

Research Note

Critical Pedagogy, Islamisation of Knowledge and Muslim Education

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Abstract: This study attempts to reconstruct Western critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective and to explore its contribution to the resolution of the crisis in the Muslim mind and Islamic education. It analyses the underlying philosophical assumptions behind critical theory, compares it with Islamic philosophy of education and with the Islamisation of Knowledge project, reconstructs the Western critical pedagogy and uses the arguments of Muslim scholars to justify the need for critical pedagogy in Muslim education. It is argued that an Islamised critical pedagogy can offer an adequate resolution to the crisis in the Muslim mind.

Western critical pedagogy is an important theoretical and practical resource for an understanding of the crisis in education in the Muslim World. 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.”¹ Its ability to “synthesise all previous approaches with a clear critique of the societal conditions of education has made it the ultimate, if not the best, available paradigm for education.”² The purpose of this study is to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective and use it to realise the *tawhīdic* way of life.

According to Burbules and Berk, “the idea of critical pedagogy begins with the neo-Marxian literature on critical theory where most

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of the early critical theorists were associated with the Frankfurt School.”³ While members of Frankfurt school (such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) disagree on many points, one common feature they share is the “attempt to assess the newly emerging forms of capitalism along with the changing forms of domination that accompanied them.”⁴ 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.”⁵

Given the primacy of critical theory to critical pedagogy, this study begins by comparing the ideals of critical theory in education with Islamic education to identify the underlying philosophical assumptions they share. This is followed by a synthesis of critical pedagogy and Islamic education. It analyses the rise and development of critical pedagogy and compares it with the “Islamisation of knowledge” project and uses the arguments of Muslim scholars to justify the need for critical pedagogy in Islamic education.⁶ Finally, this study attempts to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective, based on the redefined Islamic critical view of human nature, knowledge and education.

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,⁷ 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.”⁸

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 environments, and as they try to establish their proper role in the world, their cultures will change.

It is from this view of human beings that argument was made against capitalist society that produced “a rigid, reified structure where human beings were transformed into things.”⁹ 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, thereby 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.¹⁰ 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 knowledge constitutive interests, have awakened critical educators to realise that education has the potential to become a catalyst for fundamental social change.¹¹ In the words of Fay, "critical theory holds the idea of being a catalytic agent to overthrow a given social order."¹²

This view is based on the questions that critical theorists would ask of education itself: Who is being taught what? Whose knowledge do teachers teach? 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 are rather socially constructed. For this reason too, critical theory emphasises an education that liberates, enlightens, empowers and emancipates the human individual. Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge that emancipates from habit, custom, tradition, dogma and superstition, which are usually accepted as "given" and unquestionable. Emancipatory knowledge shows how the world could be different when it is freed from suppression and social injustices. Emancipation from these oppressions can be considered "good" as it would lead to the establishment of social justice. This is the distinctive aim that critical theory shares with Islamic education since Islamic education also strives for emancipation for the purpose of establishing social justice. However, from an Islamic perspective, social justice means when Muslims realise their role as vicegerents of Allah (SWT) and an active meaning-makers. Hence, this similar aim becomes the starting point for the argument that the philosophical assumptions underlying critical theory and Islamic education are in harmony with each other.

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 as a story that is constantly being written and growing. 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. It rather connotes how human beings understand the world, whether physical or social, and the Qur’ānic text, according to their history and tradition. For Muslims, the act of interpreting the word of God (Qur’ānic verses) will always be influenced by their “situatedness” in the social world. Human beings cannot help but bring their experiences in the social world to their effort to understand the Qur’ān. Therefore, it is important that Muslims read and understand the Qur’ān and their experiences in the world critically.

According to Kazmi, the act of reading and understanding the Qur’ān and their worldly experiences is not a “one off” reading and understanding, but a continuous act where the same verse of the Qur’ān may be understood differently if read on the basis of different experiences in the world.¹³ Kazmi’s notion of “self as narrative” puts Muslims as historical beings because the Qur’ān demands that Muslims become active meaning-makers of the world. In this sense, Muslims should not be blind followers of any authority in understanding the Qur’ān 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 (the Qur’ān) and God’s works (the world). Since God demands Muslims to read and understand His words and works, it signifies that the knowledge which 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 that 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'ān and the world) are constitutive of the concept of *khalīfah* or "vicegerent."

