

**Towards the Islamisation of Critical  
Pedagogy: A Malaysian  
Case Study**

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## ABSTRACT

The starting point for this thesis is the crisis in Muslim education in Malaysia and the response to the crisis suggested by the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project. It seeks to contribute to this project by analysing its epistemological and methodological problems. On the basis of this analysis, the thesis seeks to ascertain whether an Islamised critical pedagogy can offer a more adequate resolution to the 'crisis'. In order to achieve this, the thesis is divided into two parts. The first part examines the history, causes and effects of the 'crisis' and highlights the effort of some Muslim scholars to resolve it through the Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) project. It then explores whether western critical pedagogy can contribute to the resolution of the 'crisis' by evaluating whether western critical pedagogy can be reconstructed from an Islamic perspective. In doing this, the thesis critically analyses the Islamic philosophy of education and redefines its core educational concepts. Then it provides an ideology-critique of the curriculum and pedagogy of the national education system generally, and Islamic education in Malaysia specifically. From these critiques, the thesis suggests a critical view of curriculum and pedagogy for Islamic education in Malaysia that could assist in achieving its aims.

The second part of the thesis tries to assess whether this reconstructed critical pedagogy can be practised in the Malaysian classroom in order to achieve the ideals and values of Islamic education. In order to achieve this aim, the thesis conducts a case study to evaluate whether Habermas' 'Ideal Speech Situation' can be recreated in the Malaysian classroom and whether it can encourage students to become critical thinkers. It seeks to understand a *murabbi's* experience in practising Islamic critical pedagogy and his students' experiences of encountering his practice. It also explores the students' views and experiences of practising the *murabbi's* Islamic critical pedagogy in their own classrooms. The Case Study involves a *murabbi* (a lecturer who is teaching in a Teacher Education Programme in the International Islamic University, Malaysia) and four of his students who have experiences of teaching in Malaysian schools. The Case Study is based on a critical research methodology using the methods of critical discourse analysis and narrative inquiry.

The analysis of the Case Study shows how the practice of an Islamic critical pedagogy can assist in resolving the crisis in the Muslim mind, and Islamic education through Islamic critique. The thesis reaches four main conclusions, which are: (i) it is possible to introduce and practice Islamic critical pedagogy in a Malaysian classroom; (ii) there is resistance, which a *murabbi* needs to consider when practising in a classroom that is based on an instrumental view of education, such as a Malaysian classroom; (iii) Islamic critique can be viewed as the method of ideology-critique conducted from an Islamic perspective, which could be the basis for the practice of *ijtihad* in Islamising knowledge; and (iv) the reconstructed critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective should be viewed as an Islamisation of critical pedagogy due to two of its key concepts, namely 'emancipatory knowledge' and the method of 'ideology-critique' (Islamic critique) that are based on the concepts of Islamic education.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

- ABIM *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* or Muslim Youth Movement in Malaysia
- CCTS Critical and Creative Thinking Skills
- CDC Curriculum Development Centre
- DAP Democratic Action Party
- ICT Information and Communication Technology
- ICSS Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools
- IIICE Integration, Islamicisation, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Education
- IIIT International Institute of Islamic Thought
- IIUM International Islamic University of Malaysia
- INSTED Institute of Education
- IOK Islamisation of Knowledge
- IPE Islamic Philosophy of Education
- ISS 'Ideal Speech Situation'
- IT Information Technology
- KCI Knowledge-Constitutive Interests
- MEd Master in Education
- MOE Ministry of Education
- NEPhi National Education Philosophy
- NSPC New Primary School Curriculum
- OPEC Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PAS *Parti Islam Malaysia* or Malaysian Islamic Party

PhD Doctor of Philosophy

R&D Research and Development

SESI Social Service of Industry

SPM *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* or Malaysian Certificate of Education

STPM *Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia* or Malaysian Higher Certificate of Education

TODA Textually and Linguistically Oriented Discourse Analysis

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation

UKM *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* or National University of Malaysia

## INTRODUCTION.

### **1. Background of the Thesis: The Crisis of Islamic Education in Malaysia.**

This thesis contributes to the contemporary debate concerning what is known as the 'crisis' in Muslim education<sup>1</sup> (Husain and Ashraf, 1979) by exploring the idea that a reconstruction of western critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective can offer a means of helping to resolve this crisis.

Generally, there is an agreement that the *Ummah*<sup>2</sup> is in an extremely difficult phase of disintegration, decline, confusion, and loss of identity. The *Ummah*'s condition has been referred to as a 'malaise' (IIIT, 1989: p. xii), 'malady' (AbuSulayman, 1993: Chapter One), and 'crisis' (Husain and Ashraf, 1979). This thesis uses the word 'crisis' to refer to the predicament of the *Ummah*. There is also a general agreement that this 'crisis' is an 'intellectual crisis: intellectual rigidity and

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Muslim education' that is used in this thesis means the education that Muslims experience. This includes two types of curriculum: one that is based on secular education where Islamic education is taught only as a subject, while the other one refers to Islamic education that is based on Islamic curriculum. The 'crisis' that exists in Islamic education also exists in Muslim education because Muslims who are educated in the first type of curriculum also experienced a dualistic system of education. In the case of Malaysia, the first type of curriculum refers to the national school, while the second type of curriculum refers to Islamic religious schools. Although the resolution to the 'crisis' that is explored in this thesis may be relevant to the second type of curriculum, it is also relevant in the national school, particularly in the teaching of Islamic education. Hence, the terms, 'crisis' in Islamic education and Muslim education are used interchangeably in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> *Ummah* is an Arabic word that means community or nation. In this thesis, the word *Ummah* is used as a reference to the Muslim community existing throughout the world.

stagnation, that exists in the Muslim mind, and has extended to Islamic education<sup>3</sup> (Husain and Ashraf, 1979; AbuSulayman, 1993; Hashim, 1996; IIIT, 1989: p. xii). There is a consensus among many Muslim scholars that the cause of this 'crisis' is 'colonisation, then foreign indoctrination within the Muslim education system, and finally the influence of modernisation in Muslim countries' (Husain and Ashraf, 1979; Hashim, 1996; IIIT, 1989). This thesis focuses on the 'crisis' in Islamic education, particularly in Malaysia.

The 'crisis' in Islamic education in Malaysia has two elements. The first is a crisis of *secularisation* due to the dualistic system of British education inherited from the colonisation of Malaysia. The second is a crisis of *modernisation* due to the influence of, and importance placed upon, western science and technology in the Malaysian education system. This thesis describes the attempts made by a group of Muslim scholars who are involved in the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project, and critically examines the epistemological and methodological problems of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project. But the main purpose of the thesis is to contribute to the contemporary debate concerning the crisis in Islamic education in Malaysia by offering a critique of the epistemological and methodological problems of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project. On this basis, it will explore the suggestion that a reconstruction of western critical pedagogy from an Islamic

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<sup>3</sup> In this thesis, Islamic education is used to refer to education in an Islamic spirit and tradition. This understanding of Islamic education educates Muslims of their Islamic faith, and its branches of knowledge. This term of 'Islamic education' has been derived from Douglass and Shaikh's (2004:p. 7) typology of Islamic education.

perspective may offer a more appropriate response to the crisis. The thesis will also try to discover whether critical pedagogy can be reinterpreted from an Islamic perspective in such a way that it retains the ideals and values of Islamic education. In order to do this, the thesis will include a case study of a particular attempt to introduce an 'Islamised' critical pedagogy in one of the classrooms of the Teacher Education programme in one of the public universities in Malaysia, namely the International Islamic University of Malaysia.

## **2. The Aims of the Thesis**

The overall aims of this thesis are:

**1) To examine the contemporary crisis in Islamic education in Malaysia.**

The aim here is to examine the source of the contemporary crisis in Muslim education in Malaysia by reviewing the historical development of Muslim education from pre-Independence until contemporary times.

**2) To evaluate whether critical pedagogy can be reinterpreted and reconstructed from an Islamic perspective, and whether it is able to realize and promote Islamic educational values and ideals. Here the aim is to provide a critical analysis of Muslims' response to the crisis in Islamic education in Malaysia, and argue that critical pedagogy can assist in resolving that crisis.**

**3) To evaluate whether a reconstructed critical pedagogy based on an Islamic perspective can be successfully practised in the contemporary**

**Malaysian education system.** The aim here is to conduct a case study of an identified *murabbi*<sup>4</sup> and his attempt to practise a reconstructed critical pedagogy in one of the classes in the Teacher Education Programme (MEd/PhD) in a university in Malaysia.

### **3. Research Questions**

In pursuing these aims, the thesis will seek the answer to the following questions:

- *What is the 'crisis' of Muslim education in Malaysia?*
- *Can western critical pedagogy be reconstructed and reinterpreted from an Islamic perspective?*
- *Can critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective be practised in the Malaysian classroom?*
- *Can the practice of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective help in retaining the ideals and values of Islamic education?*

### **4. A Summary of the Argument of the Thesis**

The thesis begins by explaining that within the Malaysian education system, and, in particular, within its Islamic form and structures, there is a crisis of secularisation.

This crisis is shared by most other contemporary Muslim states particularly those

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<sup>4</sup> Generally, the term *murabbi* means a person/teacher who nurtures all aspects of a person like his body, soul, faculties and capacities, where the system of nourishment should extend to the climax of man's physical and spiritual progress (derived from 'Essence of Islam: Volume Two'). In the thesis, *murabbi* refers to an Islamic critical pedagogue, one who engages in critical pedagogy with students to raise their critical consciousness, and to encourage Islamic critique.

with a legacy of colonialism.

A late 20<sup>th</sup> century attempt to address this crisis within the Muslim world was the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project initiated at the First Muslim World Conference of Education in 1977. This attempt, I argue, has not been successful due to the project's epistemological and methodological problems. The 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project disagrees with the positivistic view of scientific objectivity, but instead the project appeals to revelation as the highest authority. However, the project accepts the western understanding of modern sciences as unproblematic. Therefore, drawing on Kuhn's critique of scientific knowledge, Gadamer's critique of modern sciences' distinction between tradition and reason, and Habermas' critique of modernity on the effects of modern sciences on western societies and theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, I argue that the project needs to evaluate the one-dimensional technical or scientific view of knowledge that has developed hegemony over all other models by using Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' which provides a broader understanding of various types of knowledge.

The project's other problem, which is methodological, refers to the 'traditional methodology' of *ijtihad*<sup>5</sup> (Ali, 1999). Critics of this methodology claim that *ijtihad* is

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<sup>5</sup> *Ijtihad* is a key concept in IIIT 'Islamisation of Knowledge'. In Islamic jurisprudence or *fiqh*, '*ijtihad*' means 'creative self-exertion to draw laws from the legitimate sources' (IIIT, 1989: p. 23). However, I intend to develop this basic understanding of *ijtihad* into a methodological concept that could assist in the process of 'Islamisation of Knowledge'. The thesis refers to *ijtihad* as an act of self-interpretation or critical reflection, which becomes the basis for ideology-critique.

an analytic linguistic approach that needs to be developed and expanded (Bugaje, 1996; Ali, 1999). Critical and practical approaches also need to be considered if intellectual stagnation of the Muslim mind is to be overcome. I suggest that the concept of *ijtihad* can be used as a methodology to resolve the 'crisis' by using Gadamer's critique of method and his analysis of the notion of 'understanding', as well as Habermas' concept of the 'Ideal Speech Situation'.

On the basis of the problems of the project, I further argue that the critiques of western models of science by critical theorists, particularly Habermas', have been overlooked. On this basis, I suggest that the crisis in contemporary Muslims' education in Malaysia can be resolved with the help of western critical pedagogy. However, there is a need to reinterpret and reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective to enable the realisation and promotion of Islamic educational values and ideals. In supporting this argument, the thesis will also describe and examine the Malaysian education system, its curriculum and pedagogy so that the appropriateness of the reinterpreted and reconstructed critical pedagogy to the contemporary Malaysian education system can be evaluated.

To evaluate the reconstructed critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective being practised in the Malaysian classroom, the thesis will critically analyse the Malaysian education system, and its curriculum and pedagogy. It will also provide a case study of the classroom in a Teacher Education programme in a public university in

Malaysia, where the participants in the case study are a Malaysian critical pedagogue, or *murabbi*, and his four students. The aim of the case study is to examine the possibility of introducing critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective within the existing curriculum, identify problems that this practice may encounter, and assess the extent to which it emancipates Malaysian students and enables them to become more critical thinkers.

### **5. The Structure and Organisation of the Thesis.**

In presenting this argument, this thesis is divided into two parts. Part I covers Chapters One to Seven, and is mainly concerned with the theoretical and historical aspects of the study. The first chapter is primarily historical and provides the background context for the research by describing education in Malaysia before, during and after the British occupation. This chapter also examines how the Malaysian educational system has changed and developed in response both to the resurgence of Islam in Malaysia and to the influence of western modernity.

The second chapter provides an understanding of the crisis that has emerged in Muslim education caused by the conflict between Islamic belief and the influence of western science. It also outlines the response to this crisis by Muslim scholars and the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. Drawing on Habermas' critique of the role of science in western societies, I will try to identify parallels between the 'crisis' in modern western education (Young, 1989) and the 'crisis' in Muslim education. This

will provide the basis for my attempt to explore the potential of critical pedagogy to contribute to the resolution of this crisis.

The third chapter explores the potential of critical pedagogy as a potential theoretical and practical resource for understanding and resolving the crisis in Muslims' education in Malaysia. It will look at the origins of critical pedagogy, the ideas of some of its prominent exponents, and some of the criticisms that have been made of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy.

Chapter Four outlines three historical educational periods, each of which represents the way in which Muslim scholars in different periods of time have attempted to interpret and uphold the Islamic way of life. This chapter will also try to show how the development of these three historical educational periods has helped the contemporary Muslim scholars to conceptualise the Islamic philosophy of education and has also partly contributed to the contemporary crisis in Muslim education.

The focus of Chapter Five will be on a critical examination of the contemporary Islamic philosophy of education that has evolved and developed through these three periods. In particular, the role played in this philosophy by the concepts of 'human nature', 'knowledge', and 'education', and their significance for contemporary Muslim education will be critically analysed and their inadequacy in realising the ideals and values of Islamic education will be made clear. In addition, I will examine

Kazmi's (2000b) notion of 'self as narrative' in my attempt to review the meaning of these concepts so as to prepare the way for a reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective.

Chapter Six compares the philosophy of critical theory and the philosophy of Islamic education in order to identify their similarities and differences. It draws on these similarities in order to synthesise critical pedagogy and Islamic education. Finally, I will attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective.

In Chapter Seven, I will provide an ideology-critique of Islamic education in Malaysia based on the reconstructed Islamic critical pedagogy outlined in Chapter Six. Here, I will use Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests to develop a critical view of Malaysian education. I will also argue that a critical curriculum in Islamic education in Malaysia will encourage the practice of critical pedagogy in Malaysian classrooms.

Part II is concerned with the empirical aspect of the thesis. It covers Chapter Eight and Nine of the thesis. Chapter Eight gives a general overview of the kind of research methodology that is adopted in the thesis including the methods of data collection and analysis that are used. It also discusses the Case Study and the processes that have been involved in the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter Nine provides an analysis of the findings of the Case Study. This chapter will also

highlight the problems and criticisms of the practice of critical pedagogy in a Malaysian classroom. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the aims, and responses to the research questions that the thesis has attempted to address. In this conclusion too, I will outline a future research project that can help in the promotion of the practice of critical pedagogy in Malaysian classrooms, and consequently, promote the development of a more critical curriculum in Malaysian education.

## **6. The Methodology of the Study**

This research can be divided into two parts, a theoretical part and an empirical part.

### *i. Theoretical Part*

The theoretical part is the first part of the thesis and aims to answer the first and second research questions, and the first part of the third research question. The first research question is concerned with the description of a 'crisis' in Muslim education in Malaysia, its history, causes and effects. This description then brings forward the theoretical justification for critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective, its need and appropriateness as a critical response to this 'crisis'. The second question involves the theoretical justification for how critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective is able to realise the ideals and values of Islamic education, and be made relevant to the Malaysian educational system. The first part of the third research question will critically review and assess the existing Malaysian educational system in terms of its curriculum and pedagogy so that the practice of critical pedagogy can be made more possible. In answering all of these questions, this study will involve

theoretical literature review, historical and educational document analyses, critical reviews, evaluations and analyses.

*ii. The Empirical Part*

The second part comprises most of the third and fourth research questions, which aims at understanding how the developed critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective can be practised in the Malaysian classroom and whether it can retain the ideals and values of Islamic education. In order to answer these questions, a case study will be explored using the methodology of critical research. Two methods are involved in the case study, the methods of data collection and data analysis. The process of the data collection involves participant observation (through audio and video recording, and field note taking), interview and journal documentation. The class that has been selected for the case study is observed, while the *murabbi* and four of his students are interviewed in order to understand their experiences and perspectives towards the practice of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective in a Malaysian classroom. The method of journal documentation requires students to write in their journals, which also includes the students' personal views and experiences that have been recorded from their emails, internet chats and discussions. The method of journal documentation is selected to further understand the students' encounter with the teacher's practice of critical pedagogy.

The analysis of the data involved the method of ‘critical discourse analysis’, particularly Fairclough’s textually and linguistically oriented discourse analysis (TODA) and narrative inquiry. TODA examines the establishment of Habermas’ undistorted communication and the ‘ideal speech situation’ (ISS) in the classroom discourses. The analysis also contains an ideology-critique of classroom discourses and tries to unearth the ideological roots of practices, views and beliefs of the *murabbi* and the students. The narrative analysis of the data assists the *murabbi* and the students in sharing their experiences and views of the practice of critical pedagogy, and how these students who are also teachers in Malaysian schools try to practise critical pedagogy in their own classrooms. It is hoped that the analysis of the case study will help in the development of a critical curriculum that can prepare Malaysian teachers to become *murabbis*.

### **7. Positionality**

It is important to discuss my positionality in this study because it plays an important role in the inception and direction of this thesis, particularly in the case study. I am also making my positionality explicit to others because it is impossible to maintain neutrality and objectivity in the evaluation of this study. This is a critical research study, and is grounded in real and lived experiences. Basically, it is my own experience of the practice of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective in a Malaysian classroom that has initiated this study. From this experience, I have found my own ‘voice’ to be critical of my own Islamic faith not with the intention of

criticising Islam, but rather to develop a stronger belief and more meaningful relationship with God. However, it is important to note that this study focuses not on my own experience, but analysis of other students' understanding of their own when they encountered the practice of critical pedagogy. And as a Muslim educator striving to bring changes in my students' lives, particularly in developing their critical consciousness, I am also interested in learning about the views and experiences of the *murabbi* when he introduces critical pedagogy in his classroom. Perhaps his experience can be used as a guideline by other teachers in their attempt to develop their students' critical consciousness.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CRISIS OF MUSLIM EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA.**

#### **1.1 Introduction.**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the background context for the thesis by presenting a historical account of the development of Malaysian education from British colonisation until contemporary time. In order to show how history has played an important role in the historical evolution of Malaysian education, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section describes the history of the colonisation and independence of Malaya; the second examines Malaysian education before and after independence; the third outlines the development of Islamic education in Malaysia before British colonisation until contemporary times; the fourth analyses how western science and technology have contributed to the growing crisis in Muslim education in Malaysia.

#### **1.2 The Colonisation of Malaya.**

The acquisition by Britain of Penang, Malacca and Singapore in the seventeenth century by the British marked the first establishment of its empire in the Archipelago. These three states were known as the 'Straits Settlements' and were regarded as a British Colony. Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang had been protectorates since the 1870s until they became the Federated Malay States in

1896. On the other hand, Kedah, Perlis, Terengganu and Kelantan were under the suzerainty of Siam until they were transferred to Great Britain in 1909, while Johor was made a protectorate in 1914. All of these five states were referred to collectively as the 'Unfederated Malay States' as each had its own separate and distinct administration. Meanwhile the development of the British influence in North Borneo was closely linked with Sarawak and, in 1888, both states, together with Brunei, became a British Protectorate (Wong and Ee, 1971)

All of the states discussed above had a 'colourful' population. Malaya and Singapore had three main ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese and Indians. North Borneo inhabitants included the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Dusuns, Bajaus, Muruts and Kadazans. Sarawak too had a polyglot population consisting of the Sea and Land Dayaks, Malays, Chinese, Melanaus. The first known civilized inhabitants in Malaya and Singapore - the Malays - had remained concentrated in the rural areas as smallholders, fishermen and farmers in spite of the rapid development of Malaya. The Chinese first came to Malaya and Singapore as traders and settled in Malacca, but their numbers increased as the Malay States came under the protection of the British (Wong and Ee, 1971: p. 7).

The Federation of Malaya achieved its independence in 1957. On 27<sup>th</sup> May 1961 the Foreign Correspondents' Association of Southeast Asia in Singapore, Tengku Abdul Rahman, and the former Prime Minister of Malaya proposed that Malaya should

have an understanding with Britain and the people of Singapore that North Borneo (now known as Sabah), Brunei and Sarawak, should form Malaysia. Less than twenty-eight months after the proposal was put forward, ‘Tengku Abdul Rahman had succeeded in realizing his plans for the formation of Malaysia with the exception of Brunei’, which united together 10 million diverse people in a new nation (Wong and Ee, 1971: p. 95). However, an agreement was made on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1965, whereby Singapore ceased to be a part of Malaysia due to disagreement between the Malayan and Singaporean leaders in terms of the direction that the nation was heading. Malaysia until today consists of the Federation of Malaya or better known today as Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

Figure 1.0: Map of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak (Source: <http://geography.about.com/library/cia/ncmalaysia.htm>)



### **1.3 Education in Malaysia: Pre and Post Independence.**

English education was first introduced in the Straits Settlements and only later and slower in the Federated and Unfederated Malay States. Basically, there were two types of schools established during the British period, the vernacular schools and the English schools. The vernacular schools were schools that used the Malay, Chinese, or Tamil language as the medium of instruction. The Malay vernacular schools were established and maintained by the government in the predominately Malay rural areas, while the Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools were set up by their respective communities. The English schools provided a western education and teaching was primarily in the medium of English for the mixed urban population. There were two types of English schools: the 'Free' schools, which received financial support and were controlled by the government, and the 'Mission' schools, which received government financial aid but were established and maintained by missionary societies.

Both the 'Free' and the 'Mission' English schools received a poor response from the Malays and Indians as these schools were established in the urban areas. The Malay vernacular schools that were established by the government also received a similar poor response from the Malays for several reasons. Firstly, Malay parents were suspicious of these schools as they did not offer Islamic religious instruction, and 'the replacement of *jawi* (Malay in Arabic script) with *rumi* (Malay in Romanised script) was perceived as an attempt by the British to anglicize the Malay language'

(Hashim, 1996: p. 47). Moreover, the Malays failed to see the relevance of secular education to their simple rural lives, which did not require knowledge of reading and writing but needed intensive labour instead (ibid). Furthermore, the Malays preferred the Islamic schools that the Malay communities had already established to the government schools simply because the former taught them the fundamentals of Islam, and reading and writing in the Malay language.

The early twentieth century saw the beginning of a change in Malaysian education. Significant progress was clearly seen when 'in 1899 the British formulated an educational policy of compulsory attendance in either the vernacular or English school' (Hashim, 1996: p. 48). The Malays' attitudes toward secular education slowly changed when they realized the economic benefits that such education brought. Pupils who attended the English schools had an opportunity of getting better jobs than those who attended the Islamic schools ((Hashim, 1996 p. 48).

There were three Education Committee Reports during the pre-Independence period, which reflected the British government efforts to improve the pre-war educational system. The first, published in 1950, was the *Barnes Committee Report* and was concerned with unifying the different ethnic groups in Malaya through education. It argued that it was essential for a common Malayan outlook to be developed if self-government was to succeed. The *Barnes Committee Report* recommended that primary schooling should be aimed at 'building a common nationality and

reorganized on a new inter-ethnic basis' (Wong, 1971: p. 53). The Report also recommended that the vernacular schools of other ethnic groups should be abolished and replaced with a single type of primary school common to all, the National School, which would be bilingual—English and Malay. However this particular recommendation was opposed by the non-Malays who saw it as an attempt to eliminate their cultures and languages. This resulted in the *Fenn-Wu Report* published in 1951.

The *Fenn-Wu Report* opposed the *Barnes Report's* view of cultural integration. The former recommended that Chinese schools should be improved and argued that if the Malay language was recognized as the national language and English as the *lingua franca*, then the Chinese and Indians should be given provision to receive instruction in their own languages (Federation of Malaya, 1951b: pp. 3-4). As way of a compromise between the recommendations of the *Barnes* and *Fenn-Wu Reports*, the government passed the *Education Ordinance* of 1952, which promoted a national school system in which English would be gradually introduced in the Malay vernacular schools, and Malay and English languages would be introduced in Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools.

The third report, the *Razak Report* in 1956, marked a milestone in the evolution of a national system of education. It argued that there was a need to inculcate nationalism by providing a common content of education and the compulsory study of both the

Malay and English languages in all primary and secondary schools. Equal grants and similar training facilities to all teachers were to be provided to all types of schools, which directly ended discrimination against the vernacular schools. It also recommended that the existing primary schools should be converted to national schools (Malay language medium) and national type schools (English, Chinese or Tamil language as the medium). The *Razak Report* was important because it paved the way for equal access to higher education, which was hardly experienced by the rural communities. More importantly, 'the proposals of this Report were enacted as the *Education Ordinance* of 1957 and became the foundation of the *National Education Policy*' (Hashim, 1996: p. 54).

The post-Independence period saw Malaya continuing its search for a national education system after its independence in 1957. Two Education Committee Reports were produced: the *Rahman Talib Report* and the *Cabinet Committee Report*. The *Rahman Talib Report* of 1960 reviewed the implementation of the *National Education Policy* and found it to be sound and generally accepted by the public. The Report recommended universal free primary education to all pupils. It also ensured that compulsory Islamic religious instruction, which had been introduced in the *Education Ordinance 1957*, was fully implemented by recommending that the government bear the cost of Islamic religious instruction in assisted primary and secondary schools.

An important event that made the government realise the importance of national integration and unity amongst its people was the ‘racial riots’ that broke out on 13 May 1969 in Kuala Lumpur. The riots better known as ‘The May Thirteenth Crisis’ brought to the fore the underlying ethnic tensions caused by social, economic, and educational imbalances among the ethnic groups especially between the Malays and Chinese. This crisis caused the government to make serious efforts to address these issues, particularly in the education system. For instance, in 1970, in an effort to consolidate the education system and promote national integration and unity, the government implemented *Bahasa Malaysia* as the main medium of instruction in schools.

The second education committee report after Independence was the *Cabinet Report*, which was published in 1979. The *Cabinet Report* claimed that the primary school curriculum was ‘compartmentalized and crammed; there was not much integration among the subjects; and that a large number of the pupils lagged and mastered very few skills’ (Hashim, 1996: p. 64). As a result of this report, the *New Primary School Curriculum* (NPSC) was implemented in 1983, emphasizing the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Its main goal was to ‘help each pupil attain an overall and balanced development in the physical, spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and moral domains’ (Malaysia, 1990: p. 18). The *Cabinet Report* reflected considerable concern for the development and inculcation of moral values among

pupils, stressing that ‘workers should not only be efficient, but also be able to think and act morally and ethically’ (Malaysia, 1984: Para. 452).

In 1987, the Ministry of Education formulated the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi), which explicitly stated the direction of the national education;

Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well being as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the society and the nation at large (Hashim, 1996: p. 65).

The *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi) was considered timely as there was a ‘growing concern that national education was focussing more on the cognitive domain at the expense of the affective domain, particularly the moral and spiritual aspects’ (ibid: p. 131). In view of the *Cabinet Report* and the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi), the Ministry of Education drew up and implemented the *Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools* (ICSS) in 1989. The *Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools* (ICSS) aims were based on the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi), which explicitly displayed the change of emphasis on cognitive development to a holistic development encompassing the moral, religious, social, physical and intellectual development of the person.

This brief historical account of the educational development in Malaysia during the British colonisation and after Independence reveals that there were basically three

stages in the development of a national education in Malaysia. The first stage is the colonial period (1786-1957) where the aims of education were to provide basic literacy and vocational skills especially for lower occupations such as clerical work. The second stage of educational development was from Independence (1957) to the publication of the *Cabinet Committee Report* (1979) and was geared toward two objectives. The first was to achieve national unity through a national system of education. The second was to produce a skilled manpower for economic and national development. The third stage (1980-1990), which followed the *Cabinet Committee Report* of 1979, was dominated by a growing concern for the lack of emphasis on affective development, moral and spiritual development in the national education system.

#### **1.4 Islamic Education in Malaysia: Its History, Influence and Changes.**

In this section I will focus on the development of Islamic Education in Malaysia, on how the *National Education Policy* had affected the development of Islamic Education and Islamic religious schools in Malaysia, and on the effects of the Islamic resurgence that has occurred since the 1970's on the National and Islamic Education systems of Malaysia.

