**Towards a typology of Islamic religious education**

**Abstract**

In this article we explain the tents of the two contemporary traditions in Islam: the neo-traditional salafism and the liberal/progressive Islam and how they inform a typology of Islamic religious education. The typology clarifies the meaning of*tarbiyya, ta`dib, ta`lim* in the Islamic educational philosophy and how these concepts fit within a continuum of critical versus noncritical Islamic religious education. The purpose of this typology is to provide both scholars and practitioners a theoretical framework for thinking and reflecting upon their pedagogies and scholarly work.

**Keywords:** religious education, Islamic education, progressive Muslims, liberal Islam, Neo-traditional salafism, *tarbiyya, ta`dib, ta`lim.*

**Introduction**

The purpose of this essay is to propose a typology of Islamic religious education which takes into account the two competing traditions of Islamic communities of interpretation: neo-traditional salafism vs. progressive and liberal Islam—and their possible pedagogical manifestations in the field of religious (Islamic) education. This typology or conceptual model is relevant to explain Islamic education in western, pluralistic, and democratic society though we believe it can be useful to explain trends of Islamic education in Muslim-majority societies too.

In addition, we use the terminology of Islamic philosophy of education showing how concepts of *tarbiyya, tadib,* and *talim* are located within a continuum of critical versus non-critical voices of Islamic religious education as they are debated in Muslim and non-Muslim societies. What is important here is to help teachers and their students to reflect upon their religious identities, their understanding of Islam, and their teaching/learning practices. We believe that self-reflection is crucial for Muslims in negotiating their particular and religious identities in the modern, democratic, diverse, and globalizing world. According to Gross (2010) “the teacher’s role is to foster students’ development as independent learners who structure and “own” their religious knowledge, in keeping with their individual intellectual tendencies, diverse motivations and styles of learning, and other personal traits” (p. 267). In the following section we explore shortly the tenets of neo-traditional salafism and liberal/progressive Islam and afterwards we explain the insider vs. outsider patterns of critique in Islamic religious education.

**Neo-traditional salafism vs. liberal and progressive Muslims**

In Islam we can think of two competing traditions; The neo-traditional salafism, and the liberal/progressive Islam (Duderija, 2007, 2011; Kurzman, 1998; Saada & Gross, 2016). Each of these contemporary traditions or religious ideologies has their own understanding of modernity, democracy, progress, Islamic law (*sharia*), freedom of thought, the status of woman and non-Muslims and the interpretations of the Quran[[1]](#footnote-1) and the *Sunna* (prophet Muhammad’s teachings and deeds) (Duderija, 2007, 2011; Kurzman, 1998).

Neo-traditional salafism endorses Muslims to return to the pure and authentic Islam as it was manifested by the Prophet Muhammad and the *al-salaf al-salih[[2]](#footnote-2)* (the four righteous caliphs[[3]](#footnote-3) and the pious ancestors who followed them during the first century of Islam) (Duderija, 2007). It is the more conservative tradition of Islam which supports literal and exclusivist interpretation of the Quran, the *hadith* (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad*)*, and Islamic law (Al-Jabri, 1996; Leaman & Ali, 2008). Neo-traditional salafism accepts the instrumental (scientific and technological) and not the epistemological aspects (such as rationality, humanism, and personal autonomy) of the modern mindset (Duderija, 2007, Furman, 2016; Panjwani, 2012; Tibi, 1995, 2012). Neo-traditional salafism is built upon a romanticized and utopian vision of the past. That is, the Quranno-Sunnahic exponents recruit and the pre-modern and long-established juristic (*fiqh*) heritage[[4]](#footnote-4) (Duderija, 2007) in order to deal with modern problems and issues. Neo-traditional salafism believe in the necessity of gender segregation as the religious norm and a minimal contact between males and females in the larger society (Duderija, 2014a). It holds negative and sometimes hostile attitudes towards the western civilization (Tibi, 2012) arguing that “Islamic civilization as largely—if not completely –antithetical to that of the West allowing for no civilizational cross-pollination and syncretism” (Duderija, 2014a).

