Special Article

Re-imagining Muslim Education and the Cultivation of Democratic Citizens in South Africa

Yusef Waghid

Intr oduc t Ion

I have been engaged with Muslim education as a teacher, student, and scholar for more than four decades. I am privileged to have been born at the southern tip of the African continent—Cape Town—where my initiation into Muslim education commenced through the socializing efforts of my teachers and grandparents. They taught me to read the Quran, fundamentals of faith, elementary principles of cleanliness, and to be a person who connects with his fellow humans irrespective of race, class, language, and place of birth. I am what I became because of my fortunate rearing. The aspects of Muslim education exposited above are what contributed to my thoughts and practices today. In this sense, Muslim education is constituted by a notion of *tarbiyyah*—that is, being socialized into an inherited body of facts with little, if any, opportunity for critical appraisal of such tenets of faith. Such a notion of Muslim education is still dominant in South African Muslim educational institutions—mostly schools and seminaries—considering that the Muslim community comprising just under one million people continues to accentuate the significance of Quranic memorization and an adherence to fundamentals of the Sunnah or

Yusef Waghid, reads philosophy of education and is the author of *Towards an Ubuntu University: African Higher Education Reimagined* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, with Zayd Waghid, Judith Terblanche, Faiq Waghid, Lester Shawa, Joseph Hungwe, Thokozani Mathebula; foreword by Carlos Alberto Torres); *Education, Crisis, and Philosophy: Ubuntu within Higher Education* (Routledge, 2022); and *Democratic Education as Inclusion* (Lexington, 2022, with Nuraan Davids).

life experiences of the Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Almighty Allah be bestowed on him). The argument I proffer in this contribution is, first, that *tarbiyyah* as socialized education is insufficient to advance some of the critical postcolonial, more specifically, postapartheid ideals of a three-decades-old democratic society. Second, the notion of education as the cultivation of humaneness, just and truthful living, as couched through Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's understanding of *ta'dīb* (Al-Attas, 1991), is a meritorious practice and would advance equitable and transformative actions within a fledgling democratic community. However, as I shall argue, in postcolonial times *ta'dīb* on its own seems deficient in the pursuit of just and equal human co-living. Consequently, and third, I argue in defense of *ta'arruf* as a conception of education that can engender equitable, pluralist, and dissonant human relations so much needed to enhance South African Muslims' legitimate and genuine integration into a democratic society.

Plunging Into Socialized Practices

By far the majority of Muslims in South Africa consider Muslim education as necessary to advance their faith entitlements. Muslims at a young age are initiated into tenets of Islam with an overwhelming bias toward the recitation of the Quran and/or its memorization. A significant amount of time is spent on acquiring competence in Quranic recitation, and, if the entire Quran could not be memorized, at least some chapters or verses of the Quran are committed to memory. As a testimony to one's Muslimness Quranic recitation is considered to be of paramount importance. My own initiation into the life-world of a Muslim has been guided by a commitment to Quranic recitation and partial memorization. Equally, to be inducted into elementary understandings of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), morality (*aḥlāq*), Muslim history (*ta'rīkh*), and principles of belief and action (*tawhid*) provide the epistemological and ethical premises of Muslims' identity, consciousness, and praxis. In this way, *tarbiyyah* seems to be associated with the socialization of Muslims' life-worlds. Of significance in the defense of Muslim education as socialization (*tarbiyyah*) is the interconnectedness of the concept with a reference to Allah's position as *rabb,* or Originator. By implication, a Muslim's education commences with an acknowledgment of the omnipotent presence of Allah in everything a Muslim pursues. The recitation of the first chapter (*sūrah*) of the Quran in every prayer a Muslim performs attests to the gratitude and appreciation she announces in advancing her education:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Owner of the Day of Judgment, Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help. Show us the straight path, The path of those whom Thou hast favoured. Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