##### **1.4.1 The Origins of Islamic Education.**

Although Islamic schools were only established in the 11<sup>th</sup> C.E. (A.D.), the pursuit of education in the Islamic world began as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> C.E. in other places such as

mosques, houses of learned individuals, literary salons, bookshops, courts and palaces (Shalaby, 1954). At that time education was not confined to religious studies, but also included secular studies such as mathematics, logic, creative arts, astronomy, medicine and philosophy. Muslim scholars pursued such knowledge in order to learn about God's world. Muslims at that time possessed a culture of learning that was neither driven by the desire for certificates or qualifications nor for monetary gains.

Knowledge was highly valued regardless of whether it was acquired through the study of Islam. However, when learning became institutionalised through the establishment of formal schools, colleges and universities in the eleventh century, this early Muslim culture of learning ceased. As a result, the development of non-religious studies stagnated and more emphasis was placed on the development of religious studies in schools, colleges and universities (Shalaby, 1954). This was the case of Islamic education in the Middle East, which then spread to Malaya through Muslims' exploration, trades and marriage with the Malays during the fourteenth century.

#### 1.4.2 The History of Islamic Education in Malaysia.

The history of Islamic Education in Malaysia can be divided into two periods. The first period is the pre-Independence period, which explains briefly the origin of Islamic education and the traditional learning institutions in Malaysia. The second

period is the post World War II period, which saw the golden age of Islamic education and its eventual decline.

*i. Islamic Education in Malaysia in the Pre-Independence period.*

Traditional Islamic education in Malaysia started as early as the fourteenth century in mosques and houses of learned individuals or *ulama*<sup>1</sup>. The traditional Islamic educational system evolved from *pondok* which is an informal learning institution in the middle of nineteenth century to *madrasah*<sup>2</sup> which is a more formal and organized institution at the turn of the twentieth century. These *pondoks* and *madrasahs* were founded by *ulama*' and the local community. The syllabuses and curricula of the *pondok* and *madrasah* varied from one teacher to another, but they had a common core, which 'subscribed to the *Shafi'i* School of jurisprudence and *Ash'aari*'s school of thought' (Hashim, 1996: p. 5). The basis of the curriculum was revealed knowledge, drawn from the *Qur'an* and Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad <sup>peace be upon him</sup>, and *tawhid*<sup>3</sup>, *fiqh*<sup>4</sup>, *sirah*<sup>5</sup> and the fundamentals of arithmetic and *mantiq*<sup>6</sup>.

In the beginning, the institutions of *pondok* received higher attendances than the Malay vernacular and English schools, which were introduced by the British. However in 1872, A. M. Skinner, the first Inspector of Schools, announced that the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ulama*' mean religious scholars.

<sup>2</sup> Today, *madrasah* is referred to as Islamic religious school in Malaysia.

<sup>3</sup> *Tawhid* in Arabic means 'unification' or 'Oneness'. *Tawhid* is an Islamic concept of monotheism.

<sup>4</sup> Literally *fiqh* means understanding, perception or discernment. Today, *fiqh* is largely used to mean the knowledge of legal rules or jurisprudence.

<sup>5</sup> *Sirah* means history of Islam, including the biography of the Prophet Muhammad <sup>peace be upon him</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> *Mantiq* means logic.

*Qur'an* may be taught in the afternoon in Malay vernacular schools, but kept separate from the Malay instruction in the morning (Hashim, 1996). Hence, this was the first attempt to secularise education in Malaya. Gradually, British secular Malay education was successfully introduced with the exclusion of the *Qur'an* when the Malays finally accepted the benefits of colonial education.

The decline in the number of *pondok* institutions, which began in 1918, was also due to the discontentment of Muslim intellectuals toward the narrow objectives of *pondok* institutions (Hashim, 1996 p. 24). Muslim intellectuals felt that *pondok* education failed to prepare Muslim youths for employment in the British government services or commercial sector. Hence the first *madrasah* was established in Singapore in 1907 where subjects taught in this type of institution included secular subjects such as geography, history and science in addition to religious subjects (ibid). In the beginning the *madrasah* did not receive a good response from the public as they felt that the ideas of the founder were unIslamic. However the public changed their views when *madrasah* provided primary to higher education, which qualified Muslim pupils to pursue their studies in Middle Eastern Universities such as Al Azhar University in Egypt.

*ii. The Golden Age of Islamic Religious Education.*

The growth of Islamic education did not falter after World War II. In fact the period between the turn of the century and the early 1950s was known as the 'golden age'

of Islamic religious education (Hashim, 1996: p. 29). However, the *madrasahs* that were founded and managed by individuals and communities soon experienced financial difficulties and some *madrasahs* had to be taken over by the various state Islamic religious departments.

The 1960s saw the decline of the *madrasah*, which was due to a fall in pupil enrolment and financial problems (Hashim, 1996: p. 62). Also the *Barnes Report* recommendation of confining secular and religious instruction to normal school hours contributed to the decline of pupils' enrolment in the *madrasahs*. According to Hashim (1996), the *Razak* and *Rahman Talib Reports*' recommendations on religious instruction had great repercussions on the growth of *madrasahs*. Although both reports made positive recommendations to include religious instruction in the national and national type schools, indirectly 'the role of *madrasahs* had been undermined as Malay parents realized that their children could learn religion whether in the national or national type schools' (ibid: p. 40).

The *National Education Policy* (1957) that made it easier for the Malay pupils to continue their studies in secondary schools also contributed to the decline of pupils' enrolment in religious schools. For previously, Malay pupils attended the *madrasahs*' secondary and higher education after they had finished primary education in government schools. Financial assistance from the state religious departments also obliged the *madrasahs* to reformulate their curricula so that each

religious department had a uniformed curriculum within each state. The curriculum of the *madrasahs* was not only revamped at the primary level, but also at the secondary level. In many cases, Malay language replaced the Arabic language as the medium of instruction. Soon the *madrasah*'s curriculum had to be changed to include secular subjects so that their pupils would be able to sit for the national examinations. As a result, the religious subjects had to be trimmed to make way for these secular subjects.

By 1967 the state of Islamic education in Malaysia was perceived as unfavourable by Muslim parents (Hashim, 1996). The state of the Islamic religious schools, their lack of physical facilities, shortage of teachers, overcrowded curriculum and the overburdened examinations of secular and religious subjects were the main reasons that prevented many parents from sending their children to these schools. However, the growing influence of Islam improved the management of the Islamic religious schools and this influence came in the form of an Islamic resurgence among the Muslims in Malaysia.

#### 1.4.3 Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia.

During the 1970s there was a rise in Islamic consciousness throughout the Muslim world, propelled by several events such as the oil embargo by the *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries* (OPEC) in 1973 that gave political and economic clout to Muslim countries; the plight of the Palestinians, which sparked Muslim

solidarity; the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1978; and the development of an Islamic state in Pakistan (Hashim, 1996: p. 65).

In Malaysia, the May Thirteenth Crisis of 1963 also contributed to the Islamic revival in Malaysia, and this was further enhanced by the development of Islamic organizations in the Malay urban areas such as the *Muslim Youth Movement in Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia or ABIM)* and *Darul Arqam*. Moreover the large number of Malay students pursuing higher education in local universities and abroad opened the door to learning about Islamic fundamentalist ideas such as those of Hasan al-Banna, Maududi and Syed Qutb (Hashim, 1996).

This Islamic resurgence in Malaysia led the Muslims to become very critical of two aspects of the government's educational policy. The first was the emphasis that the government had put on secular education and material development at the expense of Islamic values and identity. Muslims argued that the national education system was devoid of any reference to religion, which was resulting in the 'indoctrination of secular values in schools' (Hashim, 1996: p. 67). They feared that there would be less religious commitment among Muslim youths and more social problems like drug addiction and discipline problems. The second was the government's 'double standard' treatment of Islamic religious schools, and of religious teachers and graduates from Middle Eastern universities. The Islamic religious schools were

neglected by the government and there was wage discrimination against religious teachers and graduates from Middle Eastern universities.

In response to these criticisms, the government undertook several measures to appease the growing Islamic movements' demands. Some of the measures taken were: the establishment of a *National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* or UKM) and its Faculty of Islamic Studies; an Islamic Teachers College; and the Islamic Education Division in the Ministry of Education. The Islamic Education Division had the task of monitoring the development of Islamic education in the national schools. By 1977, there were four kinds of schools providing Islamic education at different levels; national schools, national religious secondary schools, state religious schools, and *rakyat*<sup>7</sup> schools (Hashim, 1996).

The Islamic resurgence also changed the national education system. In the national schools, Islamic education is now compulsory to all Muslim pupils but not a compulsory examination subject as it is considered as an elective examination subject whereas, in the national religious secondary schools, Islamic education is emphasized as an important foundation subject. However, in the state religious and *rakyat* schools, Islamic education is a compulsory learning and examination subject in both the national and Islamic education examinations. Pupils who pass the

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<sup>7</sup> *Rakyat* schools are schools that are set up by individuals or local communities with their own Board of Governors.

Malaysian Examination Certificate may enter local universities while those who pass the Higher Islamic Education Certificate may enter Middle Eastern universities.

In 1977, the First Muslim World Conference was held in Makkah, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia sent Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the then Minister of Education, as its representative. In response to the recommendation made in the Makkah Conference, the government established an Islamic university, known as the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 1982. In the Makkah Conference, the *Islamic Philosophy of Education* (IPE) was formulated as follows;

Education should aim at the balanced growth of the total personality of the individual through the training of the individual's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The training imparted to a Muslim must be such that faith is infused into the whole of his/her personality and creates in him/her an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him/her to follow the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* and be governed by the Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of his status as *Khilafatullah* (vicegerent of Allah) to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe (Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 44)

It is obvious that the Ministry of Education formulated the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi) on the basis of that *Islamic Philosophy of Education* (IPE) as both philosophies of education promoted the belief in God and the importance of values in one's life. This is another important point to note. As Malaysia has a diverse population, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia has taken into account the need for integrating not only Islamic Education in the curriculum, but also integrating universal values across the curriculum for students of other faiths in order to produce a good and balanced individual who shall do good not only for him/herself, but also for the well being of his/her society. The integration of values

in the new primary (NCPS) and secondary (ICSS) curricula has changed the national education system from a secular education system to an educational system that is imbued with spiritual belief and moral values. As a result, education in Malaysia now emphasises the belief in God as the basis of education, where values should be taught to individuals apart from secular knowledge of modern science and technology, in order to create balanced individuals for the well being of the nation. This encouraged the promotion of good Muslims and good individuals professing other faiths as well.

### **1.5 The Influence of Western Modernity on Malaysia and Its System of Education in Contemporary Times.**

After achieving its Independence in 1957, Malaysia was ushered into the world of modern science, and was caught in the need to become a nation that is scientifically and technologically progressive like other developing nations. Malaysia had learned a lot from the west, particularly the colonialists, in terms of its economic superiority due to modern science. However, the Malaysian government felt that while there was a need to be independently advanced in science and technology, it was also necessary to maintain the values of a Muslim country. Even though Malaysia was very much enamoured by its colonialists and their achievements in science and technology, the secularisation of western societies that resulted from the birth of modern science, made the Malaysian leaders wary of the possible effects of western modernity of Malaysia as a Muslim country.

Japan became the point of reference for Malaysia since the Malaysian leaders felt that Japan was a good example of a developed nation that is still deeply imbued with its own values and culture. Looking at Japan, the Malaysian leaders felt and believed that it was possible to be scientifically and technologically advanced and developed while still maintaining its Malaysian culture and values. However the government failed to examine the historical background of Japan and its education, which differed from Malaysia.

Although Japan had never been colonised, it was secularised and modernised holistically. Japan developed its own modern education, and scientific technology as the dichotomy of religion-secular ceased with regards to its religion (Fitzgerald, 2003). In other words its religion too accommodated modernity when it separated the sacred from the profane (Tomatsu, 1995). In contrast, Islam is a religion that promotes the establishment of its own Islamic state and laws, which in a way integrates the sacred and the profane. This has partly contributed to the educational crisis amongst Muslims as they have maintained the Islamic system of education within a modern secular system of education, rather than developing an Islamic view of modern education.

Yet, despite the different historical backgrounds between Japan and Malaysia, the 'Look East Policy' was launched in 1982 by the then Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. The policy became the basis for the country's economic,

scientific and technological development. The educational system in Malaysia was influenced by this policy in terms of the introduction of technical and vocational schools at the secondary level and higher education. Then, in 1991, the Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, unveiled his *Vision 2020* for the nation. In the presentation of his paper titled, "Malaysia: The Way Forward", he explained that it is Malaysia's vision to become a modern, developed nation by 2020. However, Malaysia's *Vision 2020* indicated that to be progressive, Malaysia needs to develop holistically in various dimensions, which are economical, social, political, educational, psychological, spiritual and cultural. Here it is clear that Malaysia aspires to become progressive not only materially, but also in other aspects.

Undeniably, Malaysia faces a lot of challenges in achieving this, and the Prime Minister has also mentioned that the most important resource that Malaysia needs in order to face the challenges in achieving *Vision 2020* is the talents, skills, creativity and will of its people (Mohamad, 1991: p. 23). Although the Ministry of Education believes that the existing *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi) and curriculum can assist in realizing *Vision 2020*, the Ministry has now introduced the concept of 'smart school', which emphasizes critical and creative thinking on one hand, and the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning on the other. Since 1997, this concept has been introduced gradually in the national and Islamic religious schools. Multi media computers have been brought into the classrooms of both types of schools with the aim of providing opportunity to

the students to seek different methods of learning without the presence of the teachers. It was hoped that by developing and producing critical and creative individuals, Malaysia would be able to build its own technology and become a developed nation by year 2020. The integration in the Malaysian educational system between moral values and information and communication technology (ICT) may be a noble aim, but Malaysia's decision to become a developed nation by 2020 has given the economic sector the power to insist the kind of education that is needed to achieve *Vision 2020* is only possible through a 'modern' educational system.

### **1.6 Conclusion.**

Before Independence education in Malaysia during the British period was not centralized and was more in accordance with the British government's strategy of 'divide and conquer'. As such, the aim of education at that time was merely to provide basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills so that the Malays would become better farmers and fishermen, the Chinese better traders and tin-miners, and the Indians better estate workers. However after the Second World War, the British government improved the pre-war educational system with the hope that a common Malayan outlook could be developed in order to prepare Malaya for its independence.

After Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957, the government continued to develop a national education system that aimed at national integration and unity. The

other main aim of post-Independence education was to provide resources and manpower for national and economic development. During the 1980s serious efforts were finally taken by the Malaysian government to reform the national and Islamic education systems to take account of the rise of Islamic consciousness among Malaysian Muslims. Although the Islamic resurgence resulted in the improvements of the Islamic religious schools administratively and financially, the Islamic education curriculum has not changed. Hence the dualistic system of education that was introduced in British education persisted even after educational reformations in the 1980s.

The dualistic system of education which led to the secularisation of education in many Muslim countries that were colonised by the West, created an educational crisis in Muslim education (Al Attas, 1978; Husain and Ashraf, 1979; Haque, 1982; Hashim, 1996). It was argued too by Hashim (1996) that this dualistic system of education promoted the secularisation of education in Malaysia. This educational crisis in Muslim education particularly in Malaysia provides the main focus of this study. The 'crisis' that is being discussed here is the turning point in Muslim education which marked the difficulty and problem that Muslims face in their education in a modern world. The Muslim educational crisis is actually a well known crisis of religion in modernity. The decline of the influence of religion due to the rise of a secular state is common in the West. However, western colonisation in many Muslim countries has resulted in an educational crisis because of the existence of an

education that Muslims have tried to maintain within a secular system of education. Although Muslim countries have achieved their independence, this crisis has still remained due to this dualistic system of education.

In the case of Malaysia, the government's formulation of the *National and Islamic Philosophy of Education* and the reformation of the national curriculum may be considered as significant events in Malaysian education but the nation's move toward modernisation has hampered the attempt to resolve the crisis in Muslim education in Malaysia. The nation's decision to move toward modernisation meant that Malaysian system of education had to be remoulded so that it would be able to provide sufficient human resources to meet the demands of the economy in Malaysia. In this sense, education in Malaysia has to be tailored to the needs of a modern economy, which again emphasised the intellectual and physical development of individuals at the expense of their spiritual and emotional development. So the nation's move towards modernity has further added to a sense of a growing 'crisis' in Islamic education in Malaysia.

In this chapter, the causes of the Muslim education crisis in Malaysia have been identified by looking at its historical background. It reveals how history has played an important part in creating this crisis. The historical similarity of Malaysia and other Muslim countries in the cause of their crisis is highlighted. On the other hand, the different historical background between Japan and Malaysia too is highlighted to

show the inappropriateness of the government's 'Look East Policy'. Indirectly, this chapter exposes this crisis as a well known crisis of religion in modernity, created by western colonisation and secularisation. How this crisis arises has been examined in this chapter. The next question, which is what exactly this crisis is all about, is discussed in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CRISIS IN MALAYSIAN EDUCATION

#### **2.1 Introduction.**

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal how the influence of western modernity has created a crisis in Islamic education in Malaysia in at least two related aspects. The first is the '*crisis of secularisation*', created by a dualistic curriculum of education in Malaysia; in the Islamic religious schools and the National schools. The second is the '*crisis of modernisation*' created by the impact of western science and technology on both of these Malaysian educational systems.

In analysing this crisis, this chapter is organised into three sections. The first section defines 'crisis', explores what it is all about, analyses the Malaysian government's attempt to resolve it, and how the government's effort have simply exacerbated the 'crisis'. The second section examines some Muslim scholars' response to this crisis, how this led to the birth of the project of 'Islamisation of Knowledge', its aims, implementation and problems. Finally, in the third section I provide a critical analysis of the Islamisation of Knowledge's epistemology and methodology. Its epistemological framework is supported by the post-positivist philosophy of science, in particular Kuhn's critique of scientific objectivity, Gadamer's critique of the positivist's antithesis between reason and prejudice, authority and tradition, and Habermas' critique of the effects of modern science on western societies. Meanwhile

its methodological framework that is based on a ‘traditional’ concept of *ijtihad*, is critically discussed, and suggested that Gadamer’s notion of ‘understanding’ could become the basis to develop a new methodology of *ijtihad*. The critical analysis of the epistemology and methodology of the ‘Islamisation of Knowledge’ project leads to my response to the ‘crisis’ in Islamic education in Malaysia by turning to the western project of critical pedagogy, and my attempt to reconstruct or ‘Islamise’ it.

## **2.2 The Crisis of Secularisation in Malaysian Education.**

Before delving into the ‘crisis’ of secularization in Malaysian education, it is necessary to first define the word ‘crisis’. The word ‘crisis’ comes from the Greek word, *krisis*, which can be defined as a crucial stage or turning point in the course of something. In a medical sense, ‘crisis’ refers to ‘the turning point where an illness may go on to death or recovery’ (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia). The word ‘crisis’ also refers to an ‘unstable situation of extreme danger or difficulty as in political, social, or economic affairs, involving an impending abrupt or decisive changes’ (Answers.com).

The word ‘crisis’ that is used in the context of this thesis originates from AbuSulayman’s (1993) book titled, ‘Crisis in the Muslim Mind’. In AbuSulayman’s book, Al ‘Alwani’s foreword explains that the Muslim ‘crisis’ refers to ‘the *Ummah*’s state of disintegration and schism, loss of identity, failure of institutions, and inability to extract itself from its present state of bewilderment, which requires urgent changes’ (Al ‘ALwani, 1993: *Foreword*). This ‘crisis’ is caused by the

secularisation in Muslim education during western colonisation. Al-Attas argues that 'modern western knowledge is infused with western secular values, which is inappropriate for Muslims because of its secular associations', hence leading to Muslim's loss of identity and inability to realise Islamic faith and values (cited in Halstead, 2004: p. 521).

This 'crisis' is ubiquitous in Muslim countries including Malaysia. The introduction of a British education in Malaysia has resulted in the secularisation of education. Hashim (1996) argues that British colonisation was responsible for the creation of a dualistic system of education in Malaysia, whereby the National government schools existed alongside the Islamic religious schools. The consequence of this dualistic system is that Islamic education, which used to be a religious education system that aimed at imparting knowledge to Muslims on what is important in Islam has been reduced to a mere subject in the National school system. This marks the colonial period's success in secularising the Malaysian educational system as it removed any point of reference to religion from the rest of the curriculum. It is this secularisation of Malaysian education that has created a 'crisis' because of the separation of religion from the dualistic curriculum system of education whether in the National or Islamic religious school system. Although both the National and Islamic religious school systems have suffered from this 'crisis of secularisation', this thesis will only focus on the crisis of secularisation in the Islamic religious school system in Malaysia.

The post-independence period saw the development of a National educational system in Malaysia yet the effect of dualism in Malaysian education, particularly in the Islamic religious schools, was ignored. In consequence, the Islamic religious school suffered a lot of problems due to the government's lack of success in resolving the problems caused by secularisation. For instance, the Islamic religious schools did not prepare their students to become doctors, engineers or scientists due to their outdated curriculum, method of teaching, and shortage of qualified teachers (Hashim, 1996). Moreover, the crisis of secularisation in Malaysian education became more significant when 'what students learned in school sometimes contradicted what they learned in their humanities, social and natural science classes' (Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 17). A good illustration is Darwin's 'theory of evolution', which, in Islamic thought, undermines God's power and will to create the world and human beings.

From the 1970s onwards there was a change in the *National Education Policy* (NEPol) as the government reformed the National educational system so as to put the Islamic religious schools on a par with the National schools. In 1987 and 1989, the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi) and the *Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School* (ICSS) were introduced in an effort by the Ministry of Education to further overcome the problem of secularisation in Malaysian education. It was hoped that putting moral and spiritual elements in the school curriculum would help to reform the secularised nature of the educational system. Furthermore, the *Curriculum Development Centre* (a division in the Ministry of Education) was set up

in 1978 with the responsibility for reviewing the primary and secondary curriculum so as to ensure that elements, which were contradictory to any faith, were eliminated (e.g. the 'Big Bang' theory of how the world and the universe come into being). Despite these efforts to overcome the crisis of secularisation, the nation's movement toward becoming a developed nation led to the modernisation of its education, which only aggravated the Muslim educational crisis in Malaysia.

The nation's movement toward achieving a progressive and developed nation meant that Malaysia needed to achieve economic progress so that it would be able to compete with other developing and developed nations in the international market. The modernisation of Malaysian education made it imperative for the educational system in Malaysia to support and fulfil the needs and demands of the economic market. Hence the Ministry of Education in Malaysia had to play an important role as it was responsible for producing skilled, creative, moral and spiritual people who can move Malaysia into becoming an economically developed nation. This move has chartered the course of the Malaysian society from a rural to an industrial, scientific and technological society. But the modernisation of education in Malaysia has also resulted in the growing crisis of education in spite of the inclusion of the spiritual, moral and affective dimensions in the Malaysian curriculum. The crisis of secularisation that had begun with the introduction of the dualistic system of education received government's attention through its various education policies and

reformation (Hashim, 1996). However, before this crisis could be resolved, modernisation in Malaysian education impeded the government efforts.

Meeting the nation's vision of modernisation, while at the same time realising the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi), proved to be a formidable task for the Ministry of Education. For instance, in 2002, the Ministry decided to offer ICT as an elective subject in the upper secondary level. More importantly, schools were now equipped with multi-media computers to assist the process of teaching and learning in classrooms. In fact ICT is now being perceived as being able to replace part of the teacher's traditional role by providing another educational resource to the students. The problem with too much emphasis on ICT in Malaysian education is that it would become more impossible for the teachers to achieve the *National Education Philosophy* (NEPhi) if their roles were being limited. The inculcation of the affective and spiritual dimensions cannot be successful if teachers become mere facilitators in the classrooms. However, this is the actual practice in the contemporary modernised educational system of Malaysia.

## **2.3 Islamisation of Knowledge.**

### **2.3.1 Inception and Aspirations.**

Many Muslim scholars were aware of the consequences of the colonisation and modernisation of education in a Muslim country. They acknowledged that 'Western achievements in science and technology had made terrestrial life safer and more

comfortable' (Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 39. Yet they claimed that 'this material progress had not been matched by any progress in spiritual development and, in consequence, human beings were becoming detached from their *raison d'etre*' (ibid). They realised the necessity to reform Islamic education so that Muslims would become progressive materially and spiritually. There was also a growing realisation among many Muslim scholars of the need to change the Islamic education system so that knowledge could be taught and learned from a more integrated perspective. This resulted in attempts to resolve the crisis by teaching the natural and social sciences, and literature from an Islamic perspective (ibid: p. 17). The group of Muslim scholars who called for this attempt named it as 'Islamisation of Knowledge'.

The inception of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project actually began in 1972 when the Association of Muslim Social Scientists was established to address 'the intellectual problems facing Islamic thought' (IIT, 1989: p. xii). Then, in 1977 the Association organised an international conference involving some distinguished leaders of Islamic movements and some Muslim scholars, where the participants unanimously agreed that 'the contemporary crisis of the *Ummah* was intellectual-a crisis of thought' (ibid: p. xiii). The purpose of this particular conference was to discuss the 'crisis' of the Muslim mind, identify its causes, the problems, and possible ways of resolving them. More importantly, the problem of resolving this 'crisis', which they claimed was due to secularisation in Islamic education, and brought about by dualism in the educational system, was the focus of this conference

(Husain and Ashraf, 1979). In consequence of this conference, the Association established the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). The purpose of IIIT is to revive and reform Islamic thought and its methodology of *ijtihad* so that Muslims would be able to deal with present challenges, and contribute to the development of Islamic scholarship in contemporary social sciences. This is achieved through its 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project.

The IIIT was responsible for a series of international conferences on Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) that discussed strategies to resolve the crisis and provided a work plan for Islamising knowledge. In other words, Islamisation of Knowledge is a project to resolve the 'crisis' caused by the modernisation of Islamic education and national education in Muslim countries. This project attempts to overcome the division in Islamic education between religious knowledge and modern sciences. According to Hashim, 'Muslims were in a 'crisis' because they did not agree with the secular nature of their national education, whose objectives were inappropriate and opposed to Islam' (1996: p. 7). On the other hand, some Muslims were also unhappy with the Islamic education system because its curriculum was limited, outdated and did not prepare Muslim pupils for practical and economical life in a modern, technological society.

It was more alarming when many Muslims, disciplined in the western system, failed to appreciate their own Islamic heritage while most Muslims disciplined in the

Islamic system were not aware of the complexities of modern civilization or of how to integrate modern science with Islamic values. Therefore, what the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' movement claimed as 'necessary is the emergence of a third group who are acquainted with their own traditions but are willing to acquire any wisdom that modern civilization can offer' (Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 15). To make this third group possible, he argues that it is necessary to create an integrated system of education that 'Islamicizes' the humanities, and the social and natural sciences. Husain further explains that the 'Islamisation of knowledge' requires redefining the concept, role and methodology of the humanities, and the natural and social sciences by applying what is called the 'transcendent norm'. The 'transcendent norm' is the norm that is directed by faith in one God, and governed by Islamic values. Based on this view, Islamic sciences ought to recognise human beings as standing in a realm dominated by God metaphysically and axiologically. This understanding of science redefined by the IOK movement is also founded on the basic Islamic conception of a human being as consisting of mind, body and soul. Hence education from the Islamic point of view should develop the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of a human being.

The IIIT proposes that the educational system for Muslims needs to be revamped and reformed by uniting and integrating the Islamic and secular education systems. In order to achieve this, the IIIT suggests that firstly, Muslims need to appreciate their civilisation. Therefore, Islamic civilisation should be taught to Muslim students so

that their faith and understanding of their legacy could be deepened. Secondly, the IIIT strongly urge Muslim academicians to ‘master all modern disciplines in order to integrate them into the corpus of the Islamic legacy by eliminating, reinterpreting, and adapting its components as the world-view of Islam and its values dictate’ (IIIT, 1989: p. 18).

The IIIT draws a plan of its aims for the ‘Islamisation of Knowledge’ as follows:

1. To create awareness in the *Ummah* of the crisis of ideas. This involves enlightening the *Ummah* about the place and methodology of the crisis of Islamic thought in the perspective of its cultural and civilisational existence.
2. To foster deepen understanding of the nature of the crisis of ideas in contemporary Islamic thought, its causes, and its solutions.
3. To define the critical relationship between the failure of Islamic thought and its methodology; the current absence of the *Ummah* as a civilisation; and its failure to succeed as a free, progressive, and prosperous nation.
4. To work toward reviving the ideologies of the *Ummah*, reinvigorating and gradually redeveloping its methodology, and elucidating its viewpoints and its intimate relationship with original Islamic goals.
5. To work for adopting and incorporating comprehensive Islamic methodology in fields of social sciences and the humanities, as well as to foster and fund scientific studies in actual individual and social life conditions.
6. To implement the requisite steps to allow the developing contemporary Islamic culture and methodology to avail themselves of the fountains of Islamic principles and legacy, as well as modern sciences and knowledge, by making them accessible and digestible to Muslim students.
7. To provide help in researching, studying, and working on the methodology and its presentation, with a view toward elucidating Islamic concepts and intellectual outlook and toward laying the foundation for the evolution of Islamic social sciences and humanities.
8. To prepare the requisite intellectual cadres to broaden the field of Islamisation of knowledge through providing stipends for studies, providing academic supervision, and establishing academic programs of Islamic studies in all fields of contemporary social sciences and humanities.’ (IIIT. 1989: p. 57-58).