Adherents of Neo-traditional salafism believe that “textual sources precede and should not be understood through reality; rather reality should be understood through the text, thereby ignoring whatever reality shaped the process of text formation” (Duderija, 2007, p. 349). Thus, Muslims should not deviate from the religious knowledge produced by ‘credible’ and ‘authoritarian’ scholars and they need to explicate modernity, its problems, questions and needs in the name of the past (Saada & Gross, 2016). By the same token, ideas such as feminism, democracy, and freedom of thought are considered *bidah* or ungodly innovation (Duderija, 2014a). Neo-traditional salafism condemns the diversity of ideas about the truth and meaning of Islam (Haddad, 1995) and they apply a rigid, monolithic, literal, and dogmatic interpretation of the Quran. Proponents of neo-traditional salafism can be found in Middle Eastern countries and their influence extends to Muslim communities living in western countries such as U.S.A, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Duderija, 2007)

Unlike the one-dimensional, reductionist and past-oriented understanding of Islam and its history, progressive or liberal Islam can be viewed as an “umbrella term that signifies an invitation to those who want an open and safe space to undertake a rigorous, honest, [and] potentially difficult engagement with the tradition (Safi, 2003, p. 16-17). Progressive Muslims reject the static, dogmatic, patriarchal, de-contextualized and uncritical understanding of the *turath* (Islamic tradition) and they challenge “the transmission oriented and rigid interpretations of Islam and seek to appreciate and to contextualize the religious claims which are compatible with ideals of reflective education, rational thinking, mutual respect, and equal citizenship” (Saada & Gross, 2016, p. 1). They believe in the “socio-cultural embeddedness of the Quran and the Sunnah” (Duderija, 2007, p. 357) and that the “revivification of the heritage is possible only through a creative, historical, critical comprehension of it” (Boulatta, 1990, p. 16). Progressive Muslims, according to Safi (2017), strive to “realize a just and pluralistic society through critically engaging Islam, a relentless pursuit of social justice, an emphasis on gender equality as a foundation of human rights, a vision of religious and ethnic pluralism, and e methodology of non-violent resistant”

Epistemologically, progressive Muslims draw upon the distinction between religion and religious knowledge (Soroush, 2000). This means that the primary sources of Islam (the Quran and the Sunnah) should be interpreted considering the life conditions, experiences, and circumstances of the Muslims in a given time and place. In fact, they “embrace the modern episteme in the realms of humanities and social sciences” (Duderija, 2007, p. 356). They develop a non-apologetic and critical understanding of both Islam and modernity. This entails, for instance, the rethinking the medieval epistemology found in the works of Muslim scholars and the adaptation of Islamic teachings to democracy and the modern life.

Furthermore, liberal and progressive Muslims aim to problematize the dichotomies between Islam and modernity, Islam and democracy (Dilshod, 2010; Saada & Gross, 2016), and Islam and the west by viewing modernity and “its byproducts a result of transcultural and transpolitical intercivilizational process, thus demonopolizing the claim that modernity is a pure, universal, and monopolar western civilizational product” (Duderija, 2007, p. 355). That has been said, progressive Muslims adopt the modern idea and concepts in contemporary Muslim discourses and they do so by “exemplifying fragmentation and diffusion of intellectual authority in contemporary Muslim societies and by reflecting the multiplicity of its sources (Taji-Farouki, 2004, p. 5). Adherents of the progressive and liberal thinking in Islam can be found in the Muslim and non-Muslim societies as well (Duderija, 2007). It is worth noting that we should not view these two traditions of Islam in a dichotomous or mutually exclusive manner. In fact, they overlap and intertwine and therefore should not be viewed in an essenetialized way but “as heuristic devices which provide insight into the history of Islamic discourse (Kurzman, 1998, p. 5). In the following section we elaborate on how the two traditions explained above may inform the pedagogy of Islamic religious education.