In this chapter (*sūrah al-fātiḥah*) a Muslim reveals her bond with Allah—her Divine God—whom she recognizes as her spiritual, transcendent, sublime Creator. Espousing her inner self's connection with Allah is constitutive of the intimate tranquility she encounters when privately and publicly declaring her spirituality. In this way, first, *tarbiyyah* denotes a Muslim's innermost relationship with herself in the presence of Allah—that is, *tarbiyyah* signifies a Muslim's internal relationship with Allah Almighty. Concurrently, and second, it is her pronouncement of her connection with a transcendental God that influences everything she does in her worldly life, in particular her relations with fellow Muslims, other humans, and nonhumans. The point is, *tarbiyyah* is a recognition that no life in this world can be enacted without other humans and nonhumans. What follows from such an understanding of *tarbiyyah* is that Muslims are aroused to live their lives in recognition of their inner selves and concomitantly the cultivation of relations with other humans. Consequently, *tarbiyyah* comprises two aspects: inclining the self toward Allah until it achieves tranquility in Allah's remembrance and abiding in knowledge of His divinity (al-Attas, 1995, p. 146). This condition of self is referred to as the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*), involving the self in intellectual or rational actions with herself and others (*al-nafs al-naṭiqah*). Thus, a Muslim self acquires perceptive and imaginative qualities through her intimate relations with Allah, whereas in the self's relations with others in the world, it intelligently or rationally interprets and reinterprets ideas and experiences (thoughts and practices) it engages with. As aptly remarked by al-Attas (1995), "The soul [self] is . . . not . . . passive; it is creative, and through perception, imagination and intelligence it participates in the 'creation' and interpretation of the worlds of sense and sensible experience, of images, and of intelligible forms or ideas" (p. 171). My understanding of a Muslim (self) is one who connects innately with Allah coupled with using her intelligence in worldly relations with others.

If *tarbiyyah* (socialization) distinctively involves invoking Muslims to be perceptive, imaginative, and rational, then it is inconceivable that such a form of Muslim education ought to be equated with doctrinaire thinking. This means that *tarbiyyah* should not be implemented on condition that Muslims be indoctrinated. Indoctrination as a form of programming or

brainwashing can hardly be considered an authentic educational practice. What makes *tarbiyyah* an authentic educational practice of socialization is that Muslims are provoked to become discerning, visionary, and reasonable. For instance, when Muslims memorize the Quran they are expected to become insightful, inspired, and reasonable. How else, if the Quran summons Muslims to contemplate (*tafakkur*), to reflect (*fahm*), and to act with their intellect (*ijtihād*)? Of course, *tarbiyyah* (socialization) cannot be other than provoking the thoughts of Muslims to act with discernment, imagination, and reasonableness. However, as can be corroborated both conceptually and pragmatically, Muslim education as *tarbiyyah* (socialization) in South Africa, Africa, and elsewhere had unexpected outcomes (Waghid, 2011; Hashim, 2015), such as the incapacity of many Muslims to question, think for themselves, and argue thoughtfully, creatively, and critically. The latter are qualities associated with *tarbiyyah* (socialization) that, unfortunately, lost their way when Muslims seemingly became too dogmatic and obsessive with only the external paraphernalia of their education such as the esteem to have committed the Quran to memory, its harmonious recitations, and celebrating customary rituals without sufficient reflective thought. In South African Muslim educational institutions, in particular independent schools, understandably, Muslims ought to be initiated into teachings of democratic citizenship education, considering that the latter constitutes part of the new National Curriculum Statement. These independent Muslim schools are required to integrate aspects such as human rights, rights and responsibilities of democratic citizens, recognition of diversity, and differences commensurate with teachings of what it means to be Muslim. Teaching democratic citizenship education in independent Muslim schools is primarily linked to enhancing social cohesion, integration, reconciliation, and nation building after decades of apartheid rule. However, it appears as if many independent schools do not consider themes about democratic citizenship education as legitimately part of a Muslim school's curriculum and have excluded some of these themes from the ambit of what is known as Islamic Studies. Considering that the subject of Life Orientation is included in the country's National Curriculum Statement, many Muslim independent schools have allocated the teaching of themes about democratic citizenship education to the subject of Life Orientation. In fact, Niehaus (2011, p. 20) confirmed that HIV and AIDS education together with sexuality studies are also excluded from the subject of Islamic Studies in independent Muslim schools. If Muslim education as *tarbiyyah* (socialization) can

be separated from the teaching of pertinent themes that can contribute toward the democratization of civil society and its educational institutions, then questions can legitimately be asked about the relevance of such a form of education. I offer three remarks that seem to go against any form of Muslim education as a socialized practice that excludes an interrogation of concepts pertaining to democratic citizenship education.