2.3.2 Implementation and Criticisms.

The IIIT attempts to achieve its aims by holding international conferences, seminars and workshops to disseminate information about the 'crisis' and its resolution of 'Islamisation of Knowledge', through publicity in the mass media and its publications. Apart from that, it aims to assist in the Islamisation of Knowledge by providing funds to Muslim academicians and scholars to carry out research, by providing opportunities to classify the Islamic legacy in the form of an academic encyclopaedia, by using computer technology to develop a database for a 'clearinghouse' of any publications on Islam, through the writing of textbooks in various disciplines on models of works in Islamisation of Knowledge, providing scholarship, training and academic grants, and supervision.

In Islamising knowledge, the IIIT outlines two stages that one would have to go through, which are, firstly, 'mastery of the modern sciences and their legacy, and secondly, defining the main issues' that are important to resolve and using 'Islamic creativity and initiative to integrate the Islamic vision and outlook with the facts of contemporary life' (IIIT, 1989: p. 88-91).

No doubt the Islamisation of Knowledge project is a noble and an ambitious project and the IIIT remains loyal to its mission by regularly organising international conferences and workshops on Islamisation of Knowledge', and by publishing textbooks, books, journals, and occasional papers of works on Islamisation of

Knowledge. However, the IIIT's 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project received various criticisms from many Muslim scholars (Bugaje, 1996; Ali, 1999) particularly because it 'accepts western classifications of knowledge as unproblematic and thus pays inadequate attention either to the sources of knowledge established in Islam or to the methodology followed by eminent Muslim thinkers' (Halstead, 2004: p. 522). Therefore, it is important to consider these criticisms and examine the IIIT's efforts of 'Islamisation of Knowledge' so that the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project may be improved.

Bugaje (1996) raises several issues of the IIIT's 'Islamisation of Knowledge' such as the absence of an Islamic metaphysics in its classification of knowledge, the IIIT's lack of clarity in explaining how the work of Islamisation could be carried out by introducing Islamic key concepts in various disciplines, and the difficulty in mastering the modern sciences. On the other hand, Ali (1999) raises the issue of a 'methodological crisis' which led to the 'intellectual crisis' in the Muslim mind. Ali claims,

the traditional methodology has become inadequate. To overcome this problem it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the Divine and human. They argue that we all agree on the need to return to the pristine teachings of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*; because the real issue does not lie in the absence of principles and values, rather the real issue arises when we come to their application and this involves the issue of methodology (ibid: p. 29)

Apart from these issues, Rahman raises a more important point on Islamising knowledge when he argues that if Islamisation of Knowledge is to get rid of unIslamic elements in western knowledge, then the problem is in 'deciding what is

and what is not Islamic in a body of knowledge, including knowledge that is widely accepted as Islamic' (cited in Kazmi, 2003: p. 288). Rahman further argues that it is more important to help Muslims to become better thinkers than telling them how to think (ibid).

All of these criticisms can be summed up into two main points, which are the epistemological and methodological problems of the IIIT's 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project. I suggest that the epistemological problem can be resolved by drawing from Kuhn's critique of scientific objectivity, and Habermas' critique of modernity, and its methodological problem can be resolved by drawing on Gadamer's 'philosophical hermeneutic'.

#### **2.4 Islamisation of Knowledge: A Critique.**

The first criticism that I intend to examine is how the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project classifies knowledge. The criticism of the IIIT's epistemology is in its acceptance of western classification of modern sciences although it criticises the positivistic view of scientific knowledge as being objective and value-free. However, its acceptance of the classification of western modern sciences, i.e. the natural and social sciences, indicates its acceptance of the scientific method to study and resolve problems in the social dimension. It is important to understand the effects of extending the natural scientific method on the social dimension. Before I examine the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project's classification of knowledge, I critically

analyse the Enlightenment project of modernity and the positivistic view of science by drawing from Kuhn's critique of the positivistic view of science, Gadamer's critique of the Enlightenment's view of tradition and Habermas' critique of the effects of modern science on western societies.

#### 2.4.1 The Enlightenment Project of Modernity and Its View on Science.

The Enlightenment project in Europe, which began in the 17th century, was a revolt against the power and traditions of the church (which were considered by some to be superstitious), its political legitimacy and feudalism. One of the central ideas of this project was that the source of truth of moral, social, and aesthetic values is neither found in the sacred (the pope or the clergy) nor secular (the emperor or the nobility), but rather within the public use of reason. Another was that the goal of science was the pursuit and discovery of the truth about nature and phenomena (Newton, 1997).

For many Enlightenment thinkers, scientific truth was 'objective', 'universal', value-free, and non-culturally specific, and was uncovered by the application of the scientific method. This scientific method, which is, known as the hypothetic-deductive method entailed the testing and validating of hypotheses by evidence and data in order to arrive at objective, neutral and value-free knowledge. The hypothetic-deductive method begins with a hypothesis that is generated through an empirical process of discovery, and consequences are deduced from it to provide an explanation. In western societies, the great achievements of science encouraged the

view that scientific knowledge is 'rational' and therefore superior to other kinds of knowledge. According to Watson, the scientific method claimed that it provides 'genuine knowledge while religious belief is a matter of subjective opinion as it cannot be proven empirically' (cited in Hashim, 1996:p. 11).

The Enlightenment's confidence in the ability of science to discover the truth about nature and phenomena strengthens its belief that it is science rather than religion that liberates human reason from darkness and fear, and elevates it to its true potential of arriving at 'universal truth'. Consequently the noble educational aim of the Enlightenment is to free the students' minds from religious dogmas and superstitions so that they may exercise their freedom of reasoning or 'rational autonomy'. For Enlightenment thinkers, human beings, unaided by Divine revelation or signs are able to understand and uncover the basic structure of the world through the mere application of their rational abilities. As their knowledge of the world becomes broader and more unified with the help of science, human beings will experience not only continuous scientific and technological progress but also social, political and moral progress as well.

In the light of this analysis, the practical task of the Enlightenment project became an educational task. Modern educational thought believes that it is possible to emancipate human beings from the influences of tradition, religion or superstition through the educational process. The emancipatory ideals of modern education are

closely associated to the Kantian notion of ‘rational autonomy’, which reflects that ‘through education individuals may become rationally empowered to transform themselves and the social world in which they live’ (Carr, 1995: p. 122). In terms of the Enlightenment thinkers, this would be possible if a society is organised on the basis of ‘objective standards of rational justification’ as dictated by modern science (ibid).

#### 2.4.2 The Failure of the Enlightenment Project of Modernity.

The preceding discussion has briefly outlined the Enlightenment view of modern science’s aims, ideals and its view of education, which may seem perfect. However contemporary western scholars have now revealed that the Enlightenment project was based on (a) an erroneous view of science and its method and, (b) a false view of the impact of science on society. The following analyses are based on the influential philosophical writings of Kuhn, Gadamer and Habermas.

##### *i. Kuhn and the Changing View of Science.*

The positivist view of science has been attacked by Kuhn, particularly in their claim that scientific knowledge is ‘objective’, ‘universal’ and ‘value-free’. Carr explains that,

the positivists assume that scientific knowledge is in a continuous state of accumulation and growth. As more areas are explored, old areas examined in more detail, more accurate observations made and more sophisticated experiments conducted, so new concepts and theories are formulated, new law-like regularities are discovered and the stock of true, valid, knowledge grows (1983: p. 71).

However, Kuhn argues that this view is incoherent and the development of scientific knowledge should be viewed as 'a succession of 'revolutions' in which dominant 'paradigms' are over thrown and replaced' (ibid). According to Carr,

a paradigm represents a conceptual framework which a community of scientists engage in to interpret their reality. It also includes models of research, standards, and a set of methods that the community adhere to consistently. Kuhn calls the production of theories within a paradigm as 'normal science' which is also a practice of 'puzzle-solving'. 'Puzzles' that appear within a paradigm that the community cannot resolve become anomalies. Sufficient anomalies cause a 'crisis' to develop within a paradigm, which eventually forces the community to become discontent, thus losing faith in it. The crisis is resolved only when the paradigm is abandoned and replaced with a new one. Kuhn argues that this 'paradigm shift' is not based on any systematic, logical or rational proof based on reason. Rather it is a 'scientific revolution' brought about by the 'conversion' of the community (ibid: 72).

Kuhn claims that the 'conversion' of the community disproves the positivist's assumption that scientific knowledge is 'objective', 'universal' and 'value-free'. Like human reason that is always grounded in tradition, a scientific inquiry is also grounded in a paradigm. Like the relationship between human reason and tradition too, 'the way a scientist views a particular aspect of the world is actually guided by the paradigm in which s/he is working on' (Chalmers, 1982: p. 96). Kuhn stresses that 'scientific work is not just a matter of passive obedience to rules rather it involves the active elaboration of existing custom and convention' (Barnes, 1985: p. 89) based on 'the individual scientist's training and education of working on a scientific paradigm' (Chalmers, 1982: p. 93). Kuhn also claims that 'the "universal" criteria scientists share are sufficiently open when they require interpretation and judgment of alternatives when specific choices are made between rival theories and paradigms' (Bernstein, 1983: p. 54). Kuhn explains that 'the decision that scientists

make in theory-choice is not based on precisely formulated rules, but rather their criteria of choice is actually influenced by their values' (cited in Bernstein, 1983: pp. 55-56). Bernstein explains,

Kuhn seeks to make sense of rational disagreement in theory-choice; a disagreement that cannot be resolved based on determinate rules, but by the force of arguments advanced in favour of the successes of a given paradigm theory, which persuaded the community of scientists (ibid: p. 55).

Therefore, Kuhn's arguments undermine the positivist claim that scientific knowledge is superior because it is objective, universal and value-free. Scientific knowledge that is grounded in a paradigm is based on personal and consensual considerations rather than mere logical justifications. For this reason too, Kuhn likened the act of scientists who change their allegiance from one paradigm to another to a 'religious conversion' (Barnes, 1985: p. 93). To elucidate his point, Kuhn argues,

science appears to be an impersonal, objective activity because most ideological and normative conflicts are suppressed by the scientists in their allegiance to a dominant paradigm, but a paradigm stipulates a 'particular view of the world' which incorporates ideological preferences and normative assumptions. When these assumptions and beliefs incorporated in a dominant paradigm, are imposed on the scientific community, then science itself resembles an ideology because of its claim that it is free from value conflicts and ideological bias, yet prescribes its values and ideology without considering the plausibility of different 'views of the world' (cited in Carr, 1983: p. 75).

On the basis of Kuhn's arguments, the Islamisation of Knowledge project needs to be critical of the influence of scientific method on human sciences, particularly its dominant view of the world.

*ii. Gadamer's notion of 'prejudice', 'authority', and 'tradition'.*

Gadamer is another philosopher who views scientific method as being grounded in another tradition, which is not an appropriate method for understanding human sciences. Gadamer explains that 'what has been programmatically developed is a science of society that is measured by the yardstick of a progressive knowledge of regularity' (1989: p. 4). He claims that 'the ideal is to understand a phenomenon in its unique and historical concreteness—to understand how this man, this people, or this state is what it has become or, more generally, how it happened that it is so' (ibid: p. 5). Gadamer conceptualises a different notion of 'understanding', one that is neither 'concerned with scientific investigation nor verification to satisfy the methodological ideal', but rather 'belongs to the human experience of the world in general' (ibid: xxi). Gadamer calls this experience 'hermeneutic'.

Gadamer explains his 'philosophical hermeneutic' based on his 'recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice' (1989: p. 270). Gadamer criticises the Enlightenment's discrediting of prejudice and argues that 'it is one's prejudices rather than one's judgments that constitute the historical reality of one's being' (ibid: p. 277). The Enlightenment's critical theory of prejudices is presupposed in its claim that 'methodologically disciplined use of reason can safeguard from error' (ibid). On the contrary, Gadamer's prejudices are not perceived as something that is purely negative, but as enabling one to understand something. In other words, understanding of something takes place when one's prejudices come into play with

the thing itself. When one tries to understand something new, s/he is acutely aware of the thing as being different and alien to him/her. This awareness is made by those prejudices that blind him/her to the meaning and truth of what s/he is trying to understand. And when s/he finally understands the thing, it is his/her enabling prejudices that allow him/her to understand the thing.

Apart from prejudices, the Enlightenment also considers 'authority' as an 'error' because 'authority is responsible for one's not using one's own reason at all' (Gadamer, 1989: p. 277). However, Gadamer argues that,

the essence of the authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge—the knowledge, namely, that the other is superior to oneself in judgment and insight and that for this reason his judgment takes precedence—i.e., it has priority over one's own. This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed upon but is earned, and must be earned if someone is to lay claim to it. It rests on acknowledgment and an act of reason itself, which aware of its own limitations, trusts to the better insight of others. In this sense, authority has nothing to do with blind obedience to commands, but rather to knowledge (ibid: 279).

One form of authority, namely 'tradition' is also criticised by the Enlightenment, on the basis that, 'what has been handed down to us—and not what is clearly grounded—always has power over our attitudes and behaviour' (ibid: p. 280). However, Bernstein argues that 'tradition is that which shapes one and is constitutive of the historicity of his/her being' (1983: p.140). Like 'situatedness', one cannot escape being in a tradition, so everyone is ontologically grounded in a tradition. 'Tradition is the basis for understanding the situation of the present' (Kim, 2005: p. 67). Gadamer criticises the Enlightenment's discrediting of tradition and argues that 'we produce

tradition ourselves inasmuch we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a 'methodological' circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding' (1989: p. 293). In a sense, 'understanding in the human sciences is actually addressed by tradition' (Gadamer, 1989: p. 282).

Gadamer provides an alternative way of understanding human sciences, one that reconstructs the concept of 'tradition' 'authority' and 'prejudice'. Gadamer's hermeneutic offers an ontological view of 'understanding' and 'interpretation', which could become the basis of a new methodology for the Islamisation of Knowledge project, namely, the practice of *ijtihad*.

*iii. Habermas: Critique of Modernity.*

Muslim scholars who supported the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project were divided in the extent of their agreement about the western modern science's usefulness in improving the lives of the members of the society but they agreed that it had caused more harm than good due to the way in which it excluded values (Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 30-46). The attempt of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' scholars to reconcile western modern science and Islamic education that is based on Islamic epistemology faces many challenges as Habermas' critique of modernity explains how science could become a dominant ideology, known as 'scientism'.

Habermas theorises that knowledge is driven by human interests, which develop out of the natural needs of human beings. Basically there are three human interests that develop three kinds of knowledge, which are, scientific knowledge which is developed on the basis of the human interest in predicting and controlling the world; practical knowledge which is grounded in the human interest that enables human beings to understand the world in hermeneutics or interpretive knowledge; and emancipatory knowledge that enables human beings to become critical and emancipate themselves.

By 'scientism' Habermas means that it generalises the 'technical' interest to predict and control nature to other kinds of knowledge thus disabling the other 'non-technical' interests to understand meaning and emancipation from domination. In another sense, scientific knowledge ignores what Habermas calls 'self-reflection' or the 'reflexivity' of human agents, which is one of the defining features that make us human and able to change the course of our history (Giddens, 1985: p. 125). 'Just as scientists 'reify' the natural world (treat it as a 'thing'), seek its laws and exercise dominance over it, so do positivists seek the 'laws' of human conduct in order to exercise more effective control' over the social world (Gibson, 1986: p. 36).

And when scientism works its way into education, it changes the objective of education into creating a better life for human beings, by defining and measuring 'better' lives quantitatively and technically, eliminating the qualitative aspects of

human beings such as the affective dimension (moral, spiritual and emotional aspects). So what happens is that education becomes a site where students are equipped with technical knowledge and skills. When students' reasoning and potentials are being reduced to technical skills, students become automated machines, which have been programmed to achieve certain goals as outlined by modern education (Freire, 1985). This is the instrumental model of knowledge, which becomes the basis of modern education. For followers of Habermas, this model of education has also led to an educational crisis in modern Europe and in the United States as has been examined by Young (1990, pp. 1-14). I argue that this model of education, which has been adopted by the Malaysian government, has also aggravated the 'crisis' of Islamic education in Malaysia.

#### 2.4.3 Islamic Epistemology and Methodology.

In 1995, Al 'Alwani who is one of the prominent scholars involved in the project and the IIIT presented a paper with the aim of clarifying and updating the 'formulated principles of a rational examination of the *Ummah's* malaise' (1995: p. viii). The paper offered an updated review of the progress of the Islamisation of Knowledge project. Al 'Alwani claims that

the project has generated a worldwide debate, been misinterpreted, criticised, and elucidated but the task of the project has not yet been made crystal-clear and effortless. Rather as the project advocates and requires, there will always be new and different interpretations of Islamising knowledge. He argues that the project aims to restore the link between knowledge and values, is a continuous process, and brings about the interplay and exchange between the two readings; that of revelation and that of the natural universe which would lead to a balanced understanding of reality (Al 'Alwani, 1995: pp. 10-28).

I suggest that Al 'Alwani's argument for a balanced understanding of reality through the interplay of the two readings, revelation and the natural universe, can be made possible by using Gadamer's notion of hermeneutical understanding. I will try to show how this can be achieved by drawing on Kazmi's notion of reading and understanding the signs of God, the *Qur'an* and the world in Chapter Five (pp. 151-5).

Al 'Alwani's argument also suggests that the attempt to Islamise science should be based on the two readings. This is because the IIIT realises the incompatibility of the positivistic view of modern science with revelation as a source of knowledge, so it tries to base the Islamic worldview on an epistemological framework derived from Islamic sources (*Qur'an* and *Sunnah*) as the highest authority. By inserting revelation in the hierarchical sources of knowledge, the IIIT stands in contradiction with the 'positivist-empiricist legacy that only accepts knowledge that is based on senses experience and empirically verifiable' (Ragab, 1993: p. 6).

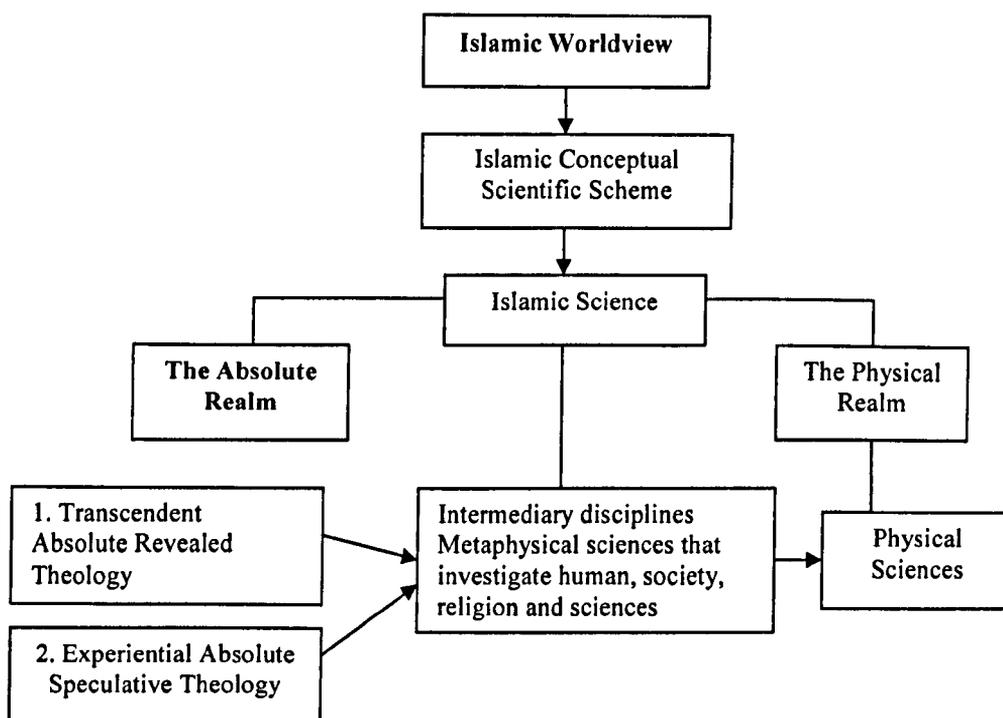
Acikgenc suggests an Islamic conceptual scientific scheme that divides Islamic science into two realms, the Absolute and the physical realms. According to Acikgenc,

Revealed theology simply organises and systematically presents the subject matter of the Absolute (*ghayb*) such as the nature of God, resurrection, paradise and hell without any speculative interpretation. On the other hand, speculative theology concerns the knowledge of the Experiential Realm such as the existence of God, the intelligibility of life after death, freedom and other theological issues. Speculative theology is the first human science that uses rational procedure (such as philosophy),

and thus a passageway from the realm of the transcendent to the realm of the visible (physical). The intermediary sciences of metaphysical sciences that investigate human, society, religion and the nature of science uses the experimental-observational method and rational procedures in addition to the ‘subjective mood’.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the classification of sciences in the physical realm requires a more rigorous attempt such as physics, biology, mathematics and logic (Acikgenc, 1996: p. 8-61).

Acikgenc’s Islamic conceptual scientific scheme allows for the study of non-empirical and empirical phenomena. Figure 3.0 illustrates Acikgenc’s suggestion.

Figure 3.0: Islamic Conceptual Scientific Scheme (Source: Adapted from Acikgenc (1996: p. 61))



<sup>1</sup> Acikgenc refers ‘subjective mood’ to the method of understanding the Absolute realm that is not accessible to mind. He argues that certain knowledge of this realm is given by revelation which is then comprehended and attained by the mind through an experiential movement.

In this scheme, the 'non-observable enjoys equal treatment with the observable, the role of spiritual and religion in determining human behaviour is emphasised, and revelation is accepted as a source of plausible knowledge' (Ragab, 1993: p. 19).

This particular view of science would raise many questions from the positivists, but Kuhn's view of science, itself always based on a paradigmatic 'worldview' as being similar to tradition, entails the Islamic worldview as the tradition upon which Islamic science should be based. Khusro, in particular, argues that scientific discoveries should be held tentatively rather than dogmatically and that the 'Islamic education system must adopt the same scientific empiricism in worldly matters which the Muslims themselves had invented but forgotten during the past five centuries' (cited in Husain and Ashraf, 1979: p. 46). Khusro's statement denotes that the scholars of 'Islamisation of Knowledge' argue that the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* should be the basis of the Islamic social sciences and humanities so as to ensure the presence of Islamic values. Here, the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' scholars raise the epistemological role that the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* should play in Islamic education.

In theory, the Islamic conceptual scientific scheme may seem flawless, but the actual practice may be problematic as it lacks a proper methodology to realise it. The IIIT posits *ijtihad* as a key concept in 'Islamisation of Knowledge' simply because of its role as 'the traditional methodology of the Islamic legacy, particularly *fiqh*' (IIIT, 1989: p. 23). In Islamic *fiqh*, *ijtihad* means the free and independent effort of the

*mujtahid*<sup>2</sup>, undertaken for the purpose of advancement and expansion of the Islamic sciences. This development was possible through freedom of scholarly research, free expression of different views and disputations between the *mujtahid*, scholars and thinkers. *Ijtihad* is essential in Islamic fiqh because it keeps Islamic fiqh dynamic and progressive. However, during the eighth and twelfth centuries, *ijtihad* was abandoned and the *shari'ah*<sup>3</sup> was then declared as perfect so as to safeguard and protect Islamic religious matters and issues from the manipulation of unjust rulers. The closure of the door to *ijtihad* stifles Muslims' creative thought not only in the field of Islamic *fiqh* but, in other fields as well (IIIT, 1989: p. 23-24).

The IIIT tries to rejuvenate the role of *ijtihad* by claiming that it is the key to a successful 'Islamisation of Knowledge'. Extending the practice of *ijtihad* to other fields of knowledge, many Muslim scholars such as AbuSulayman and Iqbal call *ijtihad* as the 'methodology of Islamic thought' (cited in Ali, 1999: p. 30). 'Iqbal argues that the right of *ijtihad* in modern times should not be confined to *ulama*' alone, and should be open to all' (ibid). Many Muslim scholars agree on the need for the development of *ijtihad*, which used to be the traditional methodology of Islamic thought so that it could sustain itself in contemporary times (Ali, 1999; Sardar, 2003). 'They also agree for the development of a new methodology that uses analytical, critical and comparative approaches to integrate the Islamic vision and

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<sup>2</sup> *Mujtahid* means a knowledgeable and 'qualified' person who practises *ijtihad*. In Islamic *fiqh*, a *mujtahid* is an expert in *Shari'ah* and *fiqh* (*Taqlid*: Following a *Mujtahid*).

<sup>3</sup> *Shari'ah* means Islamic law.

outlook with the facts of Muslim contemporary life' (Ali, 1999: p. 30). The need for a new methodology is particularly imperative in fulfilling the first stage of IIIT's plan of Islamising knowledge, that is, mastery of the modern sciences and Islamic legacy. Ali (1999) stresses the necessity for critical analysis of the heritage of Islamic thought instead of blind acceptance. Al 'Alwani also argues that *ijtihad* would not be possible unless the heritage is critically investigated (cited in Ali, 1999: p. 32).

I argue that rather than focussing on the debate about the epistemology and methodology of Islamisation of Knowledge, critical pedagogy could be a useful and appropriate alternative to concentrate on. This is because of the way the western project of critical pedagogy has responded to the challenges and problems brought by modern sciences. The 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project may have attempted to develop its own epistemological framework and methodology, but Habermas' critique of modernity and scientism needs to be considered because by overlooking this important critique, the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project could be impeded. For instance, Bugaje reminds that the possible lack of success in the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project is due to what Rahman says as

the largely mechanical character of instruction and because of juxtaposing the old with the new. The whole process of integration has been caught up in a vicious circle: unless adequate teachers are available with minds already integrated and creative, instructions will remain mechanical and sterile, even when the students are good; but on the other hand such teachers cannot be produced on a sufficient scale unless an integrated curriculum is made available. This vicious circle Rahman argues, can be broken only at the first point - if there exist some first-class mind that can interpret the old in terms of the new with regards to its substance, and turn the new into the service of the old, which is ideal (Bugaje, 1996: p. 7).

It is difficult to Islamise knowledge when the ‘crisis’ of secularisation in education in most Muslim countries either remains unresolved or the attempt to integrate the dualistic system has failed. For example, Haque pointed out that in Bengal in the 1910s, the Muslims combined some secular and Islamic religious subjects but their attempt fell short of a substantial synthesis and the dual systems persisted (cited in Hashim, 1996: p. 17).

Moreover, in the area of research in the social sciences, positivism still forms an influential portion of the academic population (Al Zeera, 2001b: p. 2). Positivism remains influential not only in the west but also in many Muslim countries, particularly in the universities, and as a result, ‘many Muslim students do quantitative research that neither advances Islamic knowledge nor increases self awareness and awakening of the soul’ (ibid). In other words, Habermas’ argument of the effect of modern sciences on western societies has also affected Muslim societies.

The ‘shadow’ of scientism has also started to infect Malaysia, particularly its education as Malaysia is fast moving towards achieving the title of ‘progressive nation’ (scientifically and technologically). Public universities in Malaysia including the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) tend to emphasise the importance of empirical research and development (R&D) in their attempt to produce sufficient ‘human resources’ and ‘skilled manpower’ to achieve the nation’s

objective. As a result the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project (one of the visions of IIUM) has also become an 'instrumental' and 'technical' project. One of the ways to enlighten Malaysian society to the ideological force of scientism is through an alternative form of education that will help students acquire a more critical understanding of the dominant ideology informing their society by showing them how they come to have it and how it is maintained. In the west, the claim to be able to provide this alternative is made by critical pedagogy.

## **2.5 Conclusion.**

This chapter undertook the task of defining the 'crisis' in Malaysian education by examining the two aspects of the 'crisis' namely secularisation and modernisation brought about by colonisation and the nation's move toward 'a progressive nation'. The chapter then outlines the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project as one of the responses toward this 'crisis'. It describes the Institute of Islamic Thought's (IIIT) efforts in promoting the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project. Although the IIIT disagrees with the positivist view of science, it accepts the classification of modern sciences, which undermines the dominant ideology of 'scientism'. Based on this point, I supported the IIIT's attempt to provide an Islamic conceptual scientific scheme by using Kuhn's critique of the positivistic view of science. Acikgenc's Islamic conceptual scientific scheme places Islamic worldview as the basis for Islamic science. This scheme tries to eliminate any elements in western modern science that contradicts Islamic values.

On the other hand, I have drawn on Habermas' critique of modernity to argue that the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project needs to be wary of the influence and effect of modern sciences on Muslim societies. I illustrated some of the effects of modern sciences in the western and Muslim societies, particularly Malaysia. Then the methodological issue of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' is discussed, namely its concept of *ijtihad*, and the need for a new methodology to be developed. . I use Gadamer's hermeneutic to explain another view of understanding the human sciences, which could become the basis for *ijtihad*. Finally, I raised my contribution to the contemporary debate of 'Islamisation of Knowledge' by turning to the western project of critical pedagogy. However, there is a need to reconstruct or 'Islamise' the western project of critical pedagogy so that it would be more appropriate in the Malaysian context.