**A typology of Islamic religious education**

Ashraf (1988) explains five kinds of knowledge in Islam: spiritual (knowledge of God and his characteristics); moral (the meaning of good life and Islamic ethics); intellectual (knowledge produced through application of reason and logic); knowledge based on imagination; and knowledge based on the senses and experience. Scholars agree on three major purposes of Islamic religious education (Cook & Malkāwī, 2010; Halstead, 1995, 2004; Waghid & Smeyers, 2014; Waghid, 2011). These are *tarbiyya* which means to grow and to rear the spiritual elements in students’ lives in accordance to the commands of God; *talim* means to instruct, and to perceive the knowledge transferred by teachers through instruction and teaching; and *tadib* which is the inculcating of good virtues and sound behaviors in Muslim students (Cook & Malkāwī, 2010).

Khan (1987) explains that *tarbiyya, tadib,* and *talim* deal with the spiritual, moral, and intellectual components of Islamic education respectively.The spiritual aspect of Islamic religious education aims to develop students’ desires and capacities to seek wisdom and justice as they are clarified in the Quran(Halstead, 1995). It means worshiping God through obedience to His instructions and by doing good deeds. It encourages Muslims to make the connection between their lives on earth and eternal life after death. According to Zia (2007) “spiritual development in an educational context means awareness and reflection upon one’s experiences; questioning and exploring the meaning of experience; understanding and evaluating the possible responses and interpretations; developing personal views and insights, and applying these insights to one’s own life” (p. 120).

*Tarbiyya,* using the Islamic terminology, cares more about the *Ibadat* (*huquq Allah*—God’s worship) rather than *muamalat[[5]](#footnote-5)* (*huquq al-ibad*—social obligations) (Waghid, 2011; Zia, 2007). It is concerned about instilling the tenets of faith in Muslim students such as the five pillars of Islam: the performance of prayer five times a day, fasting in the month of *Ramadan*, giving of alms to the poor (*zakat*), to believe in one god (Allah) and that Prophet Muhammad his messenger, and to perform pilgrimage (*hajj*) once in a life time to Makkah (Waghid, 2011). It is argued that this kind of education challenges discourses and practices of materialism, consumerism, and rationalism in the modern life (Hussain, 2004; Merry, 2006) by connecting Muslim believers to a transcendental power which provides them answers to existential questions and the meaning of prayer, forgiveness, patient, sacrifice and salvation. It aims to help Muslims achieve an inner peace by “developing and refining elements of love, kindness, compassion, and selflessness” (Cook & Malkāwī, 2010, p. xxviii). *Tarbiyya* emphasizes the belief and fear of one God (Allah) who is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent.

*Tadib in* Islamic philosophy requires Muslim students to be familiar with the moral teachings of Islam and its ethical code which depends basically on the Quran, *ahadith* (prophetic traditions) and the *fiqh* (jurisprudence). The word *tadib* is derived from the word *adab* which “has a connotation of good breeding, courtesy, and urbanity, in the later sense of civility, etiquette, and correct behavior in both social and political contexts” (Lewis, 1988, p. 27). Educating students to become good Muslims means to follow the divine law, the Quranic exegesis and the contribution of authoritative Muslim scholars (*ulama*) (Zia, 2007). For instance, students study within the *tadib* outlines what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in terms of behaviors and how to apply the recommended Islamic behaviors in everyday life. Halstead (1995) explains that the divine law in Islam “integrates political, social, and economic life as well as individual life into a single religious worldview” (p.29). Indeed, Islam has several moral teachings on topics such as marriage and divorce, sexual relationships, trade, governance, and how to treat needy people. In short, *tadib* cares more about the *muamalat* or the civil transactions and Muslim duties towards fellow humans, society, and environment (Johnston, 2004; Niyozov & Memon, 2011). This includes, in part, learning the civic responsibilities of Muslims towards believers of other religions, non-believers, and citizens of different cultural, linguistics, socioeconomic, political and ethnic backgrounds.

*Talim* is related to the work of teachers, how they transmit Islamic religious content and theory of knowledge in their classrooms (Halstead, 1995). Halstead (1995) explains in Islam “the teachers were accountable to the community not only for transmitting knowledge and for developing their students’ potential as rational beings, but also for initiating them into the moral, religious, and spiritual values which their community cherished” (p. 31). Although rote learning, memorization, and frontal teaching are very common in the Islamic world (Niyozov & Memon, 2011; Sahin, 2013) some philosophers of Islam such as Ibn Khaldun criticizes these methods of teaching and recommended nurturing skills of reasoning and critical thinking (Halstead, 1995).

