenges and needs.

Second, research is needed to provide evidence to determine whether current policies on Islamic education and the reform of the Muslim communities in the West are applicable and sufficient for the progress of these communities and their subsequent contributions to the host societies.

Third, further research is needed to develop programs for Muslims in the West that can help them integrate successfully into new societies by meeting two conditions: a) remaining faithful to their religious principles and b) being reformed within the context of the Western societies.

Fourth, current research on Muslim leadership and scholarship should be broadened through empirical research to assist Muslim leaders in the West to educate and lead Muslims accurately and efficiently in the new environments. To keep the continuity and cohesion of my research, a follow-up study can be pursued to help Muslim scholars and policy makers understand the evolving nature of Islamic education and social issues in the context of the Western societies. As newly emerged phenomena, Muslim involvement in the West will continue to experience the transition from a static to a more integrative approach by the new understandings and the new generations.

Fifth, future research needs to be directed towards Islamic schools and how their graduates perform in Western contexts as both Muslims and

Western citizens. Additionally, a longitudinal study of graduates of Islamic educational institutions in the West might help determine if these institutions actually benefit students in both formative as well as modern knowledge. It would also be useful to conduct studies that compare Muslim students who attend Islamic schools in the West and Muslims students who are in the public school system or students who have a dual Muslim and Western educational experience. Furthermore, it might be interesting to see how their "Islamic" notions differ from practicing Muslims who do not graduate from Islamic schools.

Lastly, a replication study should be conducted in different Muslim communities in the West to ascertain the contributing factors of Muslim assimilation, isolation or integration. Muslim leadership could learn from this kind of study and develop short-term and long-term plans to assist Muslims in integrating successfully into new contexts. However, Muslim leaders and scholars need to take into consideration the local conditions and needs.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This dissertation investigates the social dimensions of Islam and Islamic education by exploring its historical and theoretical backgrounds, the aims of Islamic education with the focus on ethics as its essential ingredient, reform in Islamic education and communities, and the reformers and leadership in contemporary times. The research examines some recent Muslim thoughts on Islamic education and some models that, while respecting the sources of Islamic tradition, also offer a possible alternative within the current context of Western societies.

The intent of this study is to support these ideas and re-examine others so as to meet the educational and spiritual needs of Muslims in the West. The concept of re-examining existing processes to ensure relevance to future needs is not a new discovery. This consideration of Islamic resources – the Qur'an, Sunnah and the writings of early Islamic scholars – to inspire continuing growth within the contemporary society is a process that has been in use since the inception of Islam. By re-examining Islamic scholars' views in the light of Islamic sources and modern challenges, contemporary Muslim scholars continue the tradition of reform.

In this study, Islamic intellectual tradition has been regarded as a horizon of possibilities which gives Muslims in the West a finite but open perspective from which to understand the sacred texts. From the Islamic perspective on reform there are two levels of principles: the changeable and the unchangeable. To make the best use of Islamic intellectual heritage, there should be a constant revitalization of both levels of principles, the former being understood in the light of the latter. Innovative methods of presentation should also be employed so that the unchangeable might not surrender to historical forces or sink into oblivion and the changeable might be rightly appraised in different socio-historical contexts.

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