The rationale for this is due to critical pedagogy's response to the challenges and problems that positivism has brought in western education. I will attempt to argue that western critical pedagogy can help to resolve this crisis because of what it can do, which is, to critically analyse the philosophy, policy and practices of Islamic education in Malaysia, and examine whether they are congruent with the Islamic philosophy of education, its aims, ideals and values. Perhaps the practice of critical pedagogy will expose the true interest of the philosophy, policy and practices, which, in reality, may not be shared by Malaysian society, but perceived by them as ideal. Most importantly, critical pedagogy may enable Malaysian society to realise the

power that certain knowledge plays in their lives, particularly modern science that reduces all knowledge to 'technical' knowledge. However, before reconstructing critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective it is imperative that the western critical pedagogy is understood in terms of its background, theory and practice.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: HISTORY, CONCEPT, PRACTICE AND CRITIQUES.**

#### **3.1 Introduction.**

This chapter introduces and explores the potential of critical pedagogy as an important theoretical and practical resource for an understanding of the crisis in Islamic education in Malaysia. It does so in order to provide an understanding of critical pedagogy, of how it is theorised and practised, and how it enables me to identify aspects of critical theory that are significant or relevant to an understanding of Islamic education. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section offers a historical account of the origins of critical pedagogy. The second section briefly discusses the idea and concept of critical pedagogy and identifies its task and main concerns. In the third section one of the major critical pedagogy theorists, Paulo Freire and his work is discussed. The fourth section explores the practice of critical pedagogy in two forms: namely critical teaching and critical literacy. The final section of the chapter discusses some of the main criticisms of the theory and practice of critical pedagogy. The critiques of pedagogical theory address the question of identity development, and the gap between the rhetoric of critical pedagogy and its implementation in classroom practice. The practice of critical pedagogy has been under fierce criticisms particularly in its lack of practical results in terms of its 'exclusionary' practice, the 'emancipatory authority of the teacher,

and the distorted representation brought by ‘competing voices’. The conclusion to the chapter offers a brief review of the issues discussed in this chapter and raises the question of what, if anything, critical pedagogy can contribute to the resolution of the crisis in Muslims’ education in Malaysia.

### **3.2 The Background Origin of Critical Pedagogy.**

#### **3.2.1 Critical Theory – A General Introduction.**

According to Burbules, ‘the idea of critical pedagogy begins with the neo-Marxian literature on critical theory where most of the early critical theorists were associated with the Frankfurt School’ (Burbules and Berk, 1999: p. 50). Similarly Giroux (1983: p. 8.) maintains that critical theory can be understood as ‘the body of theoretical work developed by the early critical theorists known as the Frankfurt School’. However, unlike the positivism of the Vienna Circle, critical theory has never become a universal theory that all members of the Frankfurt School (such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) could unanimously agree upon. However, one common feature that all members of the Frankfurt School share is the ‘attempt to assess the newly emerging forms of capitalism along with the changing forms of domination that accompanied them’ (ibid: p. 50). This common purpose has developed ‘critical theory’ from a mere school of thought into ‘a process of critique, which allows the claim of any theory to be confronted with the distinction between the world it examines and portrays, and the world as it actually exists’ (ibid). The three main ideas that I wish to extrapolate from the Frankfurt School’s critical theory

are its theory of domination, its method of ideology-critique and its ideal of self-emancipation.

The Frankfurt School's *theory of domination* looks at how ideologies emerge in various forms to dominate individuals and society. The Frankfurt School indicated how technology, for instance, has become a major force of production and a formative mode of social organization and control to serve the interest of multinational corporations. Technology in the contemporary era has become an instrument for control and domination for these corporations because technology is able to 'organise and perpetuate (or change) social relationships, behaviour and thoughts' (Kellner, 1997). As such, technology in the realm of culture has produced mass culture that habituated individuals in society to conform to dominant patterns of thought and behaviour. Culture can also become a form of an ideology; a good case in point is American 'popular culture', which the Frankfurt School believe to be highly ideological as it works to promote the interests of American capitalism (ibid).

The second key idea in the Frankfurt School critical theory is 'ideology-critique' which is a method of critical reflection that critical theorists employ to critically expose a socially dominant ideology. Ideology-critique sets out to identify not just the dominant ideology, 'but the forms of social practice that reproduce dominant forms of social activity and which assist in perpetuating existing ideologies' (Kellner, 2003b). Ideology-critique promotes self-knowledge which helps to

enlighten the individuals of their beliefs and understandings, but more importantly 'emancipates them from their irrational beliefs and misunderstandings that they have taken for granted and inherited from habit, tradition and ideology' (Carr, 1995: p. 50).

Thus, the third key idea of critical theory-'self-emancipation'-is actually the outcome of ideology-critique. This is because self-knowledge allows the individuals to examine the rationality of their practices in the social and historical context so that ideologically distorted self-understandings and beliefs can become transparent and so deprived of their power. It is this realisation or 'self-emancipation' that enables the individuals to eliminate or change their beliefs so as to break the chain of the power of the dominant ideology.

Earlier members of the Frankfurt School, like Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, were critics of 'traditional theory', which begins from Descartes through positivism and is characterized by what is now called 'foundationalism' i.e. the attempt to ground theory in epistemological postulates which form the foundation upon which traditional theorists build their theoretical constructions. The problem with traditional theory is that it has absolutised theory to the extent that theory has become uncontested and non ideological. Habermas is a contemporary critical theorist whose critical theory will provide the basis for my attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective.

3.2.2 Habermas' Critical Theory.

Habermas' work has been widely used in education (Kellner, 2003a; Carr, 1996; Young, 1989; Grundy, 1987; Gibson, 1986). Habermas is well known for his critique of modernity and its impact on western societies. At this point, Habermas' critical theory in general, his 'critique of the rise and influence of instrumental rationality', his 'theory of knowledge constitutive interests', 'theory of communicative action', and 'Ideal Speech Situation', which include his notion of discourse, rationality and truth in particular is discussed.

*i. Critique of instrumental and scientific rationality.*

Fundamental to an understanding of Habermas' critical theory is his critique of instrumental rationality. For Habermas, the problem with modern societies is that they have created conditions in which the natural sciences are championed to the extent that human reason has lost its role of critical and reflective thought. Human reason in modern societies has become instrumental where it only sets out to achieve pre established goals. Instrumental rationality has given rise to a separation between means and ends, facts and values, truth and virtue, theory and practice. The problem is aggravated when scientific reasoning is extended beyond the world of nature to the human and social world as well. This results in the influence of scientific reasoning in all aspects of everyday social life.

Habermas argues that scientific rationality has become ideological as it distorts the view of the relationship between philosophy and science. 'Instead of scientific

rationality being justified against standards laid down by philosophy, philosophy now has to be defined according to the standards of rationality laid down by science' (Carr, 2004: p. 11). When epistemology has so been reduced to the philosophy of science, Habermas calls this "scientism: science's belief in itself", that is, science is not only viewed as a type of knowledge but every other knowledge must identify with science" (cited in Carr, 1995: p.114). 'Scientism' produces the understanding that social theory requires the value-free scientific methods of theorising, inevitably limiting the critical and reflective ability of individuals to manage their own lives. In this view, human social science is treated as similar to natural sciences.

Habermas argues that the problem with this view is that first, human beings are not mere objects that act according to fixed laws of nature, rather 'human beings are capable, reasoning actors who know and understand why they act as they do' (Giddens, 1985: p. 125). Secondly, there is the 'overestimation of the role of science as the only valid knowledge that we can have of both the natural and social world' (ibid). When scientific rationality intrudes into the social dimension of human life, the way in which all human knowledge and truth are validated will be based on standards laid down by scientific methodology. Therefore, this positivistic view of knowledge separates facts from values and undermines the role of critique in social life. This particular view of knowledge threatens the notion of subjectivity and ignores the social and historical dimension of human beings (Giroux, 1983).

In fact, positivist rationality has also manifested itself in the cultural realm. The ‘thingification’ or ‘reification’ of culture in a capitalist society has turned “culture into an industry that not only produces goods, but also legitimates the logic of capital and its institutions” thus negating critical thought and opposition so as to ensure the domination of nature and society proceeding under the guise of scientific and technological progress (Giroux, 1983: p. 20). Scientific rationality and the culture industry have eroded critical thinking to the extent that it has allowed ideology to dominate in the forms of mundane practices and beliefs, ‘common sense’ and ‘taken-for-granted’ assumptions. Ideology in these forms maintains the interests of certain groups at the expense of others. The dangerous effect of instrumental rationality is that it results in the inability of individuals to control their destinies. Habermas’ critical theory is an attempt to liberate individuals from domination, which will provide them an opportunity to understand and be free from coercion in matters which affect their lives. ‘Habermas develops a critique of scientific rationality and seeks to reunite means and ends, and theory and practice in his theory of knowledge-constitutive interests’ (Gibson, 1986: p. 34).

*ii. Theory of knowledge-constitutive interests.*

Habermas theorises that there are three types of knowledge which are bound by certain human interests. These three ‘knowledge-constitutive interests’ (KCI) correspond to particular forms of sciences. The ‘empirical and analytic sciences’ promote the technical interest in predicting and controlling the natural world.

However, when individuals interact with each other this promotes an interest in understanding and interpreting meanings, which gives rise to the ‘historical and hermeneutics sciences’. Finally, the third KCI derives from human beings’ concern to achieve rational autonomy of action, free from any form of domination whether the domination of nature over human life, or of some groups over others. This concern for emancipation from domination is the interest served by the ‘emancipatory science’ of critical theory. Habermas’ theory of KCI is illustrated in table 3.0.

Table 3.0: Habermas’ Theory of Knowledge-Constitutive Interests

(Source: adapted from MacIsaac, 1996 and Carr, 1985: p. 94).

<i>Type of Human Interest</i>	<i>Kind of Knowledge</i>	<i>Research Methods</i>
Technical (Prediction)	Instrumental (causal explanation)	Positivist sciences (empirical-analytic methods)
Practical (Interpretation and Understanding)	Practical (understanding)	Interpretive Research (historical and hermeneutics methods)
Emancipatory (Criticism and Liberation)	Emancipation (critical reflection)	Critical Social Sciences (critical theory, emancipatory action research)

Habermas’ ‘emancipatory science’ or critical social science aims to realise the individuals’ ability of self-reflection and critical thought by engaging in his concept of ‘discourse’. Within Habermas’ discourse, two ideas are particularly important, which are the notion that all human linguistic communication involves ‘validity-claims’, which are implicitly made by all speakers (theory of communicative action), and his contention that ‘an ‘ideal speech situation’ is presumed in the use of language’ (Giddens, 1985: p. 128).

*iii. Theory of communicative action.*

For Habermas 'rationality' has to do with the manner in which knowledge is used rather than its foundations. 'A statement or an action is considered 'rational' to Habermas if it could be justified in procedures of argumentation or discourse' (Giddens, 1985: p.132). As Gibson puts it, 'he argues that when we speak, we implicitly make four validity claims: that what is being said is intelligible (comprehensible or made in a shared language), true (of matching reality), correct (legitimate and appropriate to the context of utterance) and sincere (genuinely meant)' (Gibson, 1986: p. 39). An undistorted communication happens when speakers can defend all four validity-claims, 'where what is said can be shown to be meaningful, true, justified and sincere' (Giddens, 1985: p. 129).

Habermas further argues that of the four validity claims, only the second and third can be defended in a discourse. The other two, which are the first and the fourth validity-claims, can only be justified by expressing the utterance in a different way for the first validity-claim, and by demonstrating sincerity in action for the fourth validity-claim. From this analysis, truth for Habermas is an agreement that is reached through critical discussion. However, Habermas makes the distinction between a 'rational consensus' that is based upon reasoned argument and a consensus based upon power. It is in his explanation of the presumptions about the circumstances that make it possible to have a rational consensus that leads to his 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS).

*iv. The 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS).*

Habermas argues that truth depends on the conditions that make it possible to assess arguments so that all relevant evidence could be brought into play, and 'only logical, reasoned argument is involved in ensuing consensus' (Giddens, 1985: p. 131). Habermas calls the discourse that takes place in these circumstances the 'Ideal Speech Situation'. It is a situation where speakers are free from any constraints that could prevent them from assessing evidence and argument, and where speakers have equal and open opportunity to participate freely in the discourse. Habermas is actually less concerned that 'an actual consensus is ever reached, than that the search for truth takes place in a context that makes real consensus possible, namely one that is free of violence and oppression' (Endres, 1997). It is possible that discourse is another alternative to achieve truth for Habermas' discourse helps test the truth claims that people make which they no longer take for granted.

For truth, according to Habermas, is not achievable through sense experience alone, but only through critical thought and communication. Habermas claims that a distorted communication can be transformed into an undistorted communication through his 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS). Habermas describes his own approach to epistemology as 'universal pragmatics, the task of which is to identify and reconstruct the universal conditions of possible understanding' (Endres, 1997). 'Universal pragmatics' means that language plays an important role and purpose in particular contexts. In this sense, Habermas has expanded the study of language to a

study of communication. 'By bringing the pragmatic dimension of language under rational reflection, Habermas changes the way we think about truth' (ibid). It is in Habermas' theory of action toward understanding a 'speech act' that sets out the elements of non-distorted communication, and it is through this notion of ISS that the 'emancipatory interest is presupposed in the speech itself' (Gibson, 1986: p. 39). Speech itself presupposes truth if distortion can be recognised by understanding what might be considered as non-distorted rational communication.

Although there are few actual situations that would meet these expectations, the ISS retains its usefulness as a 'standard for critique and reform' (Gibson, 1986: p. 39). For what is more important is that in the ISS 'truth is achieved through critical thought and subjective consensus rather than mere sense experience and scientific method' (ibid). Thus by the use of language, individuals have the opportunity to reflect and question their own actions, beliefs and views which they have taken for granted, examine and 'emancipate them from the corrupting influence of tradition and ideology' (Carr, 1995: p. 117). Based on this view of emancipatory knowledge, writers like Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren have developed a pedagogical tradition known as critical pedagogy.

### **3.3 Critical Pedagogy Theorist: Paulo Freire.**

There are many critical pedagogy theorists such as Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Ellen Ellsworth, Douglas Kellner, but I have only selected Paulo

Freire to be discussed in this section due to his influential work. In fact, Freire's work has had a profound impact around the world and in most varied areas of knowledge such as pedagogy, philosophy, history, sociology, participatory research, research methodology in arts and sciences, and particularly in adult education (Freire and Macedo 2001).

*i. Paulo Freire*

Paulo Freire was born on September 19, 1921. He grew up in the Northeast of Brazil where his experiences deeply influenced his life work. Because Freire lived among poor rural families and labourers, he gained a deep understanding of their lives and of the effects of socio-economics on education. He became a grammar teacher while still in high school. Even then his intuition pushed him toward a dialogic education in which he strived to understand students' expectations. Freire's educational thought began to manifest with his appointment in 1946 as director of Education at The Social Service of Industry (SESI), an employer's institution set up to help workers and their families. It was here that he began to see more disconnections between elitist educational practices and the real lives of the working class. During this time Freire also participated in the Movement for Popular Culture, and supported the active exercise of democracy in lectures and in his Ph.D. thesis, "Present-day Education in Brazil," written in 1959 (Bentley, 1999).

Some of Freire's key philosophies are the notion that education needs to be 'dialogic'. The dialogical approach involve teaching and learning as a two way

process as opposed to the 'banking' concept of education. Freire argues that 'education has become an act of depositing where the teacher deposits whatever s/he thinks that is useful, relevant and important while the students dutifully 'swallow' everything that is 'given' by the teacher' (Freire, 1978: p. 45). This 'banking' concept of education illustrates the passive role of students in the classroom hence acknowledging the superiority of the teacher to her/his students, which may become repressive. Freire further argues that emancipation is not only concerned with liberation from false beliefs, but also from repressive, or partisan preservation of an unjust *status quo* (ibid). So Freirean pedagogy is very much concerned with the development of 'critical consciousness'. 'Critical consciousness' is the ability to perceive social, political, and economic oppression and to take action against the oppressive elements of society. For him, liberation begins by recognising the system of oppressive relations, and one's own place in that system. So not only students' but teachers' criticality needs to be developed so as to realise education as the practice of freedom rather than domination.

Freire views 'the task of critical pedagogy as bringing members of an oppressed group to a critical consciousness of their situation as a beginning point of liberatory praxis', which is 'the authentic union of action and reflection on action' (Burbules and Berk, 1999: p. 51-52). It is insufficient for Freirean critical pedagogy to just reform the habits of thoughts of thinkers without transforming and challenging the institutions, ideologies and relations that distort and oppress thinking. Thus Freire thinks that the pedagogical method that could transform the situation is collective

dialogue, which focuses on the process of 'decodification'. The process of decodification is a way of reading 'social dynamics' or 'why the world is the way it is' and how it might be made different. Freire's concept of *dialogic exchange* also implies that both teachers and students learn, question, reflect and participate in the making and giving of meanings. Concretely, this pedagogy begins with the teacher mingling among the community, asking questions of the people and gathering a list of words used in their daily lives. The teacher was to begin with understanding the social reality of the people, and developing a list of generative words and themes which could lead to discussion in classes, or 'cultural circles' (cited in Bentley, 1999). By making words (literacy) relevant to the lives of people, the process of *conscientization* could begin, in which the social construction of reality might be exposed and critically examined.

In 1962 Freire used his method to teach 300 farm workers to read and write in just 45 days. Through his idea of 'reading the world' and 'reading the word', he managed to show how important it is to be literate in order to understand the world and 'be able to connect the world with the word' (Freire and Macedo, 2001: p. 9). As a result of his success with his literacy education project, the government approved the establishment of thousands of cultural circles all over Brazil. Unfortunately, the military coup in 1964 halted the work, and changed Freire's life. In June 1964, Freire was imprisoned in Brazil for 70 days as a traitor. He stayed briefly in Bolivia then lived in Chile for five years working for the Christian Democratic Agrarian Reform Movement.

'In 1967 he published his first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bringing him acclaim and a position as visiting professor at Harvard in 1969' (Bentley, 1999). 'In 1968 he wrote his famous '*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was considered as his most important work having been translated into more than twenty languages' (Freire and Macedo, 2001: p. 27). Freire was invited to Geneva in 1970 where he worked for ten years as a special educational advisor to the World Congress of Churches. During this time, Freire traveled worldwide helping countries to implement popular education and literacy reforms. In 1979, after 15 years of exile, Freire was allowed to return to Brazil, which he did in 1980, and join the Workers' Party (PT) in Sao Paulo. From 1980 to 1986, he supervised its adult literacy project and with the triumph of the PT in 1988, Freire was appointed Minister of Education for the City of Sao Paulo (Bentley, 1999).

His policy work and innovations in literacy training as Minister continue to affect the city and Brazil to this day. In 1991 the *Paulo Freire Institute* was created, centered in Sao Paulo and maintains the Freire archives. Freire has been recognized worldwide for his profound impact on educational thought and practice. He received many awards and honorary doctorates such as the King Balduin Prize for International Development, the Prize for Outstanding Christian Educators in 1985 with Elza, and the UNESCO 1986 Prize for Education for Peace (Bentley, 1999). Freire's influence is clearly seen not only in the students' lives that he changed with his literacy project, but also in the works of other critical pedagogy theorists who continue to develop on his idea such as Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren.

### **3.4 Critical Pedagogy: Concept and Practices.**

According to Morgan (2000: p. 274), critical pedagogy is where critical theory meets education. As such critical pedagogy draws widely on the Frankfurt School critical theory as well as the Freirean pedagogy of liberatory praxis. It is also informed by Gramsci's notion of hegemony, (that is the permeation throughout society of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs and morality that has the effect of supporting the status quo in power relations (Burke, 1999)); Foucault's notion of power/knowledge (which provides an understanding of how knowledge is not innocent but very much related to power); feminist theory (which reveals the inequalities which affect women and their education) and neo-Marxist cultural criticism of the effects of the 'reification' of culture in a capitalistic society (ibid). However, critical pedagogy has also been influenced by progressive educators who are concerned with promoting democratic ideals within education such as John Dewey. In fact, McLaren perceives Dewey's 'attempt to link the notion of individual and social (cooperative) intelligence with the discourse of democracy and freedom' as the basis of 'a language of possibility' (1989: p. 199).

#### **3.4.1 Education and Schooling.**

Perhaps the attempt to explain and understand critical pedagogy can be made clearer by contrasting critical pedagogy with traditional pedagogy (see Table 3.1). Unlike traditional pedagogy, in which education is perceived primarily as a process to the social reproduction of inherited values, beliefs, accepted norms and practices in a

society so that the society would continue to transmit such understandings and knowledge from one generation to the next, critical pedagogy perceives education as a process of social transformation. In traditional theory, the purpose of schooling is to provide students with equal access to education, train and equip them with relevant skills that are needed for the benefit of the economy. It is this relationship between schools and society that critical pedagogy challenges. It seeks to reveal how traditional pedagogy reproduces social inequalities through the social reproduction of class and perpetuates racialised inequalities through organised and deceptive schooling practices. Schools serve to replicate the values and privileges of the dominant class, and ensure that those who are not privileged accept the *status quo* as natural.

Critical pedagogy views schooling as a form of ‘cultural politics’ that introduce, prepare and legitimise certain ways of understanding and behaving in the world. It claims that schooling involves power relationships and the domination of certain forms of knowledge to serve the interests of a certain social group, thus leading to the ‘reproduction of social inequalities linked to racism, sexism, class discrimination and ethnocentrism’ (Morgan, 2000: p. 274). The task of critical pedagogy is to recognise and identify how existing curriculum, and approaches to teaching, provides students with a perspective that tends to marginalise certain voices and ways of life. What this entails is that cultural politics challenge students and even teachers to question and critically analyse the beliefs, views and practices that ‘shape

the histories and socioeconomic realities that give meaning to how they define their daily lives and construct what they think as truth' (Darder *et. al*, 2003: p. 11).

Table 3.1: Traditional Pedagogy vs. Critical Pedagogy (Source: Adapted from Kemmis and Sugget, 1983: p. 11-14; Darder *et.al*, 2003: p. 25).

	<i>Traditional Pedagogy</i>	<i>Critical Pedagogy</i>
<i>Education</i>	Social reproduction	Social Transformation
<i>Schooling</i>	Training skills	Cultural politics
<i>Knowledge</i>	Correspond to facts	consensual
<i>Curriculum</i>	Structured syllabus, subject specialisation, instructional application of theory	Praxis; all human activity is understood as emerging from ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue and action (Darder <i>et. al</i> . 2003, p. 15).
<i>Control</i>	Hierarchical power	Power-sharing and participatory control
<i>Teaching</i>	Instructional and directive pedagogy; transmitting of knowledge	Dialogue or discourse
<i>Role of Teacher</i>	Authoritative	Project organiser, moderator or coordinator with an emancipatory aim
<i>Teacher-Student Relationship</i>	Teacher is in authority, directive and control students' progress	Teacher is a participant just like students in meaning making.

What is more important is that critical pedagogy contends that 'schooling should work against the class interests of students who are politically and economically vulnerable in the society' (Darder *et.al*, 2003: p. 11). Critical pedagogy helps students to understand that 'all knowledge is created within a historical context' (*ibid*: p. 12). So students should know that they and the knowledge that they bring into the classroom is historical or 'constructed and produced within a certain historical moment and under certain historical conditions' (*ibid*). Following this line of argument, students can come to understand themselves as subjects of history and that though conditions of injustice are historically produced by human beings, they

can also be transformed by human beings. This argument speaks ‘the language of possibility’ and change in critical pedagogy, which eventually results in social transformation.

#### 3.4.2 Knowledge, Truth, Control, Curriculum, Teaching, Teacher’s Role and Teacher-Student Relationship.

If knowledge is viewed by critical pedagogy as historically, socially, culturally, politically and economically constructed, traditional pedagogy views knowledge as corresponding to facts. Knowledge from the latter’s point of view is objective and commonly described as skills and information. From the perspective of Habermas’ theory of knowledge-constitutive interests (KCI), the traditional view of knowledge is imbued with the ‘technical interest’ to predict and control, where its priority is for the advancement of technical, rational and scientific knowledge. In contrast, critical pedagogy places a ‘central value on the role of knowledge for social justice through critique’, dialogue or discourse and consensus (Kemmis *et. al.*, 1983: p.11). ‘Truth is achieved by means of discourse of critical thought and subjective consensus’ (Endres, 1997).

Because traditional schooling is a mechanism of control, students are streamed based on selection from assessment. The curriculum of traditional pedagogy consists of a rigid differentiation of subjects based on specialisation and organised in a hierarchy according to the demands of the economic marketplace. Since schooling concerns

equipping students with relevant skills and information, the curriculum separates theory and practice to 'disconnect objective knowledge from the cultural norms, values and standards of the society at large' (Darder *et. al.* 2003, p. 12). However, critical pedagogy supports the 'notion that theory and practice are inextricably linked to our understanding of the world and the actions we do in our daily lives' (ibid, pp. 14-15). Curriculum in this pedagogy is of 'praxis'; an ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue, and action.

The teacher's role in traditional pedagogy is that of an authority who transmits knowledge and the teaching is instructional with specific learning outcomes to be achieved in every lesson. In a sense, teaching and the relationship between teacher and student are as depicted by Freire in his 'banking' concept of education as students learn what the teacher thinks is appropriate and relevant. The teacher is in authority and controls students' progress so students do not have a voice of their own. They are taught what to think, how to think and when to think. However, critical pedagogy advances 'democratic schooling which aims at power-sharing, shared decision-making and participatory control' (Kemmis, 1983: p. 12). In this kind of schooling, the teacher's role is as a 'project organiser' or moderator that opens the discourse or dialogue in the classroom to encourage students to participate in the meaning making and critical thinking. As in Freire's *dialogic exchange*, both teacher and students participate in the process of learning and *conscientization*. The

teacher is no longer the authentic authority of knowledge and truth because the teacher assumes the role of a coordinator with an emancipatory aim.

Like critical theory, critical pedagogy is concerned with emancipation. And like progressive education, critical pedagogy is also concerned with democratic schooling. Critical pedagogues are not only involved in identifying dominant and repressive practices, but are also moved to change them to promote democracy in schooling and education. Changing these practices is possible by means of 'critical thinking', promoted through dialogue or discourse. In effect, what happens in the practice or discourse of critical pedagogy is that it seeks to create an 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS) in the classroom: a situation in which pupils discuss dominant culture, beliefs, values, interests and practices in existing society. In this sense, critical pedagogy seeks to enlighten students and so emancipate them from the ideologically distorted understanding they have acquired of the 'given' culture, beliefs, values, interests and practices of their society. 'Given' in this context is what individuals assume as what has 'naturally' existed whereas practices and knowledge are historically located and socially constructed. Discourse and dialogue are the basis for critical pedagogy in challenging the reproduction of certain types of knowledge and the preservation of the interest of certain social and economic groups at the expense of the minority.

### **3.5 Critical Pedagogy in Practice.**

Although critical pedagogy in practice can and has taken different forms, I will restrict these differences to two salient critical activities: critical teaching, and critical literacy. These two forms of critical pedagogy have been developed in both theoretical and practical research. As critical pedagogy is critical theory in education, critical teachers have benefited the most as critical pedagogy has re-defined their role and relationship with their students, giving them more liberty and freedom to realise their true potentials as teachers and learners in their classrooms. Critical teaching allows teachers to be more aware of their role as teachers who can make a difference in their students' lives by 'teaching' their students to think critically and learn to question what students initially thought to be true. Critical teaching challenges not only students, but also teachers as to what is 'truth' and what is 'real' by bringing an understanding of how their realities are historically and socially constructed into the classroom. For instance, 'taken for granted' assumptions, mundane practices and beliefs are questioned and re-examined so that their ideological 'roots' can be explored. By doing this, students and teachers learn to distinguish between what they believe to be true and what actually could be the truth.

An example of critical teaching is cited in a reflective study conducted by Obidah in her attempt to understand 'the challenges of mediating the boundaries of race, class, and professorial authority in an undergraduate multi-cultural education course' (2000: p. 1035). The first day of the multi-cultural education course began with

Obidah distributing an article titled 'Body rituals among Nacirema'. The class then were asked to discuss their reactions to the article within their groups. 'An interesting discussion ensued about the strange rituals of the Nacirema and it became more interesting when the class discovered that they were actually reading about themselves; Nacirema was American spelled backwards' (ibid: p. 1036). Some of the students were embarrassed with the comments that they made about these 'strange' people and their practices. The article was intended to disrupt the students' understanding of culture whether their own or 'foreign' culture, and it succeeded in achieving its aim because students started to examine and reflect on their beliefs and assumptions of what their culture is all about and what is perceived as 'foreign' culture. The findings of this study which is based on the researcher's experiences indicated that for critical teaching in a multi-cultural education course to succeed, it is necessary to 'enter uncomfot zones where both teacher and students can challenge their beliefs' (ibid: p. 1059). For students, to 'challenge their long-held beliefs may be a challenge in and of itself', while for teachers the act of 'critiquing their underlying assumptions and pedagogy may be the entry into their own uncomfot zones' (Obidah, 2000: p. 1059).

Critical teaching may also be perceived by some as teaching to transgress the border of marginalised groups with the hope of assisting them to locate and possess their own 'voices'. This is another reason why many critical educators, who have previous experiences of authoritative pedagogy during their own school days, realise what

critical pedagogy can offer them in their teaching. Hooks (1994), for example, asserts that the critical pedagogy that she practises affirms students' presence, their right to speak in multiple ways on diverse topics, share their unique experiences, and value other people's experiences. It is through this kind of pedagogy that students learn to have their own voices, and learn about the diversity of other people's experiences, which allows us to understand how our own experiences can provide a limited knowledge on what we say and think. Thus critical teaching lets us understand that difference does not necessitate the inferiority or superiority of the 'other'.