In fact, the last decade there is a growing critique of the rigid and monolithic understanding of Islamic ideals and a request to adapt Islamic teachings to the values of modern and democratic life (Kunzman, 1998; Ramadan, 2004; Safi, 2003; Saada & Gross, 2016; Selcuk, 2012; Tan, 2011; Wilkinson, 2013, 2015; Waghid & Smeyers, 2014). Selcuk (2012) argues, for instance, that “theology must be suitable to improve individual intellect and appropriate for the democratization process of society” (p. 224). She adds that the *sharia* (Islamic law and jurisprudence) must be understood from a historical perspective allowing Muslims to contextualize the Islamic instructions based on their needs and the progress of their societies. Also, Selcuk (2012) and Wilkinson (2013) criticize the blind imitation of the interpretations of previous religion scholars, the literal interpretation of the Quran, and the uncritical acceptance of the Islamic cultural heritage. Waghid (2011) links Islamic education to the achievement of truth and justice, and Waghid and Smeyers (2014) suggest an adaptation of the concepts of *tarbiyya, tadib,* and *talim* to the demands of cosmopolitan and democratic citizenship.

The following typology summarizes the different positions on Islamic religious education as they apply concepts of *tarbiyya, tadib,* and *talim* and fit within the continuum of liberal/progressive versus neo-traditional salafi/conservative communities of interpretation.

**Liberal- progressive- Critical (maximal) *Talim* (reflective and reformist)**

***Tarbiyya (ibadat):* spirituality** ***Tadib(mu`amalat)*: morals**

**Neo-traditional salafism - Non-critical (minimal) *Talim* (conservative, fundamental)**

This typology of Islamic religious education provides teachers and practitioners of education a framework to cultivate the spiritual, moral, and intellectual faculties of their students. The typology illustrates that teachers of Islamic education may offer their students with the learning experiences that highlight different levels of *tarbiyya, tadib,* and *talim.* As we mentioned earlier and following the work of Waghid (2011) and McLaughlin (1992) we can think of teachers who are more or less critical in terms of allowing their students to 1) question religious ideas, stories, and concepts; 2) reconsider the contributions of religious authorities and scholars; and 3) reflect upon their faith and develop their own religious identities. Teachers who follow the neo-traditional salafism represent the minimalist (non-critical) attitude in Islamic education. They prefer teaching the “what” and “how” of Islam (Waghid, 2011). This kind of education is described in the literature of religious education as teaching into religion (Byrne, 2014; Saada, 2015) or teaching for commitment (Tan, 2008).

The non-critical mode of the typology encourages the teaching of the Islamic ethical code and spirituality in a confessional manner. This represents, for instance, past-oriented understanding of modernity; a binary view of the relationship between Islam and the western civilization; a limited understanding of diversity, human rights, and value pluralism in society; and an emphasize on the textualist and exclusionist (and not the rational or context-related) exegesis of the Quran, the *hadith*, and Islamic law (Al-Jabri, 1996; Ali & Leaman, 2008; Saeed, 2006; Saada & Gross, 2016). Non-critical and minimal perception of *talim* might be manifested through`traditional’ and non-reflective pedagogies such as the memorization of the Quran and the *hadith*, rote learning, frontal instruction, and role modeling. Teachers who are more critical represent the maximalist and the reformist outlook in the typology which engage students with the “why” of Islamic instructions. They want to make Islam more adaptable to democratic and pluralistic societies (Al-Jabri, 2009; Kamrava, 2009; Kurzman, 1998; Wright, 1996). We clarify this further in the following section.

To sum up we can roughly speak of four types of teachers in Islamic religious education: teachers who advance critical skills and values in both *tarbiyya and tadib*; those who are critical in *tarbiyya* and non-critical in *tadib;* those who are critical in *tadib* and not in *tarbiyya;* and those who are non-critical in both *tarbiyya* and *tadib.* Next we explain the meaning of critical Islamic education, the kind of questions teachers and students may ask, and why it is much appropriate for living in democratic and multicultural and multi-faith societies.