First, not to consider an inquiry into social cohesion and integration as important for Muslim education, more specifically, Islamic Studies, is a denial that an analysis of social cohesion and human integration have ever been and should be a part of the lives of Muslims. The prophet Muhammad considered co-living with Jews and Christians in the newly found city of Madinah as a recognition of others' rights to hold diverse and dissenting religious views and that they should not be compelled to be assimilated into the dominant faith at the time (Islam). To think that social cohesion and integration does not deserve a place within Islamic Studies is to undermine the human urgency to interconnect with one another. If Islam stands for peace, there can only be peace and tranquility when Muslims are taught to cohabit their place of living with others. In fact, how would Muslims ever disseminate an integrated message of Islam if they themselves do not recognize the significance of societal interrelationships? Such irrational thinking is undoubtedly a recipe for hatred, antagonism, and exclusion.

Second, South Africa is considered the country with the highest number of infected HIV and AIDS patients in the world. If Muslims can be taught at a very young age about the risks and opportunities for HIV and AIDS prevention, including it in a Muslim education curriculum will only advantage the broader South African community. As far as I know, Muslims in the country do not live or are not expected to live isolated from other citizens. South African Muslims are integrated in the broader civil society and are subjected to the Constitution and Bill of Rights like every other citizen. And to presume that HIV and AIDS have nothing to do with Muslim lives is not only to be oblivious of the number of Muslims already affected by the disease, but also ignorant that Muslims should be insulated from a world pandemic. The very meaning of *tarbiyyah* (socialization) implies being associated with all of humanity irrespective of race, ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation. I am here, specifically, thinking of the current coronavirus pandemic that also had its impact on the wider South African population, including the minority of Muslims in the country. If the argument is proffered that an inclusion of preventative measures in spreading the virus has no place in Islamic Studies, then

such a form of Muslim education deserves to be reconsidered as apt for
the conscientization of humanity.

Third, if discussions of reconciliation together with forgiveness and
nation building and development are not considered as relevant to and
for Islamic Studies, then the possibility would wane that Muslims will
ever be considered as authoritative contributors to the cultivation of their
now almost three-decades-old democracy. Several Muslims have endured
hardships in the antiapartheid struggle, and some lost their lives as well.
The revered Imam Abdullah Haron (spiritual leader of the Stegman Road
Mosque in Claremont, Cape Town) was incarcerated for his antiracist
epistemology. He died in defense of justice and reconciliation at a time
when not many among the Muslim clergy at the Cape supported his politi-
cal stance. Equally, there are a few religious leaders who opposed racial
discrimination and segregation during the apartheid days. Thus, any effort
to exclude studies on reconciliation, forgiveness, and nation building from
a Muslim education curriculum would not only undermine conscientized
efforts of some of the Muslim religious leaders at the Cape, but also the
understanding that Islam is not opposed to human integration and peace.
When the Quran reminds us that humans should remain Allah-conscious
in the pursuit of collective ideals, it does not make any distinction among
them. Therefore, any argument against integrating studies about reconcili-
ation and nation building into a Muslim education curriculum does not
merit any support at all.

Next, I examine why Muslim education as *ta'dīb* (goodness) has
emerged as complementary to the concept of *tarbiyyah* (socialization).

actIng WIth goodne SS (*Ta'dīb*) or not?

The concept of *ta'dīb* as Muslim education gained much consideration
after Syed Naquib al-Attas's pronouncement that the concept is consti-
tuted by at least three features: First, as a philosophical concept, *ta'dīb* is
inextricably connected to disciplined action of the mind, which involves
discerning and justifiable speech devoid of untenable claims (al-Attas,
1991, pp. 24–26). In this way, goodness in the education of Muslims
seems to be linked to their plausible articulations of truth claims that are
prudent and judicious. In agreement with al-Attas (1991), Muslim leader-
ship everywhere, including South Africa, is deprived of virtue (goodness)
as a corollary of its lack of *adab* (good action). And, unless such leadership
invokes "proper" and "right" speech—that is, discerning and justifiable

speech—Muslim communities and their education would remain in a condition of injustice (al-Attas, 1991). Injustice prevails when (educational) leaders show an incapacity for discernible and justifiable speech. When Muslim leadership in South Africa fails to respond carefully and judiciously to the societal malaises of patriarchy and religious intolerance many Muslims might have become vulnerable to, in al-Attas's semantic parlance, a lack of *adab* (goodness) is present in their speech and practices. The point is that a lack of *adab* (goodness) within Muslim education would invariably result in uninformed and dissolute speech that would undermine any just form of education.