Critical literacy, like critical teaching, 'encourages one to challenge taken-for-granted meanings and 'truth' about a way of thinking, reading and writing about the world' (Koh, 2002: p. 259). It 'questions the neutrality of power relations within discourses and encourages students to develop inquiring minds that question the cultural and ideological assumptions underwriting any text' (ibid). Morgan explains that 'students can learn to examine the politics of representation in discourses, interrogate the unequal power relations that are embedded in texts, and be aware of how texts position participants within discourses' (cited in Koh, 2002: p. 259). 'One purpose of critical literacy is to problematise classroom and public texts' (ibid: p. 261). An example cited by Koh (2002) is how Comber described a group of high-school students from non-English speaking and working class backgrounds investigating the problem of truancy among non-English speaking students in

Victoria, Australia. This project was made their curriculum as they wrote about themselves and their position as a marginalised group of students in a predominantly English speaking school. As these students researched the problem, they became engaged in producing new knowledge about problems experienced by disadvantaged non-English speaking students. What is significant in this study is that, ‘students’ own views were included and represented rather than being imposed by a dominant group’ (ibid).

‘Texts are also no longer confined to written texts such as books and may include the multi-modal ones of sounds, graphic, images and print’ (Koh, 2002: p. 259). Critical literacy can also be practised beyond the four walls of a classroom such as in working places. However, some critical educators have attempted to teach critical literacy that is informed by critical pedagogy in the classroom, which actually opposes ‘the teaching of literacy as a mere acquisition of language skills, genres and competencies in writing and reading based on traditional practices and ideologies’ (ibid: p. 260). Luke, Comber and O’Brien assert that ‘critical thinking programme that integrates critical literacy in the classroom has been reconceptualised as understanding and addressing systems of beliefs about the cultural, social and political world’ (cited in Koh, 2002: p. 260). In a sense, both critical teaching and critical literacy share the main concept of critical pedagogy, which is to question ‘taken-for-granted’ meanings and ‘truth’ and investigate the power relations behind them.

### **3.6 Criticisms of Critical Pedagogy.**

Critical pedagogy may be considered as a young 'paradigm' in thinking about education but 'in the 1970s, it was hailed by many as the viable and vigorous alternative to other traditions in the social sciences' (Miedema and Wardekker, 1999: p. 67). Its ability to 'synthesise all previous approaches with a clear critique of the societal conditions of education has made it the ultimate, if not, at least the best, available paradigm for education' (ibid). However, in the relatively short period since it originated, critical pedagogy has met with fierce criticism in terms of its pedagogical theory and its lack of practical achievements.

The first critique of the pedagogical theory of critical pedagogy is concerned with the theory of personhood or formation of personal identity in critical pedagogy, which according to Miedema and Wardekker (1999) is based on a modern perspective, hence contradicting the commitment that critical pedagogy promises. The commitment of critical pedagogy is concerned with 'the question of social embeddedness of education' that perceives 'all educational processes are historical and that the history of modern western education has led to a situation where the results of education cannot be but problematical' (ibid: p. 71). The structure of modern western education has produced 'a personality that is either disharmonious and internally divided or ideologically curtailed depending on the extent of the domination of the hegemonic culture in that society' (ibid). A student who is a product of modern education may not be pursuing her/his own interest since s/he is

unconsciously serving the interest of a certain group. S/he also may not realise that s/he is dominated by that group. The aim of critical pedagogy is to transform the student or person into one who is able to understand and give meaning and act in an autonomous way according to her/his own judgment. In this sense critical pedagogy develops the personal identity of 'personhood' to be aware of her/himself as a continuously judging person and acting person (Miedema and Wardekker, 1999, pp. 78-79). 'Without this awareness, rational activity is unthinkable' hence it is 'necessary that the identity remains consistent and uncontradictory' if critical pedagogy is to remain committed in achieving its emancipatory aim in education (ibid).

If critical pedagogy believes in the 'necessity of a consistent and uncontradictory identity as the ultimate aim of education', then in another sense critical pedagogy's development of personal identity is imbued with 'the character of a typical product of modernity' as it is compelled to remain consistent and uncontradictory (Miedema and Wardekker, 1999: pp.77-78). The understanding that an identity ought to be stable and consistent should be reconsidered as there are many voices representing different needs and interests within a person. Voices are self-definitions that speak of their self-affirming ways which are constructed by individuals themselves. Self-definitions represent the 'authentic voices' of the students and help to make them visible and define themselves as authors of their own world. 'Self-definitions give the students an identity and political position from which to act as agents of social

change' (Ellsworth, 1989: p. 309). So there may be many voices within a student, which may contradict each other because in reality the person is not always consistent as s/he encounters many different experiences.

It is in the course of his/her development that s/he learns to handle these voices in a certain way: either negating or working with them positively. It is these responses that bring about changes in an individual which is continuous as learning is not to be fitted with a new repertoire of behaviour, but it is actually the qualitative changes in an existing repertoire. As Miedema and Wardekker (1999) argue, surely one does not expect to be emancipated and left, assuming that s/he has achieved a unified identity, for this would mean that s/he is being passive and has stopped connecting with the society and the world. For them, being emancipated should mark the first step of a continuity of change and improvement or formation of a person. More importantly, critical pedagogy should be committed to create an education that promote the possibilities for students to become authors of their world, agents of social change and co-authors of the cultural narratives' (ibid: p. 81). And to achieve this, identity cannot be consistent and remain uncontradictory.

The second criticism of critical pedagogy points to 'the gap between the rhetoric of critical pedagogy and the realities of its implementation in actual classroom practice' (Ball, 2000, p. 1007). The first reason for this is the use of inaccessible language which made it difficult for practitioners to make links between its rhetoric and

implementation (ibid). The literature of critical pedagogy is not very useful in assisting educators to think and plan for improvements in the classroom because 'its concepts operate at a high level of abstraction' (Ellsworth, 1989: p. 300). This eventually leads to a lack of practical results. In other words, critical pedagogy has, in practice, fallen short of its expectations. There are three criticisms of the failure of the practice of critical pedagogy to live up to its theoretical claims. The first concerns the 'exclusionary' practice of critical pedagogy, and points to how critical pedagogy seems to be dominated largely by male critical pedagogy theorists (Burbules and Berk, 1999: p. 57). Second, it has been argued that while critical pedagogy claims to promote open dialogue this in fact masks paternalistic conversation that neither include issues nor represent the 'voices' of women and other groups (Ellsworth, 1989). Third, it has been pointed out that while critical pedagogy champions emancipation and is considered a liberatory practice it actually practises suppression. The domination of male critical pedagogy theorists in critical pedagogy does not help in presenting the 'voices' of women (Burbules and Berk, 1999: p. 57), and more importantly, work by the male critical pedagogy theorists tends to represent the voices of women while actually repressing them.

Another criticism of critical pedagogy concerns the practical reality of critical pedagogy in a classroom where 'strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact' (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 306). In critical pedagogy

the authoritarian nature of the teacher remains, but this time in the form of an emancipatory authority. It is claimed that the teacher, as an emancipatory authority, has the potential to 'link knowledge to power by bringing to light and teaching the subjugated histories, experiences of those who suffer and struggle' (Giroux and McLaren, 1986: p. 227). Yet a teacher may not be the best authority to do this as s/he may not be free from her/his own 'learned and internalised oppressions' (Ellsworth, 1989: p. 308). Shor and Freire (1987: p. 14) emphasise that 'as an emancipatory authority, a teacher may think that s/he knows the objects of study better than the students, but actually s/he 're-learns' them when studying with the students'. However, Ellsworth (1989: p. 306) argues that the reason for re-learning is not due to the realisation that teacher may learn something new from the students' own experiences, but because it enables the teacher to 'devise more effective strategies to bring the students' understanding up to the level of the teacher's'. These arguments are basically addressing the philosophy of the teacher/student relationship in realising the practice of critical pedagogy. The way in which critical pedagogy re-defines the teacher/student relationship should be re-assessed so that the criticisms of the practice of critical pedagogy may be overcome.

The final criticism also concerns the reality of the practice of critical pedagogy where 'competing voices' may result in the silencing of voices of other groups. Dlamini (2002: p. 57) explained how the power that an 'authority of experience' has over the potential voices of other groups can silence and exclude other experiences.

The concept of 'sharing power' between teacher and students in critical pedagogy does not improve the situation, but rather it aggravates the situation by promoting 'the authority of experience' to become the legitimate speaker. The teacher who is disillusioned by the unlimited freedom of 'sharing power' between teacher and student may not be able to establish an undistorted discourse if s/he allows students to exhibit racist and sexist attitudes. The teacher should at least comment or invite comments on these attitudes.

### **3.7 Conclusion.**

The purpose of this chapter has been to shed some light on western critical pedagogy and its development since the 1970s. The first section highlighted critical theory as the theoretical basis of critical pedagogy. In particular, it was argued that Habermas' critical theory, when brought into education gives the opportunity for education to become an agent of fundamental social change. The second section discussed the ideas of one of the major critical pedagogy theorists, Paulo Freire and how his work raises questions and provides answers to debatable issues of inequalities in education. The third explained further the general concept of critical pedagogy by comparing it to traditional pedagogy. The fourth section outlined how critical pedagogy is being practised in the area of critical teaching and critical literacy. The final section looked at some of the criticisms that have been made against critical pedagogy in theory and practice. Issues in this final section will be taken up in my

attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective to suit the Malaysian education.

Before embarking on my attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective, it is important that the Islamic philosophy of education is examined. By comparing its philosophy to the philosophy of critical theory, it may be possible to develop a synthesis of both philosophies in the reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective. However, it is equally important to examine the three Muslim periods that have contributed to the development of Islamic education. This would also enable the analysis of the rise of Muslim crisis in education within its historical context. Therefore, the subsequent chapter will attempt to achieve this purpose.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT MUSLIM PERIODS IN THE TRADITION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION.**

#### **4.1 Introduction.**

This chapter provides the historical context within which the Islamic philosophy of education has developed by describing three Muslim periods within the tradition of Islamic Education. These periods represent Muslim learning and education in order to understand and uphold the Islamic way of life, which have hence helped in the development of Islamic Thought, education, and schools. The discussion of these three periods is focussed on certain features which resonate with some of the features in critical pedagogy. It is these similar features that will show a connection between Islamic education and critical pedagogy. This chapter is organised into five sections. The first three sections discuss the three Muslim periods in Islamic education, the 'classical', 'modern' and 'contemporary' periods.

The first section of this chapter discusses the 'classical' period (610 – 1258 C.E.), which began from the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> time (570 – 632 C.E.), the Four Pious Caliphs time (632 – 660 C.E.), the Umayyad (660 – 750 C.E.), and Abbasid dynasties (750 – 1258 C.E.), some famous classical Muslim philosophers from the ninth until fifteenth century, and the development of learning, and schools in Islam. Some books on the history of Islam may distinguish between the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon</sup>

him and the Four Pious Caliphs time as the 'early' period of Islam, while the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties are regarded as the 'medieval' period of Islam (Rahman, 1966: p. 68), but I classify these two periods into the 'classical' period because of the Muslims' independence in the flourish of their thought and critical debates. The second period, which was the 'modern' period (1800 – 1950 C.E.) of Islam began with the first Muslim modern reformist, Afghani (1839 – 1897 C.E.) until the establishment of a Western Islamic university, the Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. It is important to note that the period of western modernity is similar to the modern Muslim period. Finally, the 'contemporary' period (1950s – 21<sup>st</sup> century) of Islam emerged in response to the impact of western modernity and post-modernity, and now appears in this thesis, in the form of the Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) Project. The fourth section is an analysis and a critique of these three periods. It is in this particular section that features of these three traditions that resemble critical pedagogy's, particularly on the importance of critical activity, are discussed. Finally, the conclusion section reviews the main issues in this chapter and directs them to the question of the need to critically examine the Islamic philosophy of education.

## **4.2 The 'Classical' Muslim Period (610-1800 C.E.)**

### **4.2.1 The Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> time (570-632 C.E.)**

The 'classical' Muslim period is traced from the Prophet Muhammad's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> time, which was also termed as the 'Golden Age of Islam' (Ahmed, 1992: p. 36).

Even from this early period, the Muslims' pursuit of knowledge was encouraged and stemmed from an effort to understand and interpret the *Qur'an* in order to practise its teachings in their worldly life. The learning of the whole *Qur'an* merely through recitation and memorisation in contemporary time differs from the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> time because the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> emphasised more on the understanding of the *Qur'an*, verse by verse, in terms of its meaning and practice, rather than mere memorisation.

The daily goings-on in the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> life from his actions, words and even tacit approval, is referred to as the *Sunnah* or Tradition of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup>. The verbal and written reports about the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> *Sunnah* are known as *hadith*, which was later developed and became a science (at the beginning of the tenth century) due to the rigorous methodology used to preserve the authenticity of the documentation of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> life. The demise of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> in 632 C. E. was followed by the leadership of four of his closest companions, Abu Bakr As Siddiq, Umar al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali Abi Talib, who were also known as the 'Four Pious Caliphs' (*khulafa' ur-Rashidin*).

#### 4.2.2 The Four Pious Caliphs' (Khulafa' ur-Rashidin) Time (632-660 C.E.).

After the demise of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup>, the first four caliphs ruled the Islamic state according to their understandings of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> and the

*Qur'anic* teachings (Rahman, 1966: p. 43). During this period, higher education after the elementary level at *kuttab*s took place in the form of *halaqa*s<sup>1</sup> (learning circle) and in mosques, which usually involved adults rather than children. The reign of the Four Pious Caliphs also marked one of the greatest achievements of Islam, the compilation, writing and distribution of the *Qur'an* (ibid).

#### 4.2.3 The Umayyad Dynasty (660-750 C.E.).

The assassination of the fourth pious caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib, resulted in the beginning of the Umayyad dynasty with Muawiyah becoming the first ruler of the Umayyad dynasty (Ahmed, 1992). The Umayyad dynasty began in 660 C.E. and lasted shortly until 750. Fourteen Umayyads ruled during this period notably Muawiyah (the founder), Abdul Malik, Umar II, Hisham, and Yazid III (ibid: p. 38). During the Umayyad dynasty, education and learning became more organised when a curriculum in the *kuttab*s were developed than during the 'Pious Caliphs' time. Higher education or learning after completing elementary schools or *kuttab*s took place in mosques, literary salons, libraries, book shops and houses of learned men, and the curriculum began to develop according to the rise of theological and legal schools.

It was during this period too that 'the rise of early theological schools and the first

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<sup>1</sup> A *halaqa* or learning circle is a group of individuals who meet regularly to review, learn and discuss certain issues or *suras* in the *Qur'an*.

stage of development of law' took place (Rahman, 1966: p. 43). The latter could be considered as the rise of 'religious methodology in the absence of the living guidance of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> and of the earliest generation of his companions' (Rahman, 1966: p. 43). The first outcome of this methodology was the Tradition (*Hadith*) of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup>, which was 'accepted as the authoritative second source of the content of Islam besides the *Qur'an*' (Rahman, 1966: p. 43). Meanwhile the development of theological schools was encouraged by 'the advance of Islamic culture in the expanding empire, which had given rise to various new issues' that required reasoning (Sheikh, 1969: p. 2). According to Rahman,

an important result of the interaction between Islam and foreign ideas such as Hellenism, was the differences of opinions on matters of theology and theological ethics, and the rise of early schools of Islamic thought (law and theology). This and the opposition against the Umayyad dynasty amongst non-Arabs, such as the Persians, resulted in the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate and the installation of the Abbasids in Baghdad (1966: p. 3).

#### 4.2.4 The Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258 C.E.).

The Abbasid dynasty gave rise to a thirst for knowledge among Muslims. The thirst for knowledge was not only confined to religious knowledge alone, but also to other kinds of knowledge. Although schools, as formal institutions of education, had not yet been established, this did not hinder the growth of knowledge. Muslims sought knowledge in palaces, bookshops, literary salons and libraries set up by the Abbasid caliphs. Learning flourished in these places as they housed translated books in various areas from Arabic literature to astrology. The Abbasid caliphs were directly responsible for this pursuit of knowledge. For instance, Al Mansur's effort in

translating books on philosophy and science from Sanskrit, Persian, Syriac or Greek to Arabic encouraged the study of philosophy, arts and science. Muslims did not only spend their time reading, but also copied these books and sold them cheaply, which encouraged further the dissemination of knowledge. Moreover these places such as palaces, bookshops, literary salons and libraries were also considered as places for education because debates and discussions ensued amongst Muslims out of their readings, which contributed to the expansion of knowledge (Shalaby, 1954: pp. 26-39). The Abbasid dynasty also saw the rise of many prominent philosophers. It is this rise of Muslim philosophers that characterised the Abbasid period as the 'Golden Age of Islamic sciences' (Hashim, 1996 p. 92).

The Abbasid political control weakened and in the 'ninth and tenth centuries, the Muslim dominions broke into independent states or groupings, such as the Tahirids and Samanids in Persia and Fatimids in Egypt' (The Islamic World to 1600). The Fatimid dynasty is the 'shia dynasty that ruled much of North Africa from 910 to 1171 C. E. 'The Fatimids had their origins in what is modern Tunisia, but after the conquest of Egypt in 970 C. E, they relocated to a new capital, Cairo' (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia). Its decline in 1160 C.E. was later replaced by the Sunnis Ayyubids.

#### 4.2.5 Classical Muslim Philosophers (Ninth-Fifteenth Century).

This section presents a selection of some of the famous classical Muslim philosophers in order to show the varied interests of these philosophers, and their

attempt to reconcile faith and reason. In addition to this, their varied interests have also contributed to the development of the classification of knowledge in Islamic education, such as Al Farabi and Ibn Khaldun's classification of sciences (see table 5.0, in Chapter Five, p. 110).

Al Kindi (805 – 873 C.E.) was the first Arab philosopher who studied a variety of subjects such as arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, theory of music, optics, meteorology, medicine, geography, pharmacy and politics (Sheikh, 1969: p. 60). *Al Kindi* was well known for his attempt to 'reconcile science and philosophy on the one hand, and both with religion, on the other' (ibid). To him, 'reason and prophecy were considered as equally important and valuable avenues in achieving the knowledge of ultimate reality' (ibid: p. 62). Al Kindi 'prepared the ground work for the developments of Arabic philosophy through his philosophical problems which were either continued or opposed by later Muslim scholars' (ibid: pp. 69-71).

Al-Farabi (870-950 C.E.) was the first Turkish philosopher to become famous and was called the 'second Aristotle' (Sheikh, 1969: p. 72). He continued the harmonisation of Greek philosophy with Islam, which was then taken up by Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Al Farabi's political philosophy remains the point of reference for many scholars until today (ibid, pp. 95-96). Ibn Sina (980 – 1037 C.E.) was considered as the 'most famous scientist and philosopher of Islam' (ibid: p. 97). His work in logic, psychology, physics, mathematics, astronomy and poetry made him very well

known. Contemporary research in Ibn Sina's philosophy has revealed some very significant aspects of his metaphysics. For instance, Professor J. L. Teicher of Cambridge University viewed that there were some anticipations in Ibn Sina's speculative system of some of the foremost views of Descartes, Kant and even of Bergson (cited in Sheikh, 1969: p. 112). He further claimed that Ibn Sina only differed from them in his philosophical terminology. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that some contemporary Muslim scholars have claimed that modern science is the legacy of early Muslim scholars (Husain, 1979).

Al Ghazzali (1058-1111 C.E.) was highly regarded and at times considered to be on a par with the founders of the schools of law. Al Ghazzali was sceptical of the Muslim philosophers' attempt to reconcile philosophy and religion but that does not mean that he did not believe in the works of reconciliation (Sheikh, 1969: pp. 153-154). What he stood for was the idea that there may be many possible reconciliations between philosophy and religion but 'oppositions between the two should not be looked over, rather they should be distinctly recognised, and boldly but justly met with' (ibid). 'With Al Ghazzali, the theological, philosophical and mystical converged to attempt an all-embracing harmony, an end to dispute' (Ahmed, 1992: p. 45).

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 C.E.) was another Muslim scholar who is worth discussing. He was a historian, philosopher, economist, politician but more importantly, can be

considered one of the founders of sociology. He resembled Al Ghazzali as they both had a highly critical attitude towards philosophy, and maintained that the nature of ultimate reality cannot be apprehended by means of reason alone, but only through religious experience (Sheikh 1969, pp 204-205). Ibn Khaldun was the last classical Muslim philosopher who marked the end of the 'classical' Muslim period. It was in 1066 – 1067 C.E. that schools started to flourish in the Islamic world and by the end of the 'classical' period, Islamic education became more organised and was taught in private and public schools.

#### 4.2.6 Islamic Learning and Schools (Sixth-Nineteenth Century).

It is essential that Islamic learning during the classical Muslim period is discussed in order to understand the development of the curriculum and pedagogy in Islamic education. According to Shalaby, there were different kinds of places for learning (1954). Schools or the *madrasah* system began to flourish in 1066 C. E., but prior to that 'there were also other places for learning such as the *kuttabs*, palaces, bookshops, houses of learned men, literary salons, the desert and the mosque' (Shalaby, 1954: p. M-23). He explains that there were two types of *kuttab*<sup>2</sup>; one that has existed before the rise of Islam where teachers taught reading and writing in their houses; and the second type which taught the *Qur'an*, but existed after Caliph Uthman ibn Affan's (the third pious caliph) time because the 'revealed *Qur'anic* verses that were written on leaves, parchment and wood were only collected,

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<sup>2</sup> *Kuttab* is a place for learning reading, writing and simple arithmetic. It is also known as the place for learning at the elementary level (Shalaby, 1954: 16-17).

compiled, copied by hand, and distributed during his the time' (ibid: p. 20). However, learning was encouraged during early Islam when Caliph Umar al-Khattab drew up a curriculum for elementary learning, which included other subjects such as arithmetic, 'swimming, horsemanship, famous proverbs and good poetry' (ibid: p. 22). This is the general character of the curriculum in *kuttabs*, although it differed from place to place.

Muslim children did not learn the *Qur'an* in the *kuttabs*, but they learned the *Qur'an* from their parents in their houses or from individual teachers in the teachers' houses. It was after the compilation of the *Qur'an* that the second type of *kuttab* as a place for learning elementary education that included the *Qur'an* and other elementary subjects was established.

During the early Muslim period, higher learning after the elementary level at *kuttabs* continued in the form of *halaqas*<sup>3</sup> (learning circle) although there was no direct link between elementary and higher education. The *halaqas* focussed mainly on the learning of the *Qur'an*. In the beginning, the *halaqas* took place in the houses of learned men such as *Al Arqam*<sup>4</sup>, the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> companion but later moved to the mosque after its establishment.

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<sup>3</sup> A *halaqa* or learning circle is a group of individuals who meet regularly to review, learn and discuss certain issues or *suras* in the *Qur'an*.

<sup>4</sup> *Al Arqam* is one of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> close companion who valued knowledge and encouraged learning to the extent that he regularly held meetings for learning the *Qur'an* with the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> and other companions.

During the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties there were 'two types of education, the palace-school education for the princes with the aim of preparing them to rule, and adult education for the masses' (Rahman, 1996: p. 182). From the latter, higher education grew through halaqas where 'Islamic learning and the content of Islamic thought were centred on individuals rather than places for higher learning such as mosques' (ibid: pp. 184-5). An important characteristic of learning during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties is the individual importance of the teacher. Even when *madrasahs* became more organized, 'the biographies of illustrious scholars usually give the names of their teachers rather than the names of the *madrasahs*' (ibid: p. 185). The importance of the teacher encourages the phenomenon of 'seeking knowledge' amongst Muslims. Students travelled a great distance to follow the lectures of famous teachers.

The *madrasah* system or schools whether private or public, were founded by individuals and through donations for special Islamic subjects such as the teaching of *Hadith* (Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition) and law. Rahman views that 'the *madrasah* system with its restricted curriculum, was the symptom of the decline of Muslim intellectual. Rahman asserts that 'the pure intellectualism that resulted from Muslim's critical and active discussions reacted on the religion of Islam and produced the famous rationalist religious movement of the Mu'tazila' (1966: p. 4).

He further claims that

the leaders of Muslim orthodoxy (such as scholars in the legal schools) suffered when this rationalist movement was elevated to the position of a state creed during

the Caliph Al Ma'mun's time (810-833 C. E.). Gradually, the orthodox scholars brought almost all education under their control, and worked out and implemented curricula to realise their own intellectual and spiritual ideals. This system of education was so effective that the movement of religious rationalism declined, and only persisted with the works of outstanding individual philosophers who reacted on orthodox tradition. What emerged from this impact is a certain amount of room for intellectualism within their educational disciplines, but the development of a systematic rational philosophy and sciences was closely monitored (1966: p. 5).

In the beginning of the tenth century, there was the closure of the door of *ijtihad* which also caused the scholars' to restrict the *madrasah* curriculum. As a result of a 'restricted curriculum', learning in the *madrasah* was confined to *Hadith*, *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*<sup>5</sup>, *tafsir* (exegesis of the *Qur'an*), and dogmatic theology<sup>6</sup>.

The inclusion and development of foreign sciences in the *madrasah* curriculum was limited. According to Shalaby, 'learning in the mosques was transferred to *madrasah* due to the increase in the number of students, new subjects and active debates that prevented worship from being conducted properly' (1954: p. 55). Makdisi claims that 'the *madrasah* was devoted primarily to the Islamic law, while the other sciences were considered as secondary. On the other hand, the mosque continued to be used for the teaching of the various Islamic sciences including law' (1981: p. 9). Shalaby also says 'that while the curriculum in *madrasah* was restricted, the mosque included other studies as well such as literary studies, astronomy, and medicine' (1954: pp. 49-57).

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<sup>5</sup> *Usul al fiqh* means the principles of jurisprudence.

<sup>6</sup> After the closure of the door to *ijtihad*, 'the content of dogmatic theology was regarded as absolute, self-sufficient, and removes the possibility of all creative challenge that may arise' (Rahman, 1966: p. 187).

Apart from the curriculum, Muslim scholars had also gained the experience of developing their own sciences and teaching them in a way that defended their curriculum and pedagogy. The nature of the curriculum entails a ‘textual study of the books, which encouraged memorization rather than real understanding’ (Rahman, 1966: p. 189). However, Makdisi claims that

memorisation was not meant to be unreasoned rote learning, but reinforced with intelligence and understanding’. Although a distinction was made between those who could merely reproduce a text and those who understood it, Muslim theorists of education seldom failed to advise the students to learn the textbook by heart (1981: p. 103).

As a result, learning in the late classical Muslim period was no longer motivated by their thirst for knowledge, but rather by their interest in acquiring a certificate or qualification.

Education was also being used to propagate political cause and ideology during the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt. ‘The dynasty and its followers belonged to the Shiite branch of Islam, to a sect called the Ismailiyya’ (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia). In 972 the famous mosque-school of Al Azhar was founded by the Fatimids in Cairo. When the Fatimid dynasties fell into the hands of the Sunnis, the Sunnis did not waste anytime in reforming education, particularly Al Azhar, which has now become a Sunni institution and one of the greatest traditional Islamic universities in the world (Rahman, 1966: p. 183). The Sunnis established *madrassahs* everywhere as a way to counteract the previous spread of the Shi’ite doctrine. With the victory of the Sunni doctrines, secular studies regained some of their importance (Shalaby, 1954: p. 57).

The *madrasah* system reached its highest point during the Ottoman empire where the *madrasahs* were instituted, funded and maintained by the administrative of the *Shaykh al-Islam's* office (the *Ulama'* or the Muslim scholars). The nature of the *madrasah* system did not prepare Muslims for a different kind of opposition, which is in the form of western imperialism and modernity .

#### **4.3 The 'Modern' Muslim Tradition (1800-1950 C.E.)**

Modern 'Muslim' tradition runs parallel to the period of western modernity. In fact, the 'modern' Muslim tradition was actually a response to the impact of Western imperialism on Muslim society. 'Muslims found it difficult to reconcile themselves with what was rapidly becoming the European phase of world history' (Ahmed, 1992: p. 117). The political defeats and subjugation of the Muslims under western rule made Muslims incapable of constructively rethinking their heritage and meeting the intellectual challenge of modern thought. In order to keep up with the West, the Muslims could not help but borrow Western ways in their attempt to meet the challenge posed by Western modernisation. What was more aggravating was the projection of the 'historic experience of Christianity' into the Islamic tradition of the conflict between reason and tradition' (Rahman, 1966: p. 214).

This awkward situation drove the Muslims to be occupied with the 'intellectual products of modern civilisation' instead of working for the opening of the door of *ijtihad* (interpretation) (Rahman, 1966: p. 215). Hence a general summons to the

*Ummah* to raise their intellectual and moral standards as a means of confronting Western expansionism was issued by Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-1897), who was considered as the first genuine Muslim modernist (ibid: p. 216). Although Afghani did not himself produce any modern thought, he appealed for the cultivation of philosophical and scientific disciplines through general educational and curricular reforms.