**Modes of critique in Islamic religious education**

The maximal and critical notion of *talim* in the typology appreciates student’s questioning of religious morals and spiritual ideals and it rejects “the monopoly over religious hermeneutics or the literal interpretations of Islamic texts” (Saada & Gross, 2016, p. 2). The critical standpoint assumes that “no scholar has absolute jurisdiction over what counts as legitimate or not, but rather that meanings are shared, experienced, and deliberated upon on the understanding that something new or other might still emanate” (Waghid, 2011, p. 4). It encourages Muslim students to interrogate the underlying assumptions of their beliefs and practices and to recognize the possible controversies and tensions in Islamic history, theology, and politics (Zia, 2007).

The maximal and critical notion of *talim* can be described as learning from religion (Saada, 2015) or teaching from commitment (Tan, 2008). It follows the assumption that “an authentic faith is an autonomous faith” (Laura & Leahy, 1989, p. 259), and it tries to balance rootedness with openness in Islamic religious education (Tan, 2008). This entails, for instance, that “students are introduced to [Islam] from within the religious system while developing the adolescent reflective thinking and rational autonomy” (Tan, 2008, p. 72). Also, teachers are encouraged to “ask questions and be willing to respond to the questioning honestly and in a way that respects the adolescent`s cognitive and emotional maturity… [to] make the adolescent aware that religion is a matter of faith rather than universally, publicly agreed belief… [that] morality is not exclusively dependent upon religion… [and to] encourage attitudes of tolerance and understanding in relation to religious disagreement” (Tan, 2008, p. 73). Critical *talim*, we can add, is much reasonable for students at the high school level assuming that they have established some sense of primary culture or religious belonging (Tan, 2008; Thiesen, 2014; Saada, 2015) and that they have developed the basic skills of critical thinking and argumentative capabilities.

We can think of two modes of critique while developing the students’ capacities of critical thinking about the moral and spiritual issues of Islam—a critique from within (criticism internal to a tradition) and from without (criticism external to a tradition) (Alexander, 2016; Leirvik, 1999; Runzo, 1989). The former can be described as education for weak rationality and the later is education for strong rationality[[6]](#footnote-6) (Tan, 2014). According to Leganger-Krogstad (2003) “religions need to be approached both from the ‘insider’ as living sources for faith, morals and life orientation—and from the ‘outsider’, as objects for critical investigation” (p. 179). Both perspectives assume that there is no objective or context-free rationality and “terms such as ‘justification’, ‘evidence’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘liberty’ and ‘personal choices’ are not context-less and ideology-free; rather they are dependent on historically concrete languages and practices, and take place in specific settings” (Tan, 2014, p. 329). This means that the practice of rationality and independent thinking are basically embodied within convictional communities (Jonathan, 1995; Laura & Leahy, 1989).

A critique from within applies, for instance, when students are exposed to the different interpretations of the religious text and its historical and contextual implications. Also, students may explore issues within the ethical and spiritual domains of Islam such as the meaning of *shura* (consultation) in Islam and how it was confiscated by the *Jabris[[7]](#footnote-7)* doctrine during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. Also, a critique from within encourages students to compare and contrast the *fatwas* (religious edict) offered by contemporary *ulama* (clergy) and to follow (if they decide to) what provides a convincingly stronger evidence. It allows students to question the meaning of some controversial words in Islam such as *jihad*, *caliphate*, *kufr*, [*hakimiyya*](https://www.google.co.il/search?rlz=1C1RNKB_enUS487US550&q=hakimiyya&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjCnpzxxo3TAhXF1xQKHRFoAYgQvwUIFygA)*, and hikmah* and torethink the possibilities and limits of the explanations of the medieval scholars. It encourages students to reflect upon the exegesis of early and modern scholarsand how they may reflect a male-oriented implications of the Quran and the Sunnah (Barlas, 2002). It promotes Muslims to question the ethico-legal authority[[8]](#footnote-8) of the *ahadith* (plural of *hadith*) and how the *hadith*-based *tafsir* (interpretation of the Quran) may restrict[[9]](#footnote-9) the universal message of the Quran (Saeed, 2006). It endorses students to debate questions such as: to what extent Muslims may accept the authenticity and historical reliability of the *ahadith*? (Saeed, 2006; Shahrur, 1990); to what extent are individual Muslims allowed to contemplate and interpret the Quran based on their abilities and skills[[10]](#footnote-10).