Second, al-Attas (1991) enunciates that the manifestation of *adab* in communal affairs preserves a Muslim community from disgrace. In this way, *ta'dīb* is also a moral concept. I concur with al-Attas that offering a resistance to shame and humiliation (disgrace) would honor the legitimate efforts of such a community to strive toward the realization of truth and justice. Muslim education as *ta'dīb* has the potential to resist forms of human action that accentuate humiliation and dishonor. In this regard, disgrace or shame occurs when people take part in actively stigmatizing vulnerable people and groups (Nussbaum, 2004). By virtue of its potential to resist forms of vulnerability and providing people the opportunity to live shame-free lives with others—a matter of protecting people from disgrace—it can be inferred that *ta'dīb*, as preserving Muslims from disgrace (al-Attas, 1991), can ensure the protection of humans (Muslims) from shame. Davids (2013) posits that in the Western Cape of South Africa the identities and constructions of Muslim women reveal a cosmopolitan imagery: some Muslim women see themselves as being subjected to domesticity and patriarchy; others see themselves with a particular identity that determines their sense of belonging in Islam; and, some women consider themselves as private/public participants in their advocacy of Islam. Against the backdrop of these different images of Muslim women, one aspect stands out: the persistent hegemony of patriarchy in relation to Muslim leadership coupled with male-dominated interpretations of religious sources of knowledge, and the marginalization of women in Muslim educational institutions as legitimate proponents of Muslim epistemology. Thus, in postapartheid South Africa, the majority of Muslim women seem to be genuinely discriminated against as a consequence of a misconstrued notion that Islam's protagonists exclusively remain Muslim men of faith. If *ta'dīb* were to offer Muslims an educational paradigm to renounce any form of discrimination, humiliation, and marginalization, then *ta'dīb* cannot

be practiced to advocate exclusivism. Discrimination, stigmatization, and exclusivism are shameful human acts that cannot be justified by Muslim education as *ta'dīb*.

Third, *ta'dīb* as Muslim education is also an epistemological concept. It advances the notion of Islamization made famous by al-Faruqi (1982). Islamization basically calls for the integration of different categorizations of knowledge (al-Faruqi, 1982). If different categorizations of knowledge in an integrated form were to inform a Muslim education curriculum, then the bifurcation of knowledge into *'ulūm al-naqliyyah* (traditional/religious/revealed sciences) and *'ulūm al-aqliyyah* (intellectual, philosophical, and rational sciences) is an untenable idea. In such a bifurcated depiction of knowledge, an understanding that what has been revealed is not rational and what is rational cannot be considered revealed is prevalent. Simply put, the bifurcation of knowledge into revealed and rational sciences seems to be an absurd idea. What has been revealed to humans must be subjected to their interpretations, otherwise humans' autonomy would be eroded vis-à-vis their capacities to make sense of revealed knowledge. If the recipients of the Quran and the Sunnah (including *Ahādith*) are prohibited from interpreting these texts, then human interpretation is simply dismissed and the action concepts like *fahm* (reflection), *tafakkur* (contemplation), and *ijtihād* (intellectual exertion) enunciated throughout these texts become superfluous to human understanding. What ensues is that Islamization as knowledge integration becomes an impossibility when essential sources of Muslim education are denied interpretation. The point is that human interpretation of meanings of the Quran and Sunnah cannot be considered as extraneous to preserve the authenticity of revealed sciences. The authenticity of the revealed texts lies in the interpretations proffered and the justifications for such interpretations, and not in the absence of interpretation itself. Likewise, referring to knowledge as rational in itself means that such knowledge can be interpreted and justified by the validity of the arguments that support the interpretive judgements proffered. However, separating the rational from the revealed implies that what has been intellectualized about excluded the insights gained through humans' transcendental relationship with Allah. For Muslims, Allah's presence is ubiquitous, so both revealed and rational sciences involve the presence of Allah. Muslims do not exert themselves intellectually without Allah being present. They do not think without some spiritual guidance from Allah. Therefore, what has been considered as revealed and rational knowledges both contain Allah's presence, or at least Allah's promise to guide humans.