Afghani's call to modern thought was continued by Syakh Muhammad Abduh (1845-1905) in Egypt and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) in India. Both felt that Islam was not against reason and science and set out to prove it. Abduh, a trained traditional theologian, believed that science and Islamic faith do not contradict each other, but argued that 'faith and science work at different levels' (Rahman, 1966: p. 217). In doing so, he emphasised two points. The first was the role of reason in Islam, which was to positively contribute to human advancement' and the second was to represent Islam as able to accommodate new ideas and acquire modern knowledge (ibid). In practice, Abduh reformed the curriculum of the University of Al Azhar by introducing secular subjects into the traditional curriculum and establishing a medical college. Although Sayyid Ahmad Khan agreed with Abduh on the compatibility of faith and reason, he did not agree with integrating the modern scientific worldview with the Islamic doctrine based on the basic tenets of the medieval Muslim philosophers. Influenced by Western rationalism, he instead presented a personal interpretation of Islam rather than a restatement of it. Sayyid

Ahmad established Aligarh University, the first Islamic university in India that taught secular subjects like natural sciences and introduced the study of philosophy.

The early Muslim modernists' attempt to integrate modern ideas with Islam partly encouraged the influx of Western ideas and education, and legitimised the impact of Western modernity that had already occurred without actually reconstructing these Western influences on the basis of Islamic doctrine. The inability of the Muslims to cope with this problem led Islam in two directions: on the one hand towards 'almost pure Westernism' and on the other towards 'fundamentalism or revivalism' (Rahman, 1966: pp. 221-222). Eventually it was the latter that had the stronger pull in the development of intellectual modern thinkers in the form of Sir Muhammad Iqbal whose critique of western thought condemned pure, unconditional and undirected rational thought and 'pure and naked acceptance of the results of Western nationalism within the Muslim community' (ibid: p 225). Mawdudi was another fundamentalist who emphasised the importance of Islamic teachings and values and maintained that the door of *ijtihad* should be opened so that Islam can be expanded and not grounded on mere borrowing from the West. The Muslim modern thinkers made a great impact on the reconstruction of Muslim thought and brought some changes to Muslims' education particularly in Islamic schools in Muslim countries. However, the Western modern system of education and thought influenced the direction of the reconstruction of Muslim thought in contemporary times.

#### **4.4 Contemporary Muslim Tradition (1950s -21<sup>st</sup> Century).**

Contemporary Muslim tradition was considered as the era of ‘the reconstruction of Muslim thought’ (Ahmed, 1992: p. 200). He began his review of contemporary Muslim scholarship by delineating two trends among Muslims: one that belongs to the tradition that rejects the Islamic perspective on social sciences such as Talal Asad and Hamza Alavi, and another that represents the Islamic tradition in the social sciences such as Ismail Faruqi and Khurshid Ahmad (Ahmed, 1992: p. 201). Ahmed claimed that the synthesis between these two trends is represented in Ali Shari’ati’s work as a Muslim sociologist and anthropologist. Ahmed himself can be considered a contemporary Muslim scholar as he was involved in Ismail Faruqi’s project of Islamisation of Knowledge, but by using his own ‘methodology’.

The Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) Project is a noble and an ambitious project which has been further developed by the followers of Faruqi. The idea was first ignited in the *First World Conference on Muslim Education* in 1977 in Makkah by Syed Muhammad Naquib al Attas as the concept of the ‘Dewesternisation of Muslim education’, which later began to gain momentum when Faruqi expanded it as the project of Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK). Although Al Attas and Faruqi may differ in the methodology of this project, both agreed its objective. However, until today, many criticisms have been made against this project from Muslim scholars themselves as the implementation of this project seems to have produced a different picture than that expected. The hope of reconstructing Muslim thought and

reclaiming the Islamic heritage has still not been achieved as the course of the project is leaning towards 'technocratic confusion' rather than a 'balanced development' in all human aspects. Thus, it is important that all three Muslim periods in the tradition of Islamic education are analysed so that the development of Muslim thought from the classical until contemporary period is thoroughly understood.

#### **4.5 Muslim Traditions in Islamic Education: An Analysis and a Critique.**

My analysis and critique of the three Muslim periods pivot around two important features that can be depicted within these periods. The first feature is the Muslim continuous struggle to reconcile the conflict between faith and reason, religion and science, and tradition and modernity. The second feature is the early Muslims' emphases on the importance of critical activity, which has helped them to maintain the tension between faith and reason. The unique relationship between faith and reason is that the tension between the two has to be maintained so that their relationship becomes dynamic. Perhaps a clearer understanding of the relationship between faith and reason could be achieved through Kazmi's idea of the nature of the relationship between faith and reason. (Kazmi uses the term 'knowledge' instead of 'reason' but both share a similar meaning).

Kazmi (2000) contends that the nature of this relationship can be best conceptualised as one of negative dialectics. Using Adorno's 'negative dialectics', Kazmi explains

how the tension of negative dialect between faith and knowledge is essential for the dynamic growth and development of both knowledge and faith. According to Kazmi (2000: pp. 5250526), unlike Hegelian dialectics that reduces differences into unity by synthesising the thesis and anti-thesis, Adorno's negative dialectics enables faith and reason to remain as two dimensions that are related to each other permanently yet dynamically. Kazmi further asserts that,

the consequence of this relationship allows Islamic faith to make a Muslim's understanding of the signs of God possible, while the knowledge gained from understanding the signs of God reaffirms faith which in turn makes further understanding of the signs of God possible and so on in unending spiralling process (2000: p 526).

This view explains the tension between faith and reason, which without it, the two would be in conflict with one another, and could lead to a crisis of either faith being superior to reason or reason being superior to faith. In the case of the former, fundamentalism survives, while in the latter, secularism or modernism prevails. It is this conflict between faith and reason that instigated the Muslim crisis, which is also a common crisis that western societies have faced, i.e. the crisis between religion and modernity.

Each of the three Muslim periods discussed can be considered as a Muslim attempt to understand and develop Islamic education. This claim can be examined from the historical, political and social context of Muslim societies in different times and how they have influenced the direction of Islamic and Muslim education. The classical period was seen as the Muslims' preoccupations in various branches of studies, such

as jurisprudence, theology, philosophy and *sufism*<sup>7</sup> (Rahman, 1966). In their struggle to reconcile faith and reason, the classical Muslim scholars isolated theology from law and morality, hence limiting Muslim critical interpretation and activity to legal matters alone with the closing of the door to *ijtihad*. However, Western imperialism has forced Muslim modernists to open the door of *ijtihad* but because of the lack of Muslim's critical activity, they have found it difficult to regain the momentum of the dynamicity and reflexivity of intellectual thoughts that they had lost.

Unlike in western societies, where the influence of religion has declined, Muslim societies continue with its struggle to reconcile religion and modernity. This led to two extreme directions in Muslim modern thought: 'westernism' and 'fundamentalism' where both have failed to resolve the 'crisis'. According to Rahman (1966), in the attempt to face the onslaught of Westernism, Muslim scholars in the modern period were so influenced by Westernism that they accepted western culture, patterns and modes of thought without reinterpreting them to suit Islamic teachings and values. The difference between Muslim expansionists during the classical period and the Muslim modernists is that the former 'Islamised in their own way, where they integrated that which was not known to Islam into an Islamic framework of values, expanded it if not adequate, and this interpretative process occurs with every developing culture' (Rahman, 1966: p. 232). Rahman further claims that what most modernists have done instead was passively borrow from the

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<sup>7</sup> *Sufism* means mysticism.

West without creating an Islamic framework that would give meaning and point to their social reform (ibid). This passive assimilation of western thinking was particularly visible in the system of education in many Muslim countries and a good case in point is Malaysia. On the other hand, the fundamentalists renounced modern science on the basis that it contradicts Islamic teachings and its way of life. This extreme division of modern thought led to another movement in the contemporary tradition, namely the Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) movement.

The Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK) movement continues to attempt to resolve the 'crisis' through its IOK project. However, an analysis and a critique of the IOK project, which was made in Chapter Two (pp. 44-68) of this thesis, showed how the IOK project faces an epistemological and methodological problem in its implementation. The IOK acceptance of the western classification of sciences implies that the IOK has failed to see the Western 'crisis of modernity' identified by Habermas (see Chapter Two, p. 59-61, and Chapter Three, p. 75-79). The IOK was one of the resolutions to the Muslims' crisis but a closer look at how modern science has affected western societies revealed the problem of the IOK view of science. In this sense, it can be argued that the IOK movement is committing the same mistake as the jurists in the classical period, which is to declare 'science' for the IOK movement and '*fiqh*' for the jurists as the only methodology of seeking truth. Following this line of argument, it can also be concluded that the IOK project and the Western project of modern science have turned science into more than just a

body of knowledge. Science and *fiqh* in this sense have become the only 'tool' of possible knowledge. Hence, the turn to western science by contemporary Muslim scholars did not help to regain the critical interpretation and reflection that the classical Muslim scholars possessed. This leads to the connection between Islamic education and critical pedagogy; that is, critical pedagogy is the Muslim's legacy of critical interpretation and reflection, which has enabled the tension between faith and reason to remain dynamic.

In the early 'classical' Muslim period, particularly during the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> and the Four Pious Caliphs' time, the pursuit of knowledge was driven by Muslims' own interest to understand God's world. This led to the growth of Islamic knowledge during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, which is also known as the 'Golden Age of Islamic Sciences' (Hashim, 1996: p. 92). Although the early Muslims pursued all kinds of knowledge, faith was not perceived as being in conflict with reason as they sought knowledge because of their religion. Thus, the early Muslims were able to actively assimilate and accommodate any new knowledge from other cultures and religions by critically reconstructing them on the basis of Islamic values. This critical reflection of the early Muslim too signifies their success in showing how Islam, as a religion, can liberate its followers. In this sense, the conflict and tension between faith and reason can be resolved through critical interpretation. However, when the later Muslims failed to continue the critical activity of the early Muslims, the tension and conflict between religion and science occurred again. I would argue that critical

interpretation and activity need to be reintroduced again so that the conflict between religion and science, and hence, the Muslim crisis is to be resolved.

#### **4.6 Conclusion.**

The historical tradition of Islamic education among Muslims in three different periods explores the shift of thoughts among Muslim intellectuals. What this chapter has tried to show is that although the Muslim crisis in education in contemporary times has been acknowledged by Muslim scholars as a ‘crisis’ caused by secularisation and modernisation (Hashim, 1996), the origins of the crisis can actually be traced back to the classical Muslim period, particularly in the debates between the theologians and the jurists and their attempt to reconcile faith and reason. It is this debate that has forced the door of *ijtihad* to be closed. It is this declaration too that has contributed to the stagnation of Muslim thought, which has led to the Muslim’s passive assimilation and accommodation of western culture and values. In consequence, the Muslims’ crisis has worsened as they have been swept into the crisis of modernity that is already experienced by western societies.

During the three Muslim periods, the curriculum of the elementary school and higher education in Islamic education were developed through the classifications of the sciences by some classical Muslim philosophers and with the establishment of Islamic schools, the *kuttab*s and *madrassah*s. The inception of the IOK project has also helped in the development of a systematic understanding of the aims, objectives,

and the concept of Islamic education. This particular philosophy of Islamic education will be analysed and discussed in the subsequent chapter. However, the establishment of schools in the classical Muslim period and the Western modernisation of education had influenced the establishment of a modern system of education in many Muslim countries. The preservation of the former and the introduction of the latter system has created a dualistic system of education, which has further aggravated the crisis in Muslims' education. The philosophy of Islamic education that has been developed by the IOK project needs to be examined in the light of the contemporary system of Muslims' education to ensure that the Islamic educational values and ideals may be achieved or to see if a critical view of Islamic education can help retain Islamic educational values and ideals instead. This important task is undertaken in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

#### 5.1 Introduction.

This chapter continues from the previous chapter's analysis of Muslim educational tradition to an analysis of the Islamic philosophy of education that has been developed within these traditions. First, I will present the Islamic concept of human nature, knowledge, education and how the Islamic philosophy of education aims to fulfil the values and ideals depicted by these concepts. My interpretation and analysis of these Islamic concepts have been largely informed by Abdullah's *Educational Theory: A Qur'anic Outlook* and Husain's *Crisis in Muslim Education*. These publications can be considered as some of the outcomes of the *First World Conference on Muslim Education* in 1977. Husain (1979) examined the crisis in Muslim education and suggested the Islamisation of Knowledge as a resolution to the crisis. Meanwhile, Abdullah's book was a clear attempt of 'Islamisation of Knowledge' as he tried to distinguish between Islamic and unIslamic concepts in education. The 'Islamisation of knowledge' project promoted by the IIIT emphasise the importance of Islamic epistemology (*Qur'an* and *Sunnah*) and methodology (*ijtihad*) in a Muslim's attempt to Islamise knowledge.

On the other hand, I argue that the success of 'Islamisation of knowledge' depends on the ontological understanding of a Muslim as God's creature who is 'situated' in

the world. Mawdudi argues that ‘our observational and experimental activities are basically influenced by our preconceived notions’ (cited in Ali, 1999: p. 26). He further argues that in order to Islamise knowledge, ‘Muslims should look into the facts of life with a Muslim eye and think in the Muslim’s way’ (ibid). On the basis of Mawdudi’s argument, I argue that Muslims’ preconceived notions are actually influenced by how they are situated in the world. In this sense, Mawdudi’s point of ‘looking at the world from a Muslim’s eye and think in the Muslim way’ is similar to Gadamer’s notion of ‘prejudices’, ‘authority’, ‘tradition’ and ‘understanding’. To support my argument, I will draw on Kazmi’s notion of ‘self’ as a narrative in history and ‘embodied thinking’ to establish the foundation for raising the question of the ontological role of the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah* in Islamic education and the ontological question of a Muslim and how s/he can realise the concept of ‘vicegerency’.

In my critical analysis of these concepts in Islamic education that they developed, I will argue that these concepts lack a critical view of education and justify the need to include critique as an important part of being a Muslim, inherent in the Prophet’s way of life. This new role of the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah* is actually inherent in Kazmi’s notion of reading and understanding the signs of God in the *Qur’an*, which hopes to bring Muslims closer to the important role of critique as realising the *tawhidic*<sup>1</sup> way

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<sup>1</sup> *Tawhidic* or *Tawhīd* is derived from the Arabic word *Ahad*, which means ‘one’. *Tawhīd* is the Islamic concept of monotheism. In Arabic, *Tawhīd* means ‘unification’, i.e. to unify or to keep something unified. In Islam, *Tawhīd* means to assert the unity of God (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia).

of life. This chapter will provide the basis for the reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective, which is, a task that will be undertaken in the subsequent chapter.

## **5.2 Islamic Philosophy of Education.**

Generally a philosophy of education can be understood as that which guides the direction of education so that it can be informed by the values it seeks to promote and achieve the aims that have been set. The Islamic philosophy of education intends to explore education in terms of human nature; a theory of knowledge; and the purpose of human life. Here the Islamic philosophy of education hopes to provide a comprehensive view of education that includes the epistemological, ontological and metaphysical view of education.

### **5.2.1 The Concept of Human Nature.**

In understanding human nature from the Islamic point of view, there are several concepts worth exploring such as the concept of *khalifah* (vicegerent), *amanah* (trust), and responsibility/accountability. The concept of human nature in Islam may differ from other concepts of human nature. For instance, the Western Enlightenment philosophy views a human being as a 'rational animal', which admits the physical and intellectual aspects of a human being, but places more importance on the development of rationality than on other aspects. More importantly, the Western Enlightenment fails to acknowledge the existence of the spiritual or metaphysical as

an important aspect of a human being. This is supported by the Western Enlightenment favour towards scientific knowledge, method and rationality. In contrast, the Islamic concept of a human being begins with the basic nature of a human being as God's being who possesses a physical body (*jasad*), and spirit (*ruh*). The unification of body and spirit in a human being results in the ability of a human to think, feel, care and act where thinking, feeling, caring and acting do not happen separately or individually but simultaneously. This too points to the special position that God has endowed to human beings as the vicegerent of God. As a vicegerent, human being has been given the trust (*amanah*) to carry certain responsibilities and be accountable for all of his/her actions. With the special faculties that God has given him/her, a human being should be able to carry out his/her task righteously.

Muslims believe that human nature is innately good based on the concept of *fitrah* (potential/nature) (Abdullah, 1982). 'Fitrah (potential/nature) has been interpreted in three different ways by Muslim scholars' (Hashim, 1996: p. 78). The first interpretation holds the meaning of Islam itself which means a human being has the *fitrah* (nature) to submit to the Will of God. The second interpretation means that a human being has the *fitrah* (potential) to lead a *tawhidic* way of life, which is a way of life that is based on the belief in One God. Finally, the third notion means that a human being possesses the inclination to believe in God (ibid). The three interpretations of *fitrah* (nature), though different from each other, still point to the human being's inclination to believe in God. The Qur'an (51:56) has mentioned that

the purpose that God created human beings in this world is to submit to and serve God. So the purpose of human creation does not contradict human basic nature and *fitrah* that God had created in him/her. It is this concept of *fitrah* too that ties human being to God since the nature and potential of a human being with the faculties given to him/her means that s/he is able to rise to the expectations of God and discharge his/her duty as vicegerent of God. As a vicegerent s/he has the responsibility of becoming the leader in this world and utilising the resources in this world for the betterment of the world, other beings, his/her society and him/herself according to God's Will.

The human being's responsibility as the vicegerent of God does not mean that a human being lacks his/her own will, because ultimately s/he still possesses freedom to choose, although not absolute freedom. The concept of vicegerent itself negates the absoluteness of a human being's freedom because human free will cannot determine or escape God's Will such as death (Abdullah, 1982: p. 72). 'Yet as God's vicegerent s/he emancipates him/herself from all types of slavery except that to Allah' (ibid). In this sense a human being's freedom does not mean that God controls his/her behaviour. Even then s/he may not obey God's Will but s/he can never escape God's punishment and this concept of reward and punishment in Islam is inherent in the concept of responsibility and accountability of the vicegerent. Based on the Islamic concepts of vicegerent (*khalifah*), trust (*amanah*), responsibility/accountability and *fitrah* (potential/nature) Muslim scholars have

drawn the Islamic philosophy of education so that its overriding aim is to enable a human being to become a good vicegerent of God according to his/her *fitrah* (potential).

### 5.2.2 The Concept of Knowledge ('*Ilm*).

According to the *Qur'an*, God has endowed human being with '*aql* (reason) so that s/he would be able to carry out his/her duty as vicegerent of God. It is this special faculty, too, that distinguishes a human being from God's other creations because it is '*aql* that enables a human being to achieve his/her true potential (*fitrah*). The *Qur'an* emphasises the role of '*aql* and '*ilm* (knowledge) and knowledge is not limited to revealed knowledge alone but also knowledge that results from the interaction of human reason and the world (Abdullah, 1982). According to Hashim, knowledge in Islam can be acquired from two 'books', which have been given to human beings that 'contain signs (*ayah*) of the Author, the *Qur'an* and the 'open book', which refers to the world of nature including human beings' (1986: p. 78). Hashim further emphasises that 'both books invite human not to merely observe and reflect upon the signs but, more importantly, to think of their Author' (ibid). Al Attas views knowledge in Islam as 'enabling a human to grasp the right meaning or the reality of signs that s/he observes' (cited in Hashim, 1986: p. 79). For Al Attas knowledge consists of 'recognising the proper place of things in the scheme of creation that will lead him/her to recognise God and acknowledge his/her obligations

to God' (ibid). In order to achieve this it is the task of '*aql*' and revelation to complement each other and work toward the 'acknowledgement' of God.

Muslim scholars recognise several sources of knowledge but put revelation as the highest source and knowledge attained in this manner is certain (Hashim, 1986). Second, is intuition, and this is followed by reason and sense experience. This hierarchy of the sources of knowledge differs from the Western Enlightenment epistemology or view of knowledge that puts scientific knowledge as the only knowledge that is considered as rational because Western Enlightenment thinking considers the scientific method of study as the only source of knowledge that enables human beings to achieve objective truth and certitude. Only objective knowledge that can be verified and validated scientifically is considered as meaningful. As a result of this epistemology, religious knowledge and metaphysics are not considered as meaningful because they are considered subjective and cannot be verified by scientific method. On the other hand, the classification of sciences that has been formulated by Muslim scholars since the 'classical' Muslim period when Muslim scholars studied the Hellenistic sciences included religious and metaphysical sciences as equally important part of their intellectual life.

It is important to understand the justification of the formulation of the classification of sciences during the 'classical' Muslim period. The first reason was intended as a general guide on which subject would benefit learners most; secondly, it was to

enable learners to understand the hierarchy of the sciences; thirdly, it was to determine which specialisation may be legitimately pursued from the various divisions and subdivisions, and finally, it was to inform the learners of the order of subjects that they need to study before mastering a certain field. Two classifications of sciences which were formulated by two 'classical' Muslim scholars, namely Al Farabi and Ibn Khaldun, are presented below so as to view the holistic, integration and comprehensiveness of the intellectual life of the 'classical' Muslim scholars.

It is important to note that 'not all of the sciences enumerated have always been taught in all of the formal and official educational institutions' (Nasr, 1968: p. 64). Although they have only been transmitted from one generation to another through either formal instruction or private teaching, they are still regarded as a part of the intellectual life of Islam (ibid).

In the beginning religious knowledge was not separated from acquired knowledge, but it was *Al Ghazzali* who started to distinguish between the two types of knowledge as the 'debate among Muslim philosophers on the superiority of reason over revelation culminated during his time' (Hashim, 1986: p. 80). Al Ghazzali also classified religious knowledge as being obligatory on every Muslim, while acquired knowledge was considered obligatory to Muslims as a community.

Table 5.0: Al Farabi and Ibn Khaldun's Classification of Sciences (Source:

Adapted from Nasr, 1968: pp. 60-4)

<u>Al Farabi's Classification of Sciences</u>	<u>Ibn Khaldun's Classification of Sciences</u>
I. <i>Science of language</i> : Syntax, grammar, pronunciation and speech, poetry.	<p><i>Philosophical or Intellectual Sciences:</i></p> <p>Logic</p> <p>Natural sciences or physics: medicine and agriculture.</p> <p>Sciences of beings beyond nature or metaphysics: magic and talisman; science of the occult properties of letters of the alphabet; alchemy.</p> <p>Sciences dealing with quantity: geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy.</p>
II. <i>Logic</i> : the division, definition and composition of simple ideas (corresponding to the content of <i>Isagoge</i> of Porphyry, and the <i>Categories</i> and <i>On Interpretation</i> of Aristotle)	
III. <i>The propaedeutic sciences</i> : Practical and theoretical arithmetic Practical and theoretical geometry Optics Science of the heavens (astrology, motions and figures of the heavenly bodies) Practical and theoretical music Science of weights Science of tool-making (the making of simple machines and instruments for use in various arts and sciences, such as astronomy and music).	
IV. <i>Physics</i> (science of nature) such as knowledge of the principles which underlie natural bodies, science of minerals, plants and animals. Metaphysics (science concerned with the Divine and the principles of things) such as knowledge of the essence of beings, knowledge of the principles of the particular and observational sciences (the "first philosophy" of Aristotle and knowledge of noncorporeal beings).	<p><i>Transmitted Sciences:</i></p> <p><i>Qur'an</i>: its interpretation and recitation</p> <p><i>Hadith</i>: the sayings of the Prophet (<i>pbuh</i>) and their chain of transmission</p> <p>Jurisprudence (sacred law)</p> <p>Theology</p> <p><i>Sufism</i> (mysticism)</p> <p>Linguistic sciences: grammar, lexicography and literature.</p>
V. <i>Science of society</i> : Jurisprudence and rhetoric.	

Contemporary Muslim scholars do not claim that the classification of sciences promote the superiority of a science over the other. 'The idea that God is the source of all knowledge entails the unity of all the sciences' (ibid: p. 81). This does not support the idea that Muslims should pursue a particular branch of secular knowledge to the extent that revealed knowledge is being excluded or vice versa. However, the classification of sciences, when implemented in Islamic educational institutions, led to different results. Although Muslim scholars claim that the classification of sciences is just a hierarchy of divisions of knowledge, there was an indirect repercussion on the growth of intellectual sciences amongst Muslim scholars.

In addition to that, the closure of the door of *ijtihad* also hindered further development of revealed and acquired knowledge. It was only during the modern Muslim period that there was a call to reopen the door of *ijtihad* by modern Muslim scholars such as Afghani and Abduh (Rahman, 1966). When *ijtihad* was encouraged again by Afghani and Abduh (this happened during the 'modern' Muslim tradition in 1800 – 1950s C.E.), the development of revealed and acquired knowledge was also encouraged too, but Muslims had so lost their thirst for knowledge that they did not make much achievement in acquired knowledge. This is obvious as modern Muslim scholars did not continue to develop acquired sciences that had been developed by classical Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sina's medicine and Al Farabi's physics.

Consequently, Muslims cannot help but be influenced by the Western modernists' achievement particularly in modern science (Hashim, 1986).

Muslims began to realise the importance of acquired knowledge when they realised that Western modern science was not necessarily in accordance with Islamic values. Muslims felt that there was a need to redevelop acquired sciences by grounding them on Islamic principles and values (Hashim, 1986). In 1977, the *First World Conference on Muslim Education* held in Makkah recommended that a classification of knowledge from an Islamic perspective be formulated where the first category, revealed knowledge also included Islamic metaphysics and culture while the second category, acquired knowledge, included 'creative arts, intellectual, natural, applied and practical sciences' (ibid: p. 83). Muslim scholars who attended the *First World Conference* in Makkah drew up a curriculum and method of teaching which were based on Islamic tradition. This is the first effort of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project in integrating secular and Islamic knowledge. Then in the *Second World Conference on Muslim Education* in Islamabad in 1980, they put the classification of knowledge as one of the agenda items of the conference (ibid). The conference recognised two broad categories of knowledge, which is presented in table 5.1.

The division of acquired knowledge into intellectual and theoretical sciences such as philosophy and education, while commerce and the like were considered as practical sciences marked a dichotomy of theory and practice, which did not exist in the

earlier Muslim scholars' classification of knowledge such as Al-Farabi's and Ibn Khaldun's. In a sense, the contemporary classification of knowledge shows a slight influence of an instrumental view of education particularly in its dualistic concept of theory and practice. This is the implication of the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project's 'uncritical acceptance of the western modern classification of sciences' (Bugaje, 1996).

Table 5.1: Categories of Knowledge from the *Second World Conference on Muslim Education-1980* (Source: Adapted from Hashim, 1986: p. 83).

<p><i>Perennial Knowledge</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Qur'an</i>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Recitation (<i>qira ah</i>); memorisation (<i>hifz</i>); and interpretation (<i>tafsir</i>)</li> <li>b. Tradition of the Prophet (<i>pbuh</i>) (<i>Sunnah</i>)</li> <li>c. Life of the Prophet (<i>pbuh</i>) (<i>sirah</i>) which also covers the early history of Islam</li> <li>d. The concept of the Oneness of God (<i>tawhid</i>)</li> <li>e. Jurisprudence (<i>usul al-fiqh</i> and <i>fiqh</i>)</li> <li>f. <i>Qur'anic</i> Arabic</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Ancillary subjects             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Islamic metaphysics</li> <li>b. Comparative religion</li> <li>c. Islamic culture</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p><i>Acquired Knowledge</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creative arts: Islamic arts and architecture, languages, and literature</li> <li>2. Intellectual sciences: social studies (theoretical); philosophy; education; economics; political sciences; history; Islamic civilisation; geography; sociology; linguistics; psychology and anthropology.</li> <li>3. Natural sciences: philosophy of science; mathematics; statistics; physics; life sciences; chemistry; astronomy; and space science.</li> <li>4. Applied sciences: engineering and technology; medicine; agriculture and forestry.</li> <li>5. Practical sciences: commerce; administrative sciences; library sciences; home sciences; and communicative sciences.</li> </ol>

*i. Aims of Education.*

The concepts of human nature and knowledge in Islam direct the curriculum in Islam as these concepts entail the educational aims that the content of education aspires to

achieve. Aims and objectives are viewed differently where the former concern the general while the latter involve the specific outcomes of education (Abdullah, 1982: p. 114). General aims imply 'futuraity because they lie at a distance and have to be achieved with some effort' (ibid: p. 115). A general aim is considered as the final end but it is usually broken into several specific aims where each is to be attained individually in a certain sequence. 'In Islam, the general aim of education is to develop an individual who will act as God's vicegerent or at least put him/her on the path that leads to such end' (ibid: p. 116). The concept of *ibadah* (obedience to God) encompasses the general aim of education because when a Muslim behaves in such a way that what s/he is doing for the purpose of pleasing God or avoiding God's wrath, s/he is actually realising his/her duty as a vicegerent. In this sense the concept of *ibadah* (obedience to God), although a wide concept, can also become a specific educational aim if it is concerned with the daily behaviours of a Muslim. Furthermore in Islam, all education may be perceived as religious education because the concept of *ibadah* (obedience to God) should be at the heart of education so as to regulate and direct Islamic education. In contrast, Western Enlightenment views the task of education as merely 'assisting rational human beings to realise their potential, to exercise moral agency and to become autonomous' (Parry, 2000: p. 26).

Muslim educators views the components of human nature as consisting of body (*jasad*), spirit (*ruh*), and mind (*'aql*), hence they also divided the general aim of education into three subdivisions namely, the physical aims, spiritual aims and

mental aims (Hashim, 1986). The Islamic curriculum needs to consider the development of physical skills that are necessary in building and maintaining a healthy body. Moreover, the development of physical skills should also aim at implanting positive attitudes towards his/her body such as knowledge about moderate eating. Spiritual development in Islamic is guided towards keeping a Muslim in constant contact with God such as fulfilling the obligations of a Muslim like observing the obligatory prayer five times a day.