Some contemporary and progressive/liberal scholars who applied the internal critique in their investigations have established a creative and innovative understanding of Islam and the religious scripture. This includes, for instance, the writings of Wadud (2009) and Mernissi (1998) about the struggle for women’s rights in Islam; Shahrur’s (1990) linguistic analysis of the Quran and his rethinking of the law and the principles of jurisprudence; Abu Zaid’s critical hermeneutics of the Quran and the dialectical relationship between the text and the context (Kermani, 2006); Rahman’s (1982) historicism in understanding the relationship between Islam and modernity and his thematic analysis of the Quran (Rahman, 1980); Ramadan’s (2009) and Duderija’s (2014) input about *Maslaha (*common good) and *Maqasid al sharia* (the purposes of the Islamic law); Soroush’s (2000), Al-Jabri’s (1996), Kadivar’s (2009), and Khan`s (2006) writings on reason, freedom and democracy in Islam; Hassan’s (2013) exploration of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat*[[11]](#footnote-11); and Wilkinson’s (2015) recent work about Islamic education in a multi-faith and multicultural society.

Similarly, a critique from the outsider perspective is important for living in a diverse and multi-faith society. Wilkinson (2013) clarifies “in a multi-faith, rational, educated democracy, it is not good enough to just to say that Islam is the truest faith because God says so. Believers… need to be able to justify why, in a democracy, when all human beings are (in theory at least) morally equivalent to one another, it is still possible to select and be committed to one tradition of faith as opposed to another” (p. 439). In this regard teachers and their students may discuss issues such as the unity and justice of God and the meaning of *tawhid* (the unity of God), the meaning of salvation and the post-death survival (Khalidi, 1985), how Islamic morals are similar or different from other religions’ ethical systems? Can human beings live decently while not following the Islamic morals? Why God wants Muslims to worship Him? What is the rationale behind the *halal* (permitted and lawful) and *haram* (forbidden) behaviors in the Islamic lifestyle? How the belief in the predestined life explains humans’ free will and their responsibility for their deeds and the meaning of punishment or reward in the hereafter? “Can we live moral lives without god? Should we reject the notions of hell and damnation as incompatible with the belief in God’s goodness? … Can we have a satisfying spiritual life without religion?” (Noddings, 2006, p. 280) “What is the ultimate reason and meaning of all reality? Where does man come from and where does he go? Why is the world as it is? Why are we here? What will give us courage for life and what courage for death?” (Kung, 1978, p. 75), what should be the place of Islam in the public sphere? How the Islamic religious knowledge and authorities might be politicized by discourses of power and social/economic elites in a given society? To what extent Muslims may use the findings of modern sciences[[12]](#footnote-12) in order to investigate the ethico-legal content of the Quran? To what extent the Islamic interpretations are compatible with democratic values such as human rights, freedom of thought, and equal citizenship (Saada & Gross, 2016; Wright, 1996)?

In both of insider and outsider criticisms, students are expected to develop their own capacities of reflective and critical reasoning and to be appropriately moved by reasons (Alexander, 2016; Siegel, 1988). Critical *talim* then aims to reestablish an Islamic humanism (Al-Jabri, 1999; Rahman & Moosa, 2000; Tan, 2014) and to reclaim rationalism founded by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Rushd/Averroes (1126-98), Ibn Sina/Avicenna (980-1035) and al-Farabi (872-950) and the Mu`tazili theologians (Tan, 2014; Tibi, 2012; Wilkinson, 2015). Islamic humanism endorses Muslims to conduct “a meaningful application of the Islamic teachings to one’s life [assuming] that a person possesses the intellectual capacity and freedom to interpret and assess existing and new beliefs” (Tan, 2014, p. 331).