By implication, a demand for the integration of revealed and rational sciences seems to be a redundant idea.

Consequently, in South African independent Muslim schools the Islamization of knowledge idea never really succeeded because knowledge in these schools remains bifurcated as revealed versus acquired (rational) sciences, or traditional versus intellectual sciences. The problem with such an indefensible bifurcation of knowledge idea is premised on the notion that intellectualism has no bearing on what is traditional and that the revealed are unrelated to the acquired sciences. Yet, what has been revealed and acquired rationally remain subjected to human interpretive judgements, and any form (categorization) of knowledge, for Muslims, cannot avoid the omnipotent presence of Allah's guidance.

otherneSS, dIfference, and the recognItIon of PlUralIty of thought and PraxIS: *Ta'arruf* aS a form of muSlIm educatIon

The Muslim community in South Africa is not homogeneous in the sense that its members advocate a monolithic understanding of Islam, that they practice their faith according to a singular jurisprudential school of thought, and that they all attend independent Muslim schools with exactly the same missionary ethos. Instead, the minority Muslim community constitutes Muslims with diverse identities, practices, and understandings of the Quran and Sunnah. They are bound by their adherence to the primary sources of Islam, and the enactment of customs and traditions that seemed to have preserved their identities as Muslims. Quite poignantly, what South African Muslims came to realize even prior to the advent of a democratic polity is that Muslims ought to play a role in the advancement of a democratic citizenry. Consequently, one finds that Muslim slogans of unity against apartheid injustices, the participation of Muslims in the political dispensation of the newly founded democratic state, and the integration of Muslims in public schools, universities, and places of work have never been distanced from the life-worlds of the Muslim community. My own appointment as a philosopher of education at a leading university in South Africa more than two decades ago attests to the integration of Muslims into academic life. Inasmuch as postapartheid South Africa has become a haven for Muslim living, Muslims remain challenged by quintessential resistances to Muslim living even almost three decades into the country's democracy. First, a year prior to my promotion to the professoriate, I walked down the corridor of my department when a colleague

suddenly commiserated with me for the 9/11 twin tower bombings in New York, because the identity revealed of one of the suicide bombers was Mohammad al-Atta, a Muslim engineer who studied in Hamburg. If the empathy expressed toward me was because my colleague knew I was Muslim and that all Muslims should be held responsible for the atrocious acts of violence caused in New York in September 2001, then her commiseration seemed to have been misplaced at the time. If all Russians should be banned from sport activities throughout the world because their current government decided to invade Ukraine, then an injustice towards innocent others might be perpetrated only because of having a common identity with those who actually perpetrated the atrocity.

Second, after I was appointed as a professor of philosophy of education in the department where I work, my then dean requested that I provide him with published sermons I rendered at a local mosque in the area where I reside. I did, but equally questioned the motivation for having been asked, I think, for a justification of my religious beliefs and practices and whether my way of doing philosophy of education might have been influenced by some surreptitious form of radical fundamentalism that could influence my university teaching. Undeniably, a philosopher of education is influenced by the personal, public, and professional, as articulated in my interview for the professorship I currently hold. The personal refers to the traditions, thoughts, customs, and ideologies I have been socialized with, whereas the public refers to my academic pronouncements on philosophy of education at seminars, conferences, and in published articles, chapters, and books. The professionalism associated with my practices as a philosopher of education invariably involves the justifications I proffer in defense of the arguments I advance. Merely having been impelled to produce the written texts without having been critically scrutinized is reminiscent of an apartheid *modus operandi* that involved an objectionable scepticism toward others' seminal thoughts. I cannot imagine that one's scholarship would be questioned as too radical for university students. Such ludicrous demands undermine the autonomy of students to think for themselves, and the trepidation that my work would possibly indoctrinate them wrongly is based on a sham assertion that all knowledge should be informed by a singular train of thought.