The concept of "vicegerent" in Islam as depicted in the Qur'ān and developed by most Muslim scholars means that human beings hold a high position as representatives of God in the world.¹⁴ 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 imperative 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 questions have not been asked, and even if they have, no attempt has been made to answer them. The eliding of such 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.

The philosophical assumptions underlying Islamic education has not been adequately discussed in the Muslim World. Muslim scholars, barring a few, have not successfully clarified the idea of how a Muslim can reflect and critically interpret God's words and works.

Table 1: A Comparative View of the philosophy of Critical Pedagogy and the philosophy of Islamic Education

Philosophical Assumptions	Philosophy of Critical Pedagogy	Philosophy of Islamic Education
View of human nature	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
View of society and social change	Human beings are part of society and are agents of social change	Vicegerents are responsible for the betterment of society and the world, hence are agents of social change
Category of knowledge	Reflection and self-interpretations; emancipatory knowledge	Critical reading and understanding of the words and works of God (hermeneutical and critical interpretations result in emancipatory knowledge)
View of education	Social transformation	Personal and social development and transformation
Aim of education	Emancipation from oppressive ideologically constructed conception of truth and reality	Emancipation from dogmatic and ideological understanding of Islam
The “good” in education	To prepare individuals to lead a good life and establish social justice	To prepare individuals to lead a good life by fulfilling the responsibility of God’s vicegerents

In other words, how can a Muslim be emancipated and work towards emancipatory knowledge? Generally, many Muslim scholars such as Al Attas, Husain, Hashim, Al Faruqi and Al Zeera, hold the view that human beings are constituted by body (*jasad*), spirit (*rūh*) and mind (*‘aql*).¹⁵ This view of human nature entails that Islamic education should develop the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual aspects of a Muslim. However, this particular view does not elaborate on how Islamic education enables Muslims to practise *ijtihād*, be dynamic, integrate Western and Islamic knowledge, working towards the Islamisation of knowledge and, hence, resolve the “crisis.” Contemporary Islamic education needs to rethink, redefine and develop a new understanding of *ijtihād* so that it is no longer viewed by Muslim scholars as being a “traditional methodology.”¹⁶

The concept of *ijtihād* 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 as it offers a way of exposing the origins of knowledge and reveals how what a society considers as “given” or “objective knowledge” is actually constructed ideologically. If Muslims would practise ideology-critique, they would not only be able to distinguish between what is considered as Divine or as human interpretation, but also resolve the “crisis” through emancipatory knowledge. The absence of ideology-critique and the lack of emphasis on critical reflection and interpretation have, instead, limited the “Islamisation of knowledge” project.¹⁷

On the basis of these arguments, 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. 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.

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.”¹⁸

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. 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 islamises the humanities, social and natural sciences. The IIIT claims that this project of Islamisation of Knowledge not only attempts to resolve the dualistic nature of the Islamic education system, but also teach Muslims how 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.”¹⁹

On the other hand, another response to the Muslim’s crisis comes from the critics of Al Faruqi’s approach such as F. Rahman, Y.

Mohamed, U. Bugaje, Z. Sardar and Y. Kazmi.²⁰ Sardar, in particular, argues that rather than “Islamis[ing] western disciplines, which are based on western philosophical assumptions, Muslims should evolve their own paradigm and innovate appropriate disciplines within them.”²¹ Both Sardar and Kazmi argue that the “crisis” actually lies in the misunderstanding of many Muslims of the nature of knowledge.²² It is important that Muslims recognise that knowledge is always a human construct that results from human beings’ endeavours to understand the world around them. The classical knowledge that is based on the Islamic epistemology (Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, SAW) is not absolute and unchangeable. After all, the Muslim intellectual heritage is the early Muslim scholars’ interpretation of the Islamic epistemology according to their time and tradition.