Meanwhile, the mental development that Muslim scholars perceived as essential in Islam is developing intelligence that can lead Muslims to discover the ultimate truth (Abdullah, 1982: p. 123). 'The study of God's signs and the discovery of the order in these signs should lead to the recognition of the Designer of all that exists' (ibid). According to Abdullah, 'besides providing learners with facts and mental skills, Islamic education should also aim at encouraging sound thinking and deep understanding' (1982: p. 125). It is believed that attaining the physical, spiritual and mental aims in Islamic education would make it possible for Muslims to realise their duty as God's vicegerent. This is because these aims allow the basic needs of a human being to be cared for and regulated rather than suppressed.

Apart from that, the social aspect of the vicegerent is equally important so Islamic education has to also look at the social needs of a Muslim such as the needs in a

family like fulfilling the rights of parents. So there should be harmony between the individual and social aims.

*ii. Curriculum.*

Once the educational aims in Islam have been clarified, then the following step that Muslim scholars would take is to design an appropriate curriculum for Islamic education. According to Hashim, 'the content of education in Islam follows naturally from the concept of knowledge and the aims of education' (1986: p. 90). Based on an understanding of the concept of human nature and knowledge the aims of education in Islam should be in accordance with the concept of *fitrah* (potential/nature), the purpose of human creation and the concept of vicegerent. The curriculum or content in Islam should integrate both the revealed and acquired sciences where *Qur'an* should be the foundation of these sciences. These sciences are considered as Islamic as long as they are developed within the Islamic paradigm and in accordance with Islamic concepts and values. They should 'serve to assist human beings to reach intellectual and moral perfection because both sciences reveal the signs of God and have utility' (ibid). The result of education based on this kind of curriculum is that acquired sciences 'strengthen faith in God through the study of God's creation and the discovery of its laws, which enable human to produce better technology' (ibid). On the other hand, revealed sciences inculcate faith and provide moral guidance when Muslims reflect on the *Qur'an*, which assists them to manage their affairs in society better.

*iii. Pedagogy.*

In delivering the content of education so that the educational aims in Islam can be achieved, Abdullah (1982) argues that it is equally important to examine the adequacy of the methods in education so that learning the curriculum can be carried out successfully. There are no prescribed instructional methods in Islam but ‘a survey of the history of education in Islamic tradition reveals that there is a variety of methods used such as lectures, debates and memorisation’ (Hashim, 1986: p. 95). In the *Qur’an* there are verbal and non-verbal methods that are used to convey God’s words to human beings (Abdullah, 1982). The verbal methods are telling stories, asking questions, deduction and giving metaphors, while the non-verbal methods are those that involve motivation and discipline like reward and punishment.

Telling stories, especially historical ones, can assist learners to understand the content better. Reflection and not mere narration or amusement of the stories is the true purpose of this method of telling stories (Hashim, 1986). Meanwhile, the method of asking questions may be in the form of a response or a starting point to several questions, which can then lead to a dialogue. Through the dialogue the discovery of truth can also be achieved because the method of asking questions is not merely aimed at eliciting information but rather at provoking thought so that one can get a better understanding of the issue concerned (Abdullah, 1982). In this sense, the *Qur’anic* pedagogy of asking questions and dialogue are similar to the method of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy views dialogue as a medium through which

critical understanding can take place and eventually enlighten and emancipate participants. Habermas' dialogue or discourse based on his view of an 'undistorted communication' encourages participants to present their critical understanding and arguments on an issue. The emphasis of critical pedagogy is in contesting the ideological distorted understanding of what is accepted as 'given' or 'fact' in the discourse. Similarly, the *Qur'anic* pedagogy of asking questions allows learners to question what they have always accepted to be true, not primarily to nullify their belief, but rather to help them get a better understanding of it.

The *Qur'anic* method of asking questions can also lead to deduction. Deduction as another method of education is not only a result of the method of asking questions, but it is concerned with the discovery of the underlying principle or conclusion after several objects or facts have been presented or through trial and error. The final verbal method of education in Islam is giving metaphors or similes (Abdullah, 1982). By using these methods, teachers can use tangible objects to facilitate the understanding of a concept. Explanation of the abstract by using the concrete is important before learners can understand the more complex concepts. And abstraction can only be possible when learners have been presented with the tangible data from which they can conceptualise. Apart from that, another method that concerns referring to other things beside verbal symbolism is visual demonstration. This method also allows us to incorporate methods that are built on observations and other use of senses (ibid). The non-verbal methods that can be used apart from the

verbal methods are for motivation and discipline such as reward and punishment. However, teachers need to know and understand the relevance of the use of reward or punishment according to the needs of the learners so that they can be used efficiently. Yet Muslim scholars have warned of the negative effects of both kinds of reinforcements, whether reward or punishment, thus reminding teachers of the importance of using both wisely.

Table 5.2: The Relationship between Some Islamic Concepts and Islamic Philosophy of Education.

Islamic Concepts in Education	Islamic Philosophy of Education
<p><i>Concept of human nature (fitrah):</i> Human nature consists of body and spirit and the unification of these two results in the human ability to feel, think, care and act.</p>	<p><i>Aims of Education:</i> To develop an individual who will act as God's vicegerent. To fulfil the purpose of human life (within the concept of <i>ibadah</i> (submission to God))</p>
<p><i>Concept of Telos (purpose) of human life:</i> To submit to God's Will (reflected in the concept of <i>ibadah</i>). Human being's different aspects need to be developed and be in balanced so that s/he will submit to God.</p>	
<p><i>Concept of Knowledge ('ilm):</i> Within the concept of <i>'ilm</i> (knowledge), the understanding of the signs of God in the world and in the Qur'an signifies the importance of the acquisition of different types of knowledge (revealed and acquired) for a better understanding of God and improvement of one's faith in God.</p>	<p><i>Curriculum:</i> Include both revealed and acquired knowledge where <i>Qur'an</i> becomes the foundation of both types of knowledge.</p>
	<p><i>Pedagogy:</i> Variety of methods which develop different aspects of human being like asking questions for the development of the intellectual aspect.</p>

What can be concluded from this exploration of the aims, curriculum, pedagogy and concepts of education in Islam is that Muslim scholars have drawn a philosophy of

education from the Islamic perspective based on some fundamental concepts in Islam such as vicegerent, *fitrah*, trust, accountability and *ibadah* (obedience to God). Thus, the aims, objectives, curriculum and pedagogy of Islamic education have been formulated based on these concepts.

### **5.3 Islamic philosophy of Education and its Concepts: A Critical Analysis.**

In this analysis I intend to examine the Islamic philosophy of education that has been developed by contemporary Muslim scholars and explored in the previous section (section 5.2). My contribution will be a critical analysis of some of the basic concepts depicted in the Islamic philosophy of education, where I will further develop these concepts by reinterpreting them from the perspective of a contemporary Muslim scholar, namely Kazmi (2000b). The concept of human nature will be explored based on Kazmi's post-modern concept of the self as a narrative; the concept of knowledge is based on his 'reading of God's Signs', and finally his concept of *murrabi* (educator). I argue that Kazmi's concepts provide a more holistic view of Islamic philosophy of education by including the ontological and existential perspectives. This is in contrast to the *First World Conference's* development of Islamic philosophy of education that is based on concepts that only emphasised an epistemological perspective, and in some instances are instrumental in nature.

5.3.1 The Notion of Self as ‘Narrative’.

As discussed in section 5.2, generally, Muslim scholars (Abdullah, 1982; Hashim, 1986) explain the concept of human nature by examining the concept of vicegerent, *fitrah*, and *ibadah*, which usually divide a human being into the three components of body, spirit, and mind. These three components then are unified and have several dimensions such as the physical, intellectual, spiritual, moral and emotional. When the *First World Conference* in Makkah outlined an Islamic philosophy of education, it stated that Islamic education aims to ‘produce individuals who are spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically and religiously *balanced*, based on the teachings of Islam’ (Hashim, 1986: p. 109) (italics added). The balanced development of all aspects in a sense points to the question of how much spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and religious development does a person need to have in order to be considered as a ‘balanced’ individual? Should a person be more spiritual and religious than intellectual or emotional, or should the physical aspect receive the least attention? In this matter, I argue that this particular view of human nature is instrumental in nature as a human being is divided into aspects where each aspect performs certain function separately. It is this view of human nature too that results in an instrumental view of the curriculum that ‘reifies’ or treats a human being as a ‘thing’, limiting his/her true potentials. Hence I argue that another way of explaining the holistic human being can be explained clearer using Kazmi’s notion of ‘self as a narrative’ and ‘embodied thinking’ (2000b, p. 384; 2002, p. 196). Kazmi

has attempted to explain a human being by using the concept of self as a 'narrative', which prepares the groundwork for his view of an Islamic critical theory.

Kazmi begins by explaining that a human being has the potential to be 'an open project of which outcome depends on human will that is either guided by the truth as revealed in the *Qur'an*, or is not' (2000b: p. 375). Generally a human being is referred to as *Insan* (human) and Kazmi (2000b) uses this term to mean the 'objective' self, while '*Abd* (slave) although literally translated as a slave is referred to by Kazmi as 'authentic self'. The two concepts are different from each other but they are not the opposite of one another. The 'objective self' is the state of a person when s/he enters the world, the state of beyond good and evil or another sense the *fitrah* or potential of a person to become good or bad. The 'objective self' is endowed with free will and has the choice to 'seek his/her authentic self or not, to become authentic or not' (ibid: p. 376). If s/he chooses to become '*abd* (authentic self), then s/he chooses to enter a relationship with God. The notion of 'authentic self' is a relational concept. It neither refers to itself nor does it refer to the relationship that one has with whatever exists in and of the world, like his/her faculties, but rather it refers to the relationship that one has with God. An 'objective self' is always in a situation where s/he has to keep the distinction between 'me' (my relationship with God) and 'mine' (whatever that has been given to me) intact. This continuous struggle makes the 'authentic self' not a social entity but a spiritual entity.

The notion of 'authentic self' does not exist in a vacuum but it is situated in the world so it has a particular relationship to time. Kazmi follows the line of inquiry that other post-modern thinkers initiated have such as Husserl, Dilthey, Heidegger and also MacIntyre where he says 'a human being is located in time thus being subject to temporal stretch of time' (cited in Kazmi, 2000b: p. 382). The 'self' in this sense does not exist in one particular point in time but is 'thrown across time in a way that the past, present and future are internally related to each other, where each makes sense and becomes meaningful to one another as a whole' (ibid: p.383). The authentic self has the ability to make sense of the past, present and future by relating the parts to the whole, and the whole to the parts in its attempt to make the parts and the whole meaningful. The act of making sense or understanding in this way is adopted from Gadamer's notion of understanding and hermeneutics, which will be elaborated in the next section.

For Kazmi, the 'self' is a narrative; a meaningful temporal structure that unfolds in time. 'The moments and events in the life of self are meaningful because they are parts that make sense in the narrative- and the narrative is meaningful because of the events that constitute it' (Kazmi, 2000b: pp. 383-4). Self as a narrative is a story that is constantly being written and re-written. Kazmi's notion of 'authentic self' implies the ability and potential of a human being to create his/her identity as a self that is situated in time and space, and thus bounded by tradition and history. Although s/he cannot escape his/her tradition and history, s/he has the choice to realise his/her

authentic self by continuously redefining his/her choice of whether to continue the struggle of becoming an '*abd* (authentic self) or not. To continue doing so, s/he needs to be 'in' history (in the world) and not 'of' history (out of the world).

The difference between the two conditions is that to be 'in' history, the self 'recognises the importance of the phenomenon of life on this earth and acts upon it by engaging in the life practices that help to perpetuate, preserve and improve life on earth' (Kazmi, 2000b: p. 389). Whereas to be 'of' history is to allow whatever that s/he possesses define him/her to the extent that s/he becomes inauthentic. Basically, to let the distinction between 'me' and 'mine' collapse is to become 'of' history. An example to further illustrate the meaning to be 'in' history and 'of' history is when a wealthy Muslim can be considered as to be 'in' history spent his/her wealth not just on him/herself but more on helping others. One of the Islamic values that many Muslims ignore is the importance of 'equal distribution of wealth' among human beings. This understanding is usually interpreted by many Muslims as the role of the state, but it is actually the responsible of every Muslim who acquires and possesses wealth, or having more than what s/he actually needs. A good case in point of a wealthy Muslim who is 'in' history and not 'of' history is *Sayiddina Abu Bakr as Siddiq* (573 – 634 C.E.) (the first of the four pious caliphs) and also one of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> close companions (*sahaba*). *Sayiddina Abu Bakr* was a wealthy man who spent his wealth by helping other people in need such as freeing

*Bilal bin Rabah*, a Muslim slave who was tortured by his master for embracing Islam (Al-Asfahani).

### 5.3.2 Reading and Understanding the Signs of God.

Knowledge is the result of learning. Learning is when one tries to make sense and understand something or the signs of God. The way the 'self as a narrative-in-history' makes sense of the signs of God is actually a critical activity because s/he tries to understand the signs by going beyond the given meanings so that s/he can try to create new meanings. The *Qur'an* called Muslims to understand God's signs, whether in this world or in the *Qur'an* itself: "*Read, in the name of God who has created you*" (96:1). An 'authentic self' would understand any of his/her personal experiences in this world as a sign of God in the world, which is considered as an 'open book'. As an 'authentic self', s/he would read and understand the signs in the world in relation to the signs in the *Qur'an* and vice versa. This critical reading and understanding of both signs of God can also be considered as a hermeneutical activity.

Kazmi draws from Gadamer's notion of hermeneutics to explain how the act of understanding the meaning of a sign is considered a hermeneutical activity. It is hermeneutical because 'the meaning of a sign is understood in the context of the whole of which it is a part, and the meaning of the whole is understood with reference to the meaning of a particular sign' (2000: p. 28). The hermeneutical way

of understanding can perhaps be illustrated with an example of a song as the 'whole' and a single note of the song as the 'particular'. When one listens to a song, s/he does not understand the single notes separately then understand them as a song. Rather s/he understands the song as the unitary of the single notes. In this sense, Gadamer's hermeneutics explains understanding as human attitude where it is considered as a 'reflection when human beings understand and not as a methodological programme in itself' (Jeanrond, 1994: p. 65). In the light of Gadamer's hermeneutics, the learning of an 'authentic self' is reflected in his/her attempt to read or understand the signs of God in the world and the *Qur'an* where the aim of understanding is in the fusion of the two horizons; the horizon of the text (*Qur'an*) and the horizon of the reader (the 'authentic self').

Horizon, according to Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (cited in Bernstein, 1983: p. 143), is 'the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point'. Gadamer's concept of horizon is an essential extension of Nietzsche and Husserl's concept of 'situation'. Being 'situated' means one's particular vantage point or perspective is limited by his/her 'situatedness'. One can never escape his/her 'situatedness', but through the 'fusion of horizons', one's horizon is enriched and enlarged. 'It is through the fusion of horizons that one risks and tests one's prejudices' (ibid: p. 144).

Gadamer's notion of hermeneutics, tradition, authority, prejudices and understanding (which had been elaborated in Chapter Two, pp. 57-59) helps to explain Kazmi's notion of 'self as a narrative' and his theory of reading and understanding God's signs. As a result of Gadamer's understanding, there is no end in the reading and understanding of God's signs because what the signs themselves say will be different in light of a Muslim's changing horizons and the different questions that s/he learns to ask. Reading or interpreting a sign of God is not a mere reading of the meaning of the sign. In the act of understanding the sign hermeneutically, the question regarding the appropriateness of the accepted or taken for granted meaning will continue to be raised. The nature of the hermeneutical circle is to continuously explore new meanings and in the process, deconstruct the old accepted meanings (Kazmi, 2000: pp. 28-9). In this sense, 'understanding is conceived as part of the process of the meaning coming into being, and meaning is always coming into being through the happening of understanding' (Bernstein, 1983: p. 139). This notion of understanding too makes it an obligation for Muslims to continuously read and understand the *Qur'an* and the world in order to help them become 'authentic' selves. However it should be noted that understanding of the meaning of God's signs does not imply that their veracity is in doubt.

Perhaps the hermeneutical and critical activity of 'reading the signs' can be made clearer with the example of a parent who has just experienced the loss of a child. If the parent as an 'objective' self is trying to be an 'authentic self' that is 'in' history

and not 'of' history, s/he would read this phenomenon/sign of God in the world as a test that is usually given to those that God loves. And in relating this sign in the world to the sign in the *Qur'an*, s/he would recall that tests of other nature had also been given to even God's prophets like Prophet Abraham who was married for many years but was not given a child until during his old age. So instead of lamenting on his/her loss, the 'authentic self' would probably accept his/her loss and does not give up hope in God for another healthy child as did Prophet Abraham.

On the other hand, an uncritical Muslim may not be able to relate the difficulty that had been experienced by Prophet Abraham told in the *Qur'an* because s/he does not read the signs in the *Qur'an* critically. This type of Muslim has also failed to realise the 'authentic self' in him/her because to become an 'authentic self', s/he needs to be able to make critiques of every phenomenon that s/he meets in his/her life so that s/he continues to be 'in' and not 'of' history. Truly the struggle of an 'objective self' does not end until his/her death because of his/her belief in the Day of Judgment. It is important to note that the notion of the 'authentic self' does not dichotomise the human life into life here and life hereafter because life is viewed as a narrative structure of which the beginning is here and denouement some place else. Since learning for the 'authentic self' is a learning process that takes time, the 'authentic self' makes sense or understands in his/her struggle to realise his/her 'authentic self' hermeneutically.

What is more interesting is that Kazmi's reading and understanding the signs of God goes beyond Gadamer's hermeneutics and into the realm of critical activity when Kazmi (2000a) explains that one needs to be critical in understanding the inherent truth in the *Qur'an*. Taking into account the notion that self as a narrative is always situated in tradition and history, the horizon of the reader would also include his/her tradition and history. In other words, the meaning of God's words in the *Qur'an* can never be determinate as one understands the words of God from the background of his/her own 'effective history' and 'horizon'. The act of critically and hermeneutically understanding the signs of God contributes to the continuous struggle of the realisation of the 'authentic self. This points to the notion that self as a narrative 'in' history complements the concept of human nature depicted within the concept of vicegerent, *fitrah* (potential/nature) and responsibility/accountability, because the self as a narrative not only possesses the philosophical concepts found in the concept of human nature, but also improves on them by adding that critical ability that human being possesses, which can be considered similar to Habermas' third knowledge-constitutive interests (KCI), that is, the critical interest in emancipation.

Habermas' theory of KCI explains human knowledge as being directed by three human interests, which are, the technical interest to manipulate and control (scientific knowledge), the practical interest to interpret and understand (historical and hermeneutic sciences) and finally the critical interest to liberate and emancipate

from suppressing ideology and people in power (critical theory). Kazmi's concept of 'self as a narrative' includes the practical interest when s/he attempts to read and understand the signs of God hermeneutically. Kazmi's contention that the 'authentic' self ('*abd*') is in a continuous struggle to overcome history and not be overcome by history, a situation where a person has been 'reified' (or 'thingified' (become things)) implies that to become or remain an 'authentic' self, one needs to be critical of the otherness of history. The 'otherness' of history is the obstacle or phenomenon that challenges the self from becoming and remaining an 'authentic' self by making him/her 'of' history. Following this line of argument, a Muslim can be emancipated from this situation if s/he is taught how to read and understand the signs *critically* and *hermeneutically*. So Gadamer's hermeneutics and Habermas' self-interpretation or critical interpretation assists a Muslim to become and remain an 'authentic' self, thus bringing him/her closer to God.

### 5.3.3 *Murabbi*: The Islamic Critical Pedagogue.

It is important to understand the concept of *murabbi* at this point since this discussion will also explain the kind of knowledge and pedagogy that can help in achieving the ideals and values of Islamic education. According to Kazmi (1999), there are two kinds of knowledge, which are theoretical and personalised knowledge. 'Theoretical knowledge is that which is abstract, formal, impersonal, universalising, and deals with experiences that are repeatable' (Kazmi, 1999: p. 213). On the other hand, personalised knowledge is 'particularistic and deals with non repeatable and

specific experiences that are peculiar to a human being or a human in a given situation' (ibid). Another difference between theoretical and personalised knowledge is that the former is objectifiable in language, thus can be communicated and learn through written language. In contrast, personalised knowledge is not dependent on linguistic communication, but rather an orientation to knowledge and the world, and not of skill and information. Although they are theoretical and personalised knowledge distinct, they complement each other. For example, one can learn the theory of a chess game, but s/he can never understand and enjoy it until s/he actually plays. So it is his/her personal encounter with the chess game that gives him/her the knowledge that s/he needs to understand and enjoy the game.

In order for a Muslim to be able to read and understand critically and hermeneutically, it is important that s/he learns what matters in a situation for otherwise the s/he would neither be able to relate the signs in the world and the signs in the *Qur'an* nor would s/he be able to keep the distinction between 'him/her' and 'his/hers' intact. But to learn to read the signs this way is equal to learning to make judgments and making such judgments cannot be learned as a Muslim learns about theoretical knowledge. Learning to make judgments is like learning personalised knowledge by personalising it or doing it him/herself. It should be noted that Kazmi's concept of personalised knowledge differs from Polanyi's (1962) concept of personal knowledge. Polanyi's concept of personal knowledge is a non-thematic

knowledge that one acquires without any conscious effort or even awareness of learning it. One is in fact, socialised into it.

Kazmi (1999) claims that education is about helping students to create a configuration or specific structure of meaning that tells them what is important and what is not. The acquisition of a configuration of meaning is the result of a complex process of listening, watching, reflecting and practice. For instance a child learns from his/her parents of what matters and what does not by watching and listening to his/her parents, and reflecting and practising what s/he learns on a daily basis. 'A *murabbi* does what parents do but more explicitly and on a higher level of sophistication' (Kazmi, 1999: pp. 217-8.). A *murabbi* is the one who is able to teach personalised knowledge because a *murabbi* is not a facilitator, and does not merely teach what s/he knows or think others should know, but rather s/he teaches it because s/he has lived the experience and found it to be true or false (Kazmi, 1999). An example of a *murabbi* is seen in the Prophet Muhammad <sup>peace be upon him</sup> because he has reached that level where he is able to reflect the goodness of his life in his every action, word and idea. This is because although he was a Prophet he was 'neither an ascetic recluse nor an intellectual tower'; although he was an illiterate he was a thinker, and although 'he was a thinker he was not a cerebral cogitator like our present intellectuals are' (Kazmi, 2002: p. 196). In this sense, Prophet Muhammad <sup>peace be upon him</sup> was a fully 'embodied thinker because his activity and experience of

thinking is neither purely mental nor purely physical, but it was an activity in which their whole being participated' (Kazmi, 2002: p. 196).

Every act that a Muslim does should be done with his/her whole being. For instance, the obligatory prayers that Muslims have to perform five times a day is not done by 'his/her body and soul and heart and mind, but as an embodied person, surrendering in the single act of prostration his/her whole being to God' (Kazmi, 2002: p. 197). It is important to understand that the term 'thinking' that is being referred to in 'embodied thinking' is not the common thinking that is usually understood as a cognitive activity, but rather 'it refers to reflection as a mode of being in which human faculties do not function separately but in unison, in harmony with each other' (ibid: p. 213). Yet it is also important to know that the prophetic thinking is the highest level of embodied thinking, but this does not mean that embodied thinking is impossible to achieve. This is because, history has revealed that this is possible when Prophet Muhammad's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Companions were also regarded as good models of embodied thinkers to be followed after the demise of the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> for their sound and good judgments.

Table 5.3: The Relationship between Islamic Philosophy of Education and the Redefined Islamic Concepts in Education. (Derived from Kazmi 1999; 2000b; 2002).

Islamic Concepts in Education	Redefined Islamic Concepts in Education	Islamic Philosophy of Education
<i>Concept of human nature</i>	'Self as Narrative' implies the self as being situated in tradition and history, thus reprising the role of historical, social and rational beings, vicegerents of God,	<i>Aims of Education:</i> Learning to read and understand God's signs so as to be <b>emancipated</b> , become an 'authentic' self (lead a <i>tawhidic</i> way of life, and an embodied thinker
<i>Concept of Telos (purpose) of human life</i>	'objective self' ( <i>Insan</i> ) in the continuous process of becoming 'authentic' self ( <i>'abd</i> ), the concept of <i>ibadah</i> , responsibility and accountability are inherent in this notion of 'objective' and 'authentic' self; active meaning-makers	
<i>Concept of Knowledge ('Ilm)</i>	Knowledge is the result of reading and understanding the signs of God - a critical and hermeneutical activity.	<i>Curriculum:</i> Signs of God – in the <i>Qur'an</i> and in the world, which means any knowledge since the self will interpret and understand it critically and hermeneutically from his/her tradition; Personalised knowledge-learning what matters and to make judgments ( <i>phronesis</i> ), more importantly knowledge should be <b>emancipatory</b> .
<i>Concept of Teacher, teaching roles and teacher-student relationship</i>	<i>Murabbi</i> - Islamic critical pedagogue is an 'embodied thinker', has a close relationship with learners because teaches what s/he believes to be true and that which s/he practises.	<i>Pedagogy:</i> Critical pedagogy, teaching personalised knowledge by personalising it and learners learn it through listening, watching, reflecting and practising upon it – interpretation and <i>praxis</i>

#### 5.4 Conclusion.

The concept of human nature, knowledge and curriculum developed by Muslim scholars, particularly during the *First World Conference* in Makkah, are in a sense

based on an instrumental view of education because they do not differ much from the Western modern view of education particularly in its classification of sciences. On the other hand, the post-modern notion of self as a narrative in history and the reading and understanding the signs of God take into account the hermeneutical interest to connect and make sense, while the critical interest of the self in reading and understanding the signs of God keeps the distinction between 'me' and 'mine' intact, thus emancipating him/her from becoming 'of' history. The concept of *murabbi* and embodied thinking actually pave the way for an attempt to construct an Islamic critical pedagogy because both concepts have assisted in establishing the foundations of Kazmi's notion of an Islamic critical theory, which is linked in the critique of the authentic self in his/her attempt to realise the *tawhidic* way of life.

In his notion of self as narrative, Kazmi uses the term 'human drama' and 'history' to represent the result of the playing out of the dialectical tension between the 'authentic' and 'objective self' (2000b: p. 378). This continuous dialectical tension assumes that there is no instant salvation. For this matter too, realising the 'authentic self' is a learning process that takes time. Each of the 'authentic self's' learning contributes to his/her continuous struggle to realise his/her 'authentic self'. Following Kazmi's line of argument, the distinction between religious and secular knowledge is almost meaningless because it is not the content or knowledge but the purpose for which it is acquired that makes the difference. Hence Islam encourages the acquisition of all knowledge, whether religious or secular, with spiritual and

ethical value. The realisation of the 'authentic self' through reading and understanding the signs of God should be emphasised in Islamic education as it helps to realise the development of a *murabbi*. Based on this concept, I have attempted to show how the ontological perspective of the Islamic philosophy of education could be developed. Kazmi's concepts of 'self as narrative', the act of 'reading and understanding signs of God', and *murabbi* show how the Islamic philosophy of education can be realised by any individual Muslim.

This understanding is already reflected in the attitude of the 'classical' Muslim scholars in their quest for knowledge. The 'classical' Muslim scholars' (Al Farabi's and Ibn Khaldun's) classification of sciences also signified this Islamic view towards knowledge, learning and education, which also explained the critical and creativity of the 'classical' Muslim scholars compared to modern and most contemporary Muslim scholars. Furthermore, the classification of sciences of the 'classical' Muslim scholars revealed the link between theory and practice, a characteristic that lacks in the classification of sciences, which was formulated during the Second World Muslim Conference on Education. This missing link between theory and practice has caused the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project to emphasise the epistemological perspective of the Islamic philosophy of education more than the ontological perspective.

In consequence, the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project has only been successful in publishing textbooks of the various disciplines as an attempt to Islamise secular social sciences. I argue that the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project needs to focus on Islamising pedagogy that could help in creating critical Muslims. This is because the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project could only be successful if there are critical Muslims to work on the project, rather than relying on the Islamised knowledge to Islamise Muslims. Therefore, I attempt to provide a reconstruction of an Islamic critical pedagogy that can help to create critical Muslims. In doing so, the following chapter will have the task of comparing and synthesising Kazmi's post-modern concept of 'self as a narrative' and his claim to the critical and hermeneutical understanding of the signs of God, with key concepts of western critical pedagogy. Since this chapter has provided some basic concepts that are used in Islamic philosophy of education, the subsequent discussions in the following chapter will attempt to conceptualise and construct an Islamic critical pedagogy based on these concepts.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND ISLAMIC EDUCATION.**

#### **6.1 Introduction.**

The primary aim of this chapter is to identify those philosophical assumptions underlying critical theory that can be integrated with Islamic education. In order to achieve this aim, this chapter is organised into three sections. The first section notes some significant similarities between critical theory and the philosophy of Islamic education. A comparative view of the ideals of critical theory in education and Islamic education is presented so as to identify the underlying philosophical assumptions they both share.