Third, for many years I left a Quran in my office at work that I could refer to in discussions with others, or for private interrogation. As with the portrait on my wall that contains Arabic inscriptions about compassion and service to humanity, these Muslim artifacts—an Arabic-English Quran and a visual rendering that reminds one of the importance of compassion and justice in

one's daily practices—seemed to have raised the curiosity of some individuals who entered my workspace. The question they were confronted with is how a productive and astute scholar could reconcile his personal and public intellectual aspirations? Undeniably, the Quran has always been my intellectual source of inspiration. My guidance, curiosity, and desire to research stems from my understanding of the Quran corroborated by other diverse sources of knowledge. It is also in the same Quran that I uncovered verse 13 of "the apartments" (*al-ḥujurāt*), chapter 49, which corroborates Muslim education as *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) (Waghid, 2020):

> O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he or she who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things).

Why should *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) be considered as an authentic concept that constitutes Muslim education? One deduces from the above Quranic injunction that differences among human encounters can most appropriately be understood when humans associate with one another. In association the capacity is always there for humans to uncover one another's commonalities and differences. They do not merely constitute an aggregation of people with different cultural, sociopolitical, and religious persuasions. Instead, humans in association are bound together by their individual and group subjectivities on the basis of which they come to know one another (*li–ta'ārafu*). The perpetuation of human encounters is premised on the idea that knowledge about oneself and others is always in becoming so that there is no end to what will be revealed about one another. In other words, human encounters remain in potentiality in relation to the vastness of Allah's knowledge and knowledge they endeavor to acquire about the material world. Put differently, humans constantly engage in thinking about, probing, and contemplating the limitlessness of the universe. Yet, as acknowledged even by Aristotle and Plato, humans think best when they think in cooperation and affiliation with others, that is, in the context of an encounter that is intimate, caring, and enduring (Nussbaum, 1990). This means that *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) seems to have about it a special poise and graciousness—an ethical style of engagement that Muslim thinkers like Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, and al-Ghazzali had about them. More recently, Fazlur Rahman and Naquib al-Attas proffered seemingly different understandings of knowledge that,

in my view, informed one another's understandings of knowledge in a dignified manner rather than destructive and oppositional thought pieces on knowledge. According to Rahman, knowledge seemed to be open-ended, and interpretations of such knowledge are ongoing (Rahman, 1988). Al-Attas proffered that knowledge is universal and complete (certain) and not open to revision by subsequent generations but only "'to further elaboration and application" (Wan Daud, 1997, p. 15). If Wan Daud's understanding of al-Attas's conception of certain knowledge is correct, then subjecting such knowledge to further scrutiny—in the context of elaboration and application—is in fact tantamount to a recognition that interpretations of knowledge are perpetual. In this way, it seems as if Rahman and al-Attas do not distinctively differ on their conceptions of knowledge.

What draws me to *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) is not only its potential for knowledge renewal and reconceptualization, but also its capacity to cultivate democratic relations among citizens (Muslims and non-Muslims) in postapartheid South Africa. It is to such a discussion that I now turn to.

cultivating a democratic citizenry through *Ta'arruf* (associational Knowing)

Earlier, I alluded to the establishment of human encounters on the basis of engagement. Engagement is not merely an act of people participating in communal and societal affairs because the possibility is always there that some people might just make up the numbers and not actually contribute to the activity. Therefore, it seems as if engagement implies establishing a connection among people on the grounds that they willingly and attentively express themselves through speech. But then again, speech cannot also be incongruous thought pieces, for that in itself would possibly deter others from listening. If speech deserves to be listened to, then it has to be articulated in a cogent style. If speech is not lucid the possibility is always there that such speech would be dismissed. Consequently, if humans ought to connect with one another they have to engage in an inclusive manner whereby they remain committed to their deliberations as democratic equals. It is through deliberative engagement that speech becomes subjected to at least three dimensions: articulations, listening, and talking back. I agree with Benhabib (1996) that a deliberative approach to democratic engagement "is a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard to collective decision making processes in a

polity" (p. 69). In South Africa, where Muslims constitute a small minority, a deliberative approach to democratic engagement would encourage inclusive political participation on the grounds that decisions affecting the well-being of all citizens as a collectivity can be viewed as "the outcome of a procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals" (Benhabib, 1996, p. 68). In my view, *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) offers Muslims an opportunity to consider themselves as moral and political equals with others (the majority) embodied in democratic decision-making in the interest of all South African citizens. It is through *ta'arruf* that Muslims as moral and political equals can engage with others about norms that are morally and politically binding and agreed to by all affected by their consequences.