It has been argued by many scholars that most of the works that have been developed by Muslim scholars in Islamic education are confined to *sharī‘ah*. *Sharī‘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.”²³ The position of *sharī‘ah* has been elevated by many Muslims to the level of the Divine, whereas in reality, “*sharī‘ah* is merely a human construction: an attempt to understand the Divine will in a particular context.”²⁴ Indirectly, the act of *ijtihād* is also limited to *sharī‘ah* and Muslim jurists. In consequence, *ijtihād* becomes an exclusive practice that only belongs to the experts and those who are qualified in *sharī‘ah*. Although attempts have been made by the IIIT and other Muslim scholars such as Iqbal to expand this concept of *ijtihād* by including every Muslim to practise it in addressing the many problems of the contemporary world, they have not succeeded in realising their aim.²⁵

In addition, the elevation of *sharī‘ah* to the level of the Divine has eliminated Muslims’ role as active meaning-makers since 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 *sharī‘ah* as an ideology at the centre of the state. Thus the equation of *sharī‘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.²⁶ This situation was aggravated when a group of Muslims with vested interests used the notion that “*sharī‘ah* will solve all our problems (regardless of place and time), to preserve its territory, power and prestige.”²⁷ The elevation of the *sharī‘ah* to the divine level has thus terminated Muslims’ role as active meaning-makers because “the law is *priori* given and Muslims have nothing else to do but follow it.”²⁸ 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’ān 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 Allah (SWT). For example, before the formation of the four famous legal schools in the classical Muslim period, (namely, the *Hanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfi‘ī* and *Hanbalī* School) there was freedom of legal thought in the seventh and eighth centuries. During that time a host of accumulated legal opinions flourished in places like Iraq, Syria and Egypt. These different legal thoughts were due to the various ways of “interpreting the Qur’ān in the light of local customary law, and the various ways that reasoning and personal opinion were used to understand the Prophet’s Tradition.”²⁹

A shining 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.”³⁰ 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 a way to understand human society: “its growth, progress and decay under different geographical, political, religious and other cultural conditions.”³¹ Ibn Khaldun also argues that there is a connection between history and sociology. He 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.³² 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 period, many Muslim scholars have expanded knowledge that is either based on *sharī'ah*, works of early Muslim scholars or the works of Western scholars, without critically interpreting and understanding the Qur'ān and the world. As such, most Muslim scholars' thought and works in Islamic sciences have become either outdated, impractical and irrelevant in the contemporary context, 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, *sharī'ah* has, like modern science, become more than just a type of knowledge. *Sharī'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," as given by past scholars, particularly the *sharī'ah*, an attempt to synthesise critical pedagogy and Islamic education has been made. This is a 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. Islamic civilisation is different from the Western civilisation, therefore, although they may face a common problem, the solution cannot be identical because the two 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 the 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 have to 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.”³³ Islam, if reduced to 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.

A Reconstruction of Critical Pedagogy from an Islamic Perspective

The need for a reconstruction of critical pedagogy from an Islamic perspective is essential for three reasons; first, 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. Second, the synthesis of critical pedagogy and Islamic education as discussed above has 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 could help to promote the aims of Islamic education.

Critical reflection and self-interpretation may be introduced by Fay³⁴ but it is not an alien idea or practice because the first verse that Allah (SWT) revealed to the Prophet (SAW) is “Read! In the

name of God who has created human from a clot of blood..." (*Sūrat al-ʿAlaq*, 96:1), which signifies the demand that Allah (SWT) has put upon Muslims. To read in Allah (SWT)'s name does not mean that Muslims merely need to read or recite Allah (SWT)'s name, rather read "in" the name of God actually points to the way Muslims should read Allah (SWT)'s signs whether in the world or in the Qurʾān. Kazmi explains 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 Qurʾānic verses by reflecting upon them according to their historical-situatedness as well as their social and cultural contexts.³⁵ Another aspect of reading "in" God's name is when Muslims understand their daily world experiences and reacting upon these experiences on the basis of their reading and understanding of the Qurʾān. This hermeneutical way of reading the signs of God in the world and in the Qurʾān 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, economic, intellectual or religious), who think that they are better Muslims than others, expect other Muslims to think, act and behave like them.

