DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

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The phrase "Islamic education" may be taken to mean "an educational system based on Islamic understanding or Islamic worldview". But it may also mean "training in Islamic disciplines, such as *tafsir, hadith, fiqh* and *kalâm*". In this brief study we shall take it in both senses, which makes the task of this study difficult. Therefore, in order to clarify our expression we may in this regard start from education itself. I would like to define education broadly speaking as a "process of acquiring knowledge" because in the final analysis it consists of learning and teaching. Although educational activities include both learning and teaching and the second activity cannot be described as a "process of acquiring knowledge" since the purpose of education is learning, we may try to explain the internal meaning of education as a "process of acquiring knowledge." In this regard all other modes of education may be classified under one of these educational activities. Learning is in the true sense acquiring knowledge and teaching is "imparting knowledge." In that case we may interpret both teaching and learning as "processes of knowledge." On the other hand, the essential aim of education is learning; and this essential feature of education leads us to turn our attention to learning par excellence. As we approach Islamic education from this perspective it would mean that acquiring Islamic knowledge through learning must be the essence of Islamic education. This is what we shall call the external meaning of Islamic education. If we take the phrase in the former sense as pointed out above, then this would mean the internal meaning or aspect of Islamic education which signifies "an educational system based on Islamic understanding or worldview." Therefore, if we analyze the nature of learning as the process of acquiring knowledge we may at the same time discover the real nature of Islamic education. This way I am hoping to give more tools and at the same time develop more effective methods of teaching in Islamic education. As I try to very briefly outline the essential nature

of Islamic education, I shall briefly discuss how this was applied during the Ottoman period in history with some prospects for future.[1] In order to do this effectively I shall try to develop first a theoretical framework for education in general.

The process of acquiring knowledge has two aspects: One is external, the other is internal. What we mean by the internal aspect of the process of acquiring knowledge is the operation of our faculties which we employ while acquiring knowledge. As such, the analysis of this process is a theory of knowledge investigated in the branch of philosophy known as *epistemology*. The external process of acquiring knowledge is, on the other hand, what we call "learning". This is the process which is the subject of examination here as "education." Of course in this external process there are many external factors, such as instructor, teaching methods and other didactic means utilized in teaching and learning, all of which will be briefly discussed in this context.

Learning as an external process of acquiring knowledge can occur in two ways: One is natural learning, which means to attain knowledge mainly by the use of our faculties of learning and senses. The most effective method in this kind of learning is trial and error, as such it is self-learning. The other kind of learning is systematic knowledge acquisition. It is this second kind of learning that we should consider as actual education. Now we come to a point where we have to recognize the role of epistemology in education because education as systematic learning is an external process of acquiring knowledge, which is based on the internal process of acquiring knowledge. The latter is mainly the operations of our mind and other faculties of learning while we try to acquire knowledge. This means if we know how our faculties of learning operate then obviously we can teach the students more effectively. If such is the case, the internal process of acquiring knowledge can give us more effective methods of teaching and thus we need to utilize it.

Our explanation so far reveals that a theory of education

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[1] This paper is based on my brief presentation entitled "Turkish Experience in Islamic Education: Past, Present and Future" at *The 7th World Conference on Muslim Education*, Kolej Universiti Islam Antrabangsa Selangor, Shah Alam, 21-23 December 2009; see www.world-come2009.com.