Based on these similarities, I then provide a synthesis of critical pedagogy and Islamic education in the second section. In this section, I analyse the rise and development of critical pedagogy and compare it with the ‘Islamisation of knowledge’ project and its critics. I use the arguments of the critics, particularly Sardar’s (2003) and Kazmi’s (2003) to justify the need for critical pedagogy in Islamic education. I will also show how the ‘classical’ Muslim period and its achievements can be considered to be imbued with the practice of critical pedagogy so, when critical pedagogy is synthesised with Islamic education, this signifies an attempt to reclaim a Muslim tradition. It is in this section too that I will explain how

Islam can cease to become an ideology with the help of critical pedagogy in retaining its ideals and values.

Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I will attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective based on the redefined Islamic critical view of human nature, knowledge and education. It will show how the method of critique becomes the key to ground Muslims' belief to realise the *tawhidic* way of life that is required in Islam. I intend to use this method of critique as a basis for the methodology of 'Islamisation of knowledge', that is, *ijtihad*.

## **6.2 The Philosophy of Critical Theory and Islamic Education: A Comparative View.**

It is important to begin this section by examining the philosophical assumptions underlying critical theory particularly in its view of human nature, society, knowledge, and education. Critical theory's view of human beings cannot be examined separately from its view of nature and society because critical theory draws on an ontological picture of human beings as historically situated in culture and society. The Frankfurt School's view of a human being as a subject of history perhaps may best be explained using Fay's expression of what it means to be a historical being. According to Fay (1987), human beings can be considered as historical beings because they may change *themselves* through reflection and the formulation of new conceptions of self and society. This act of changing *themselves*,

through what Fay terms 'self-interpretation' gives human beings the opportunity to act upon their self-understanding by transforming their social practices and relations. What makes human beings historical beings is 'when they change their identities and societies on the basis of their reflections' (Fay, 1987: p. 52).

The view that human beings are historical beings includes the view that they are also social, rational and active beings. They are 'social' because they are able to change society through changes in their social practices and relations; they are 'rational' because of their ability to reflect on their social practices and relations, and they are 'active' because they can reconstruct and change their social practices and relations on the basis of their own rational reflections. Thus, social change and individual change are interrelated and possible because human beings are active beings who are situated in nature and society, where both nature and society constitute the social world for active beings. As human beings try to cope and shape their natural and social environment, and as they try to establish their proper role in the world, their culture will change.

It is from this view of human beings that the argument was made against capitalist society that produced 'a rigid, reified structure where human beings were transformed into things' (Kellner, 2003a). This also explains the animosity of the critical theorists toward positivist science or 'traditional theory' as Horkheimer would call it. Traditional theory is uncritically involved in the social processes of

production and reproduction. Instead of taking a critical stance towards society, traditional theory tends to assist in the advancement of science and technology. In this sense, traditional theory encourages the making of human beings into 'things' as the scientific method that it employs is extended to the social world of human beings thus undermining the human beings' abilities to self-interpret and reflect.

Proceeding from this view of human beings, critical theory sets out to examine existing ideologies and practices in society. It intends to change society through 'critical activity' with the hope of creating a better society. This has been advanced by Habermas' significant theory of 'knowledge constitutive interests' (KCI) where he identified the relationship between human interests and knowledge. Habermas contends that there are three knowledge constitutive interests (see Chapter Three, p. 78 for elaboration of his theory). Habermas' theory of knowledge constitutive interests reflects that there is another view of knowledge which differs from the empiricist or positivist's and interpretivist's views of knowledge. Although Habermas did not bring his critical theory directly into education, his works, particularly his theory of the knowledge constitutive interests, have awakened critical educators to realise that education has the potential to become a catalyst for fundamental social change (Young, 1989). In Fay's exact words, 'critical theory holds the idea of being a catalytic agent to overthrow a given social order' (Fay, 1986: p. 28).

This is possible based on the questions that critical theorists would ask of education itself: Who is being taught what? Whose knowledge do teachers teach? And whose interests are served in teaching this particular knowledge? These questions point to a salient characteristic of knowledge that can be derived from Habermas' theory of knowledge constitutive interests, which is that, knowledge is historically, socially, culturally, politically and economically constructed. It is because of this characteristic of knowledge that critical theory aims to make human beings more consciously aware of their existing beliefs and views, which are not given, but rather are socially constructed. For this reason too, critical theory emphasises an education that liberates, enlightens, empowers and emancipates. Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge that emancipates from habit, custom, tradition, dogma, and superstition, which is usually accepted as 'given' and unquestionable. Emancipatory knowledge shows how the world could be different when being freed from suppression and social injustices. The emancipation from these oppressions can be considered as 'good' because it leads to the establishment of social justice. This is the distinctive aim that critical theory shares with Islamic education because Islamic education too strives for emancipation for the purpose of establishing social justice. However, social justice from the Islamic perspective is when Muslims realise their role as vicegerents and active meaning-makers. Hence, this similar aim becomes the starting point for my argument that the philosophical assumptions underlying critical theory and Islamic education are in accordance with each other.

The philosophy of Islamic education that is examined here is largely drawn from the *Qur'an* and in some instances has been selectively derived from the views of a few contemporary Muslim scholars. The view of human beings as historical beings is reflected in Kazmi's notion of 'self as a narrative'; a meaningful temporal structure that unfolds in time. 'Self as a narrative' can be considered like a story that is constantly being written and grows. Kazmi's notion of 'self as narrative' implies the ability and potential of a human being to create his/her identity as a self that is situated in time and space, thus bounded by tradition and history. 'Bounded' here does not mean determined. Rather it connotes how human beings understand the world whether physical or social, and the *Qur'anic* text according to their history and tradition. For Muslims, the act of interpreting the word of God (*Qur'anic verses*) will always be influenced by their 'situatedness' in the social world. Human beings cannot help but bring in their experiences in the social world in their effort to understand the *Qur'an*. So it is important that Muslims read and understand the *Qur'an* and their experiences in the world critically.

According to Kazmi (2000b), the act of reading and understanding the *Qur'an* and their worldly experiences is not a 'one off' reading and understanding, but a continuous act where the same verse of the *Qur'an* may be understood differently if read on the basis of different experiences in the world. Kazmi's notion of 'self as narrative' puts Muslims as historical beings because the *Qur'an* demands that Muslims become active meaning-makers of the world. In this sense, Muslims should

not be blind followers of any authority when understanding the *Qur'an* and the world.

If knowledge is viewed by critical theory as being socially, economically, politically and historically constructed then indeed there is a need for emancipatory knowledge so that human beings may examine and identify the origin of the knowledge, which shapes their views, beliefs and practices. In the case of Islamic education, knowledge, or *'ilm*, is the result of a Muslim's act of reading and understanding God's words (*Qur'an*) and God's works (the world). Since God demands Muslims to read and understand God's words and works, it signifies that the knowledge that is the consequence of this act is emancipatory because it is based on their own rational reflections and self-interpretations, and should not be determined by any authority. Although many Muslims believe interpretations made by Muslim scholars are more accurate than those by an individual Muslim, due to the scholars' expertise and mastery of Islamic knowledge, a Muslim cannot help but reflect upon and be critical of Muslim scholars' interpretations and understand them according to his/her 'situatedness'.

For a Muslim, being emancipated is not to simply criticise authorities' (Muslim scholars) interpretation, but rather to understand the origin and the construction of these interpretations, then either make use of them or learn how they are interpreted. Here lies the similarity in the view of emancipatory knowledge that both critical

theory and Islamic education aim for. The notion of 'self as narrative' and the critical act of reading and understanding God's signs (in the *Qur'an* and in the world) are constitutive of the concept of *khalifah* or 'vicegerent'.

The concept of 'vicegerent' in Islam as depicted in the *Qur'an* and developed by most Muslim scholars (Husain, 1979; Hashim, 1996; Al Zeera, 2001a) means that human beings hold a high position as representatives of God in the world. Hence human beings as vicegerents are responsible for making the world a better place to live in. In analysing the concept of vicegerent in the light of 'self as narrative' and the emancipatory knowledge of these selves, these two notions define human beings as active meaning-makers. Also, emancipatory knowledge would make human beings better vicegerents, particularly in establishing social justice in the world. Social justice is an important demand that God has put on human beings as vicegerents of God. But without proper interest and knowledge, social justice cannot be achieved. Thus, using Habermas' third human interest of emancipatory interest, human beings as active meaning-makers can then achieve emancipatory knowledge, which would help them to establish social justice, hence fulfilling the responsibility of God's vicegerents.

If emancipation is the aim of education for Islamic education, then it is incumbent to look at Islamic education itself, in terms of what kind of Islamic education teachers teach, who should be taught, how should they be taught, and whose interests would

be served. These are not the questions that have been asked and even if they were asked, no attempt has been made to answer them. The evasion of seeking a response to these questions has resulted in an Islamic education that is dysfunctional, irrelevant and more importantly unsuccessful in establishing social justice in the world and particularly in the Muslim world.

Table 6.0: A Comparative View of the philosophy of Critical Pedagogy and the philosophy of Islamic Education.

<b>Philosophical Assumptions</b>	<b>Philosophy of Critical Pedagogy</b>	<b>Philosophy of Islamic Education</b>
<i>View of human nature.</i>	Human beings situated in the world, and are historical, rational and social beings, and active meaning-makers.	Vicegerents are representatives of God, and are historical, social and rational beings, and active meaning-makers
<i>View of society and social change.</i>	Human beings are part of society and are agents of social change	Vicegerents are responsible for the betterment of the society and the world, hence are agents of social change.
<i>Category of knowledge</i>	Reflection and self-interpretations; emancipatory knowledge	Critical reading and understanding the words and works of God (hermeneutical and critical interpretations result in emancipatory knowledge)
<i>View of education</i>	Social transformation	Personal and social development and transformation
<i>Aim of education</i>	Emancipation from oppressive ideologically constructed conception of truth and reality.	Emancipation from dogmatic and ideological understanding of Islam.
<i>The 'good' in education.</i>	To prepare individuals to lead a good life – establish social justice	To prepare individuals to lead a good life by fulfilling the responsibility of God's vicegerent.

The philosophical assumptions underlying Islamic education presented in this section have been selected from very few Muslim scholars because not many Muslim scholars have successfully clarified the idea of how a Muslim can reflect and interpret critically God's works and words. In other words, how can a Muslim be

emancipated and work towards emancipatory knowledge? Generally, many Muslim scholars such as Al Attas (1978, 1991), Husain (1979), Hashim (1996), Al Faruqi (1982), and Al Zeera (2001a) hold the view that human beings are constituted by body (*jasad*), spirit (*ruh*), and mind (*'aql*). This view of human nature entails that Islamic education should develop the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual aspects of a Muslim. However, I argue that this particular view does not elaborate on how Islamic education enables Muslims to practise *ijtihad*, be dynamic, integrate western and Islamic knowledge, working towards the Islamisation of knowledge, and hence, resolving the 'crisis'. I also argue that contemporary Islamic education needs to rethink, redefine and develop a new understanding of *ijtihad* so that it is no longer viewed by Muslim scholars as being a 'traditional methodology' (Ali, 1999: pp. 29-33).

Based on these arguments, I suggest that the concept of *ijtihad* can be redefined and developed with the assistance of the philosophy of critical pedagogy, i.e. critical theory, particularly its method of ideology-critique. Ideology-critique is a key concept in critical theory because it offers a way of exposing the origins of knowledge and reveals how what society considers as 'given' or 'objective knowledge' is actually constructed ideologically. I assert that if Muslims practise ideology-critique, not only would they be able to distinguish between what is considered as a Divine or as a human interpretation, but they could also resolve the 'crisis' through emancipatory knowledge. Instead, the absence of ideology-critique

and the lack of emphasis on critical reflection and interpretations have limited the 'Islamisation of knowledge' project (Bugaje, 1996).

On the basis of these arguments too, it is timely that an analysis of the philosophy of critical pedagogy and Islamic education be advanced so that a critical view of Islamic education may be developed. I contend that critical pedagogy, although considered a project of western post-modernity, is able to assist in retaining the ideals and values of Islamic education. The primary rationale for this contention exists in the comparable philosophical assumptions between critical theory and Islamic education. An analysis of how critical pedagogy can actually assist Islamic education to retain its ideals and values is undertaken in the subsequent section.

### **6.3 Towards a Synthesis of Critical Pedagogy and Islamic Education.**

Critical pedagogy arises out of the dissatisfaction of the inequalities perpetuated by traditional pedagogy in education. Traditional pedagogy, like traditional theory, assists in the social reproduction of class and promotes inequalities of race and gender through organised and deceptive schooling practices. Today, public schools serve to replicate the existing values and privileges of the dominant class, which those who are not privileged assume as 'accepted'. Instead of accepting inequality as something that is natural, factual or God given, critical pedagogy exposes how schooling becomes a site where certain ways of understanding and behaving in the world, including accepting 'inequalities', are actually introduced and legitimised to

serve the interests of a certain social group. Realising that knowledge is actually socially, historically, economically, politically and culturally constructed, critical pedagogy sets out to recognise and identify how existing curricula and approaches to teaching provide students with a perspective that tends to marginalise certain voices and ways of life. What this entails is that critical pedagogy challenges students and even teachers to question and critically analyse their beliefs, views and practices that 'shape the histories and socioeconomic realities that give meaning to how they define their daily lives and construct what they think as truth' (Darder *et. al*, 2003: p. 11).

Similarly, the 'crisis' in the Muslim mind and particularly, in Islamic education arise out of the dissatisfaction of repression and suppression that western secular education imposes on Muslims. As discussed in Chapter Two, the 'Islamisation of Knowledge' project is an attempt of the *International Institute of Islamic Thought* (IIIT) to resolve the 'crisis'. The IIIT proposes an integrated system of education that 'islamicizes' the humanities, social and natural sciences. The IIIT claims that this project of 'Islamisation of Knowledge' not only resolves the dualistic nature of Islamic education system, but it also could help Muslims to overcome the challenges of western modernity. The IIIT promotes Al Faruqi's approach to 'Islamisation of knowledge', which aims at overcoming secularisation by 'recasting modern social sciences within the framework of Islam' (Mohamed, 1993: p. 32).

On the other hand, another response to the Muslim's crisis comes from critics of Al Faruqi's approach such as Rahman (1988), Mohamed (1993), Bugaje (1996), Sardar (2003) and Kazmi (2003). Sardar, in particular, argues that rather than 'Islamise western disciplines, which are based on western philosophical assumptions, Muslims should evolve their own paradigm and innovate appropriate disciplines within them' (cited in Mohamed, 1993: p. 34). Both Sardar (2003) and Kazmi (2003) argue that the 'crisis' actually lies in the misunderstanding of many Muslims of the nature of knowledge. It is important that Muslims recognise that knowledge is always a human construction that results from human beings' endeavours to understand the world around them. Even knowledge that is based on the Islamic epistemology (*Qur'an* and the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition) is not certain and indubitable. After all, 'revealed knowledge' is actually the early Muslims' interpretation of the Islamic epistemology according to their time and tradition.

Sardar (2003) further argues that most of the works that have been developed by Muslim scholars in Islamic education are confined to *shari'ah*. *Shari'ah* is actually a set of principles that provide Muslims with guidance. It was developed by classical Muslim scholars but 'should not be considered as static and given, but rather as principles that can be dynamically reinterpreted and transformed within changing social, cultural and historical contexts' (Sardar, 2003: p. 28). The position of *shari'ah* has been elevated by many Muslims to the level of Divine, whereas in reality, '*shari'ah* is merely a human construction: an attempt to understand the

Divine will in a particular context' (Sardar, 2003: p. 28). Indirectly, the act of *ijtihad* is also limited to *shari'ah* and Muslim jurists. In consequence, *ijtihad* becomes an exclusive practice that only belongs to the experts and those who are qualified in *shari'ah*. Although attempts have been made by the IIIT and other Muslim scholars such as Iqbal to expand this concept of *ijtihad* by including every Muslim to practise it in addressing the many problems of the contemporary world, the success of this practice has not been achieved (Ali, 1999: pp. 30-33).

In addition, the elevation of *shari'ah* to the level of the Divine has eliminated Muslims' role as active meaning-makers as Muslims were more occupied with the idea of establishing Islam as a political state. The Muslims' preoccupation with the establishment of an Islamic state placed *shari'ah* as an ideology at the centre of the state. Thus the equation of *shari'ah* as being Divine has reduced Islam to a 'totalistic ideology', and the equation of Islam with the state has transformed Islam into a totalitarian order (Sardar, 2003: p. 30-31). This situation is aggravated when a group of Muslims with vested interests used the notion that '*shari'ah* will solve all our problems' (regardless of places and time) to preserve its territory, power and prestige (Sardar 2003). The elevation of the *shari'ah* to the Divine level has thus terminated Muslims' role as active meaning-makers because 'the law is a *priori* given and Muslims have nothing else to do but follow it' (ibid: p. 29). Hence Muslims become passive receivers rather than active seekers of truth and Islam becomes an ideology rather than an emancipating religion.

This is the real issue behind the crisis of Islamic education. During the ‘classical’ period, Muslim scholars sought knowledge based on their own understanding and interpretation of the *Qur’an* and the world. This is the reason for their great achievements in various fields of knowledge. Knowledge was sought because to be knowledgeable was considered to be a virtue that enabled them to become better Muslims and better vicegerents of God. For example, before the formation of the four famous legal schools in the ‘classical’ Muslim period, (namely the *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi’i* and *Hanbali* School) there was a freedom of legal thought in the seventh and eighth centuries. During that time a host of accumulated legal opinions flourished in different places (Iraq, Syria and Egypt). These different legal thoughts were due to the various ways of ‘interpreting the *Qur’an* in the light of local customary law, and the various ways that reasoning and personal opinion were used to understand the Prophet’s <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition’ (Rahman, 1966: p. 81).

Another example of a critical Muslim scholar is Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 C.E.) who is known as the ‘father of the philosophy of history and the founder of sociology’ (Sheikh, 1969: p. 207). Ibn Khaldun views history as a way of analysing the past to understand the present and the future. History is not just narrations about kings and dynasties or chronicles of wars and pacts, but it is a story of human civilisation and to understand human society: ‘its growth, progress and decay under different geographical, political, religious and other cultural conditions’ (ibid: p. 210). Ibn Khaldun also argues that there is a connection between history and sociology. He

also claims that the society's attitudes, beliefs and practices are considerably conditioned by its social environment. It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldun was considered the last philosopher in the 'classical' Muslim tradition, but it was only in the seventeenth century when modern Muslim scholars started recognising his works (Sheikh, 1969: p. 207). This illustrates how modern Muslim scholars have failed to expand the 'classical' Muslim scholars' works and continue their dynamicity and critical activity.

During the modern Muslim period, many Muslim scholars expand knowledge that is either based on *shari'ah*, the works of early Muslim scholars or the works of western scholars without critically interpreting and understanding the *Qur'an* and the world. As such, most Muslim scholars' thought and work in Islamic sciences have either become outdated, impractical, irrelevant in the contemporary contexts, or simply contradictory with Islam. Therefore the crisis in Islamic education and amongst Muslims shares a significant similarity with the crisis of modernity, which is that, *shari'ah* has, like modern science, become more than just a type of knowledge. *Shari'ah* and modern science have become 'the' only method for understanding the world and, more importantly, both now function as ideologies perpetuated to serve the interests of a particular group of people in society.

By examining Muslims' view of 'revealed knowledge', particularly the *shari'ah*, the attempt to synthesise critical pedagogy and Islamic education has been made. This is

the prime reason why critical pedagogy should be introduced into Islamic education: so that a justification can be made to redefine Islamic education on the basis of a critical view of education in order to achieve the ideals and values of Islamic education that were achieved during the 'classical' period of Islam. This will not be an easy task because there is also the need to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective. Islam is a different civilisation from western civilisation so though they may face a common problem, the solution cannot be identical because both are grounded in different worldviews, and visions. Every civilisation and tradition may solve their problems by learning from others but, in their own ways, and according to their own worldviews and visions, which they find satisfactory. With critical pedagogy, the crisis of Islamic education and Muslims may be resolved but the resolution would still be based on the Islamic worldview.

The primary task of critical pedagogy in Islamic education is to resolve the Muslim crisis by enlightening Muslims on the critical potential of the Muslim mind, and the need for self-reflection and interpretation based on Islamic epistemology and the world, so that Muslims realise what is actually Divine and not Divine. Since knowledge is socially, politically, economically, historically and culturally constructed this means Muslims have to become active meaning-makers in order to understand the words and works of God. More importantly, Muslims need to be able to identify how knowledge operates ideologically because 'ideology is the antithesis of Islam. It is an enterprise of suppression and not a force of liberation. Islam is an

invitation to thought and analysis, not imitation and emotional following' (Sardar, 2003: p. 171). Islam, if reduced into an ideology, breeds extremism and fanaticism, which does not require Muslims to even think, thus creating blind followers or automated machines, another form of 'reification'. However, since Islam believes in education as an agent of change and social transformation, Islamic education needs to be based on a critical view of education, which promotes emancipatory knowledge. What emancipatory knowledge is in Islamic education and what critical pedagogy is from an Islamic perspective will be explored in the next section as I attempt to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective.

#### **6.4 A Reconstruction of Critical Pedagogy from an Islamic Perspective**

The need for a reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective is incumbent for three reasons; firstly, Islamic education is based on an Islamic worldview and thus critical pedagogy, though introduced by the west, needs to be grounded in the Islamic worldview and traditions. Secondly, the synthesis of critical pedagogy and Islamic education has been made, which pointed out some common philosophical assumptions underlying both philosophies. Although critical pedagogy may be a project of western modernity, this does not mean that it always contradicts Islamic principles. And finally critical pedagogy if reconstructed from an Islamic perspective would assist in identifying what emancipatory knowledge would be like in Islam, and how it can help to promote the aims of Islamic education.

Critical reflection and self-interpretation may be introduced by Fay (1987) but it is not an alien idea or practice because the first verse that God revealed to the Prophet peace be upon him is '*Read. In the name of God who has created human from a clot of blood...*' (96: 1), which signifies the demand that God has put upon Muslims. To read in God's name does not mean that Muslims merely need to read or recite God's name, rather read 'in' the name of God actually points to the way Muslims should read God's signs whether in the world or in the *Qur'an*. Kazmi (2000a) explained that to read 'in' God's name is a critical and active meaning making activity because Muslims need to go beyond the literal meaning of the *Qur'anic* verses by reflecting upon them according to their historical-situatedness, social and cultural context. Another aspect of reading 'in' God's name is when Muslims understand their daily world experiences and reacting upon these experiences based on their reading and understanding of the *Qur'an*. This hermeneutical way of reading the signs of God in the world and in the *Qur'an* shows how critical Muslims ought to be in order to live Islam as a way of life, and not as an ideology where 'powerful' Muslims (whether political, economical, intellectual or religious group of Muslims) who think that they are better Muslims than others, expect other Muslims to think, act and behave as they do.

Islam is a belief in one God but it does not require all Muslims to lead one way of Islam because each Muslim is situated in a different way, bound by his/her history, tradition, culture and social context. The misconceptions held by many Muslims, that

there is only one way of leading the Islamic way of life, has created a number of confusions. A good case in point is the limited understanding of Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition. Muslims perceive that to be a good Muslim, one needs to emulate the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition derived from his way of life such as his manner, behaviours and even his appearance and way of eating. Since it is easier for Muslims to emulate the physical behaviour of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup>, Muslims tend to emphasise this aspect rather than the internal aspects of the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> Tradition, particularly the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> way of personalising the *Qur'an*. If one analyses carefully the Prophet's <sup>peace be upon him</sup> ability of reading and understanding God's messages with his world experiences, one would recognise how this act becomes the act of intellectualising one's spirituality, and spiritualising one's intellectuality. Being spiritual was not divorced from being rational. To be rational is a spiritual act, which is another way of describing how the Prophet <sup>peace be upon him</sup> led his life in submitting to God's Will.

Submitting to God's Will is not an ideology because God's will is that Muslims fulfil their position as vicegerent or representatives of God in the world. As vicegerents Muslims are responsible for their actions and deeds in this world. Muslims have to become critical and active meaning-makers for the betterment of their world; nature and their society. 'Betterment' here connotes the establishment of social justice and what better way to do this than through emancipatory knowledge. Hence for Muslims, emancipatory knowledge should be knowledge that is based on their

critical reflections and self-interpretations based on the dialectical understanding of God's signs. Enlightened in this way, Muslims will then attempt to change their beliefs and social practices, consequently changing society for the purpose of establishing social justice hence, submitting to God's Will.

How does emancipatory knowledge in Islam help to emancipate Islamic education? Emancipatory knowledge in the form of critical reflections of dialectical understanding of God's signs becomes a method of ideology-critique for Muslims. In another sense, this form of ideology-critique helps to keep Muslims on the way to realising their position as vicegerent. Any knowledge should be assessed critically based on this form of ideology-critique so that Muslims would be aware of the origin of the knowledge. More importantly this particular method of ideology-critique should assist Muslims in becoming critical and active meaning-makers of the signs of God, which directly lead to the progress of knowledge in Islam, thus enriching Islamic education and putting Muslims on the right course to reclaim the tradition of the pre-modern Muslim scholars.

6.4.1 Towards the Development of *Ijtihad*: A New Methodology for the Islamisation of Knowledge

I suggest that the method of ideology-critique becomes the basis of the key concept of the IIIT's process of Islamising knowledge, that is, *ijtihad*<sup>1</sup>. If this method of ideology-critique is adopted by Muslims in their practice of *ijtihad*, the Muslim crisis could be resolved because Muslims would be critical of both the western and Islamic knowledge that they have mastered. *Ijtihad* would be a new 'methodology' or rather a way of thinking that could help to integrate the western *and* the Islamic knowledge. More importantly, Islamic education would be based on a critical view of education because Muslims would continuously ask the questions of whose knowledge is being taught, who will be taught, why teachers teach the way they do and whose interests would be served when teachers teach certain form of knowledge. These critical questions of critical pedagogy would promote emancipatory knowledge in Islamic education eventually liberating Muslims from imitating others blindly and creating critical Muslims who are able to lead their own Islamic way of life based on their own critical reflection of the dialectical understanding of God's signs. How Muslims can be emancipated through Islamic education should begin in the classroom. The way teachers teach and the way students learn have to be changed and improved so that Muslim educators do not use the traditional pedagogy of Islamic education or the western traditional pedagogy (instrumental and instructional pedagogy based on

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<sup>1</sup> Ideology-critique from an Islamic perspective is a concept that this thesis develops based on its conception of, and an ideology-critique from an Islamic perspective in Chapter Seven. Also, ideology-critique from an Islamic perspective could be exemplified in the murabbi's practice of an Islamic critical pedagogy.

traditional or positivist theory), but rather turn to critical pedagogy in Islamic education instead in responding to the critical questions that critical pedagogy ask.

In order to practise critical pedagogy in the Islamic education classroom, Muslims need to recreate Habermas' 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS) because the way truth is achieved in Habermas' undistorted discourse through subjective consensus is actually inherent within the Islamic concept of '*shura*' (public consultation or discourse) and '*ijma*' (consensus of Muslim scholars). However, the ISS is an empowering concept because it not only involves the learned or knowledgeable group of people. In fact the ISS gives marginalised groups of people the opportunity to express their thoughts, beliefs and opinions about a matter freely. In recreating the ISS in a classroom that is based on the Islamic world view, I intend to introduce it in a Malaysian classroom where Islamic education is taught. But before introducing the ISS into any Malaysian classroom I would evaluate its appropriateness by bringing the ISS into one of the classrooms of an Islamic public university in Malaysia. This case study will look into the practical aspect of critical pedagogy. However before exploring the case study, it is essential that a critical analysis of the curriculum and pedagogy in Malaysian education system be developed so that the justification of the introduction of the ISS into the Malaysian classroom can be made.

### 6.5 Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have identified the philosophical assumptions underlying the philosophy of critical theory and Islamic education where both philosophies actually share some common concepts particularly in their views of human nature, society, knowledge and education. The philosophy of Islamic education that I have examined in this chapter was drawn from the *Qur'an*, and selected contemporary Muslim scholars. The concept of vicegerent, which was developed by most Muslim scholars based on the *Qur'an*, has been redefined by incorporating some views of contemporary Muslim scholars like Kazmi (2000a) and Sardar (2003). Based on these common philosophical assumptions I argued that critical pedagogy may assist Islamic education in retaining its ideals and values by synthesising critical pedagogy and Islamic education. I have also pointed out that the cause of the crisis in Islamic education is due to the reduction of Islam into a totalistic ideology when *shari'ah* (Islamic law) has been equated as the Divine and into a totalitarian order when Islam is viewed as a state. As such, traditional Islamic education has become like traditional western education where *shari'ah* has received an equal position to modern science.

It is at this juncture that I argued for a reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic worldview because Islamic education is based on a different worldview and vision from western critical pedagogy. Emancipatory knowledge and the method of ideology-critique were redefined according to the Islamic worldview, where I

proposed the method of ideology-critique as the basis for *ijtihad*, a key concept in the process of Islamisation of knowledge. However the practice of critical pedagogy in the Islamic education classroom would be based on the recreation of Habermas' 'Ideal Speech Situation' (ISS). In order to evaluate the appropriateness of the ISS in a Malaysian classroom, I will have to provide a critical analysis of curriculum and pedagogy in Malaysian education so that the justification for introducing the ISS can be made. This will be the central aim of the subsequent chapter.