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 context, bound by his/her history, tradition, culture and social circumstances. The misconceptions held by many Muslims that there is only one way of leading an Islamic life, has created a number of confusions. A good case in point is the limited understanding of the Prophet (SAW)'s Tradition. Muslims perceive that to be a good Muslim, one needs to emulate the Prophet (SAW)'s Tradition derived from his way of life, such as his manners, behaviour and even his appearance and way of eating. Since it is easier for Muslims to emulate the physical behaviour of the Prophet (SAW), Muslims tend to emphasise this aspect rather than the internal aspects of the Prophet (SAW)'s Tradition, particularly his way of personalising the Qurʾān. If one analyses carefully the Prophet (SAW)'s ability of reading and understanding Allah (SWT)'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 (SAW) led his life in submitting to Allah (SWT)'s Will.

Submitting to Allah (SWT)'s Will is not an ideology because His Will is that Muslims fulfil their position as vicegerent or representatives of God on earth. 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 society. Betterment here connotes the establishment of social justice and a better way to do this is 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 Allah (SWT)'s signs. Enlightened in this way, Muslims will attempt to change their beliefs and social practices, consequently changing society for the purpose of establishing social justice hence, submitting to Allah (SWT)'s Will.

How does emancipatory knowledge in Islam help to emancipate Islamic education? Emancipatory knowledge in the form of critical reflections on the dialectical understanding of Allah (SWT)'s signs becomes a method of ideology-critique for Muslims. In other words, 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 Allah (SWT), which directly leads 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.

***Ijtihād*: A New Methodology for the Islamization of Knowledge**

It has been suggested here that the method of ideology-critique becomes the basis of the key concept of the IIIT's process of Islamising knowledge, that is, *ijtihad*.³⁶ 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. *Ijtihād* 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 Allah (SWT)'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 traditional or positivist theories), but rather turn to critical pedagogy in Islamic education in responding to the critical questions that critical pedagogy asks.

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 *shūrā* (public consultation or discourse) and '*ijmā'* (consensus of Muslim scholars). However, the ISS is an empowering concept because it does not only involve the learned or knowledgeable group of people. It also 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 worldview, it is necessary to introduce it in a classroom where Islamic education is taught and evaluate its appropriateness.

Conclusion

The assumptions underlying the philosophy of critical theory and Islamic education actually share some common concepts particularly

in their views of human nature, society, knowledge and education. Based upon the philosophy of Islamic education drawn from the Qur'ān and views of selected contemporary Muslim scholars, it is argued that critical pedagogy may assist Islamic education in retaining its ideals and values by synthesising critical pedagogy and Islamic education. It has also been pointed out that the cause of the crisis in Muslim education is due to the reduction of Islam into a totalistic ideology when *sharī'ah* has been equated with 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 *sharī'ah* has received an equal position to modern science.

It is, therefore, imperative to reconstruct critical pedagogy from an Islamic worldview because Islamic education is based on a different worldview and vision from that of Western critical pedagogy. Emancipatory knowledge and the method of ideology-critique have been redefined according to the Islamic worldview to serve as the basis for *ijtihād*, a key concept in the process of Islamization of knowledge. However, the practice of critical pedagogy in the Islamic education classroom should be based on the recreation of Habermas' Ideal Speech Situation (ISS). The decision to introduce the ISS can be made only after it has been tested and evaluated in the classroom.

Notes

1. S. Miedema and W.L. Wardekker, "Emergent Identity versus Consistent Identity: Possibilities for a Postmodern Repoliticization of Critical Pedagogy" in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, eds. T. Popkewitz and L. Fendler (New York: Routledge, 1997), 67.
2. Ibid.
3. N. Burbules and R. Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy" in *Critical Theories in Education: Changing Terrains of Knowledge and Politics*, 50.
4. H. Giroux, *Critical Theory and Educational Practice* (Victoria: Deakin University, 1983), 50.
5. Ibid.
6. See Z. Sardar, *Islam, Postmodernism and Other Futures: A Ziauddin Sardar*

Reader, eds. S. Inayatullah and G. Bowell (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Y. Kazmi, "Islamic Education: Traditional education or education of tradition," *Islamic Studies*, 42, no. 2 (2003): 259-288.

7. B. Fay, *Critical Social Science: Liberation and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

8. *Ibid.*, 52.

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36. Ideology-critique from an Islamic perspective could be exemplified in the murabbī's practice of an Islamic critical pedagogy.