Pedagogically speaking, a critical stance in dealing with the moral and spiritual components of Islam values more the use of *aql* (rational thinking) versus *naql* (transmitted knowledge) and it appreciates *ijtihad*[[13]](#footnote-13) versus *taqlid*[[14]](#footnote-14) in the contextualizing and historicizing of religious truth claims’. Arguably, the use of empirical, experiential and logical knowledge in understanding the message of Islam is more compatible with the liberal philosophy of education because it allows for personal autonomy, critical thinking, rationality, individuality, and self-reflection.

**Conclusion**

The typology discussed in this article does not suggest a recipe for ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ Islamic education but a theoretical framework through which teachers can reflect upon their practices and pedagogical orientations. At the end, each teacher may choose what works for him/her based on his/her biography, theological training, and the needs of his/her students and the larger community. Progressive and liberal Muslims, we have argued, are more confident in advancing their students’ capacities of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning)and autonomy than the neo-traditional salafists. Teachers in both traditions, however, will establish their own insights and practices on how to differentiate between philosophical (reason-based) and religious (revelation-based) knowledge and beliefs (Saada, 2015). What is important, though, is to provide Muslim students the reflective skills and dispositions on how to live peacefully and productively in the increasingly globalizing and pluralizing societies (Wilkinson, 2015) and to be able to carry out a dialogue with people who hold a rival views about the meaning of righteous and spiritual life (Alexander, 2015).

At the same time we are inclined to join other scholars that non-critical strategies of religious education are very limited in terms of developing the Muslim students’ democratic character, their reflective capacities, and their moral reasoning (Panjwani, 2014; Selcuk, 2012; Saada, 2013; Saada & Gross, 2016; Tan, 2011, 2008; Waghid, 2011; Waghid & Smeyers, 2014). Critical conceptions of *tarbiyya* and *tadib* might be a good way for dealing with the “unhappy Muslim consciousness” (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 33) in western societies[[15]](#footnote-15). This is because critical Islamic education recognizes and respects the diversity of knowing within[[16]](#footnote-16) and outside Islam, the value of rationality, independent thinking, and the significance of political and democratic deliberation.

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1. It is considered the Word of God and the “Holy Scripture of Muslims and the most important text on which Islam is based” (Saeed, 2006, p. 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is believed that these people “are the sources of legitimate knowledge and the methodology of accessing this knowledge” (Duderija, 2014, p. 134) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Fist four Rashidun caliphs (632-660) Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Basically the legal hermeneutics of the major schools of thought (*madhahib*): The Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki and Shafi‘i. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. It is worth noting that the verses about personal matters and moral teachings are fewer (only 200) compared to 500 verses concerned with forms of worship and ritual (Saeed, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “The ability and willingness to justify one’s beliefs based on internal as well as external questions” (Tan, 2014, p. 330) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. It is a political philosophy in Islam which means that human beings do not have control over

   their actions, as they are all predetermined by God (Saeed, 2006, p. 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Some scholars view the *hadith* (the prophet’s saying) as unrecited revelation and therefore it is valid as much as the Quran and has to be followed regardless of time, place and circumstances (Saeed, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It is argued that this kind of interpretation reflect the social and historical conditions of people who lived in the seventh-century Hijaz. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Not relying on alim (authoritative religion scholar) for doing so is called the democratizing of understanding the Scripture (Saeed, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The meaning and nature of Islamic law as it is applies to Muslim living liberal secular democracies (Hassan, 2013, p. xii) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This means going beyond the grammatical, linguistic, and legal strategies in interpreting the Quran. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Interpreting the Islamic law as revealed in the Quran and the Sunnah so as to keep them in line with the intellectual, political, economic, legal technological and moral developments of society (Tan, 2014, p. 333). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The imitation and blind following of early scholars—medieval Sunni jurists and their juridical theology (Leaman & Ali, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. It is argued that Muslims in the west are attracted by discourses of defensive faith (the dichotomized constructions of Islam v. the west; Science v. religion; Islam v. modernity; and Islam v. democracy) or the abandonment of faith arguing that there is a “mismatch between the practice of [Muslims’] professional lives in non-religious contexts and the articulation of their religious beliefs” (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This may include learning about the theological schools of Asha`riya, Maturidis, Sufism, Shi’i and Mu`tazila as well as the legal contributions of the four mainstream *madhahib.* [↑](#footnote-ref-16)