In deliberative democratic encounters, all citizens (including Muslims) have the same chances to initiate speech, question, and open debate; all have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and, all have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the rules of the deliberative discourse (Benhabib, 1996). Clearly, if *ta'arruf* were to be extended in relation to democratic deliberative engagement, as a form of Muslim education, teachers and learners in independent Muslim schools would be summoned to present their points of view and positions to others through processes of articulation that invite them to think for themselves. They would also become involved in a form of engagement whereby they would think from the standpoint of all involved whose claims are acceptable, just, and appropriate. Such deliberative encounters also make provision for a reflexivity condition whereby outcomes of the deliberations cannot be conceived as final but can be revised and reexamined. If teachers and learners can engage in such deliberative encounters, then the possibility that noncoercive and nonfinal processes of opinion making in pedagogical spheres can be nurtured in independent Muslim schools. And this can only happen if *ta'arruf* is practiced unconstrainedly in such educational institutions.

Of course, in deliberative encounters there would always be dissenters who have the right to both withhold the assent and to resist the rules and agenda of any public debate. In line with *ta'arruf,* no person (teacher or learner) should ever be coerced into a compromise, for that would surely undermine the legitimate and authentic deliberation. So, unanimity cannot be attained at the cost of silencing dissent and curtailing minority viewpoints (Benhabib, 1996). In this way, *ta'arruf* as Muslim education should allow for dissonant thinking that invariably manifests in deliberative matters of mutual public concern.

toWard a concluding remarK

My argument in defense of *ta'arruf* (associational knowing) as Muslim education is not an attempt to undermine *tarbiyyah* (socialization) and *ta'dīb* (good action). Rather, if Muslim education cannot contribute toward the cultivation of democratic citizens in South Africa (and perhaps elsewhere) there is just no point in a Muslim minority striving to be included and recognized in an overwhelming non-Muslim dominated society. Embracing a deliberative democratic framework of *ta'arruf* does not mean that Muslim education, its teachers and learners, forgo their Muslimness. Instead, a more expansive framework of *ta'arruf* that incorporates tenets of *tarbiyyah* and *ta'dīb* offers South African Muslims a pedagogical framework for deliberative politics underscored by plausible forms of intersubjective communicative procedures so necessary to ensure their human flourishing in a culturally diverse society. Our hope would be that Muslims' rights to have rights will then remain a legitimate social and political reality in the context of a democratic society that through its Constitution and Bill of Rights upholds norms of universal moral respect and egalitarian reciprocity that allow minorities and dissenters to be protected from the possible tyranny of the majority.

References

Al-Attas, S. M. N. (1991). *The concept of education in Islam.* International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

Al-Attas, S. M.N. (1995). *Prolegomena to the metaphysics of Islam: An exposition of the fundamental elements of the worldview of Islam.* International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1982). *Islamization of knowledge: General principles and workplan.* National Hijrah Centenary Committee of Pakistan.

Benhabib, S. (1996). Toward a deliberative model of democratic legitimacy. In S. Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and difference: Contesting the boundaries of the political* (pp. 67–94). Princeton University Press.

Davids, N. (2013). *Women, cosmopolitanism and Islamic education.* Peter Lang.

Hashim, R. (2015). The decline of intellectualism in higher traditional studies: Reforming the curriculum. In R. Hashim & M. Hattori (eds.), *Critical issues and reform in Muslim higher education* (pp. 110–139). International Islamic University Press.

Niehaus, I. (2011). Emancipation or disengagement? Muslim minorities and their Islamic schools in Britain, the Netherlands and South Africa. In A. Tayob, I. Niehaus, & W. Weisse (eds.), *Muslim schools and education in Europe and South Africa* (pp. 15–26). Waxmann.

Nussbaum, M. C. (1990). *Love's knowledge: Essays on philosophy and literature.* Princeton University Press.

Rahman, F. (1988). Islamization of knowledge: A response. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, 5*(1), 4–5.

Waghid, Y. (2011). *Conceptions of Islamic education: Pedagogical framings*. Peter Lang.

Waghid, Y. (2020). *Ta'arruf as a philosophy of Muslim education: Extending Abu Bakr Effendi's pragmatism*. African Sun Media

Wan Daud, W. M. N. (1997). Islamization of contemporary knowledge: A brief comparison between al-Attas and Fazlur Rahman. *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 2*(1), 1–19.