

The Muslim World and the West: The Potential of Educational Institutions in Building Bridges in the Context of Malaysia

Che Noraini Hashim* & Hasan Langgulung*

Abstract

The Muslim World and the West share the same global village but each has a different civilizations and worldview. Education is seen as a major vehicle in transmitting ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. This paper begins with a brief history of the educational links between the West and the Muslim World and later discusses the role of educational institutions in creating barriers or building bridges between The Muslim World and the West, with special reference to Malaysia. It then discusses the fact that despite its independence from Britain in 1957, Malaysian educational institutions and systems are still influenced by the colonial educational system. In lieu of the above situation, pertinent questions have been raised, such as our consistencies in creating barriers and building bridges with the West. Finally, this paper puts forward some suggestions in terms of the remedial measures to minimize the barriers and bridge the gap between the West and the Muslim world.

Introduction

We Muslims are living in a period of crisis. Nowadays, it seems as if the very foundations of contemporary Muslim society are being threatened from all directions, internal and external, and by hidden and apparent forces. Powerful and influential forces are undermining the Muslim world, from the basic family institutions to educational systems and political frontiers. As a matter of fact, it is well known that Islam as a system of life is closely related to political, economic, educational, social institutions and history. Let us begin our discussion with a brief history of Muslim civilization, which experienced its golden age during the 10th to the 13th centuries. This was the era in which Muslim civilization was sought after by the Eastern and Western worlds, where scientific and intellectual achievements blossomed in the Golden age.

During this Golden Age (900-1200 A.D) the philosophers, scientists and engineers of the Islamic world contributed enormously to science and technology, inventions and innovations and by preserving humanity, values

*Institute of Education, International Islamic University, Malaysia

and ethics. During this period, the Muslims had established many Islamic centers of culture, religion and science which produced notable scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, doctors and philosophers (such as Ibn-e-Sina and Ibn-e-Rushd). Emphasis on civilization covered areas such as technology and innovation like the irrigation and canal systems, economics such as investment and education where the teaching of the Qur'an was stressed and managed to produce a comparatively high level of literacy among the general populace. Joseph (2002) in his well-known book, "Arab Civilisation", explains why education was bound to flourish wherever Islam spread, in his words: "Islam encouraged a noble ambition for learning, a craving for learning, a spirit of tolerance, a restless ambition to extend wider and yet wider the frontier of knowledge which so distinguishes the Muslims' mentality and stimulated lofty purpose".

However, this period was followed by a subsequent collapse where later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, Islamic regions fell under the sway of European imperial powers. Following the World War I, the remnants of the Ottoman Empire were parcelled out and controlled by Europe. History has shown that in 1920 the triumph over the Muslim world was complete. The long struggle between Islam and Christendom, between the Islamic empires and Europe ended in a decisive victory for the West and these further created barriers in many aspects of life in the Muslims world.

As a matter of fact, Islam had awakened mankind from the dark ages, from a period of ignorance to new frontiers where the ingredients of success can be seen in the Islamic civilization such as in the development of progressive knowledge, values and high principles of life. Bernard, L. (1984) in his book 'What Went Wrong?' says, "For many centuries the world of Islam was in the forefront of human civilization and achievement." He continues: "Islam represented the greatest military power on the earth-its armies at the very same time, were invading Europe and Africa, India and China. It was the foremost economic power in the world, trading in a wide range of commodities through a far-flung network of commerce and communications in Asia, Europe and Africa". Thus, What Went Wrong? A question that we really need to ponder upon especially in this period of crisis.

Educational Institutions as Civilizational Barriers or Help in Building Bridges

Generally, with the loss of power and prestige, honour and glory, Muslims in the course of time became poor, weak and ignorant finally tempting others (the West and the Non Muslims) to invade every aspect of their life politically, economically and socially. The Muslim community grew restless and was terribly alarmed by such barriers to Islamic Unity as

nationalism, linguistic and cultural bonds and geo-political preferences, which are in a state of gradual erosion all over the Muslim World.

Historically, the colonists left an educational legacy that could fulfill their strategized needs and objectives of dominating the Muslim world through formal and informal education. The early contact between the West as the master and the Muslims as 'slaves' left a deep hatred or imprint of hatred between them until after independence. It is not surprising that formal education was almost absent during this period. Some accounts verify that informal, unorganized efforts were made on an occasional basis to convey minimum schooling to Muslims and other settlers' children.

How is it that the Muslim society, which was once a pioneer in science and technology, and economics, collapsed? Some have put the entire blame on the West who had invaded the Muslim countries, some put the dilemma as "What has happened to the Muslims?" Are they not guided by the holy book? Is Islam a backward religion?" Mababaya (2005) state that Muslims and Muslim countries are faced with tremendous and frightening challenges. We Muslims have reached the bottom of weakness in all aspects of development. Not only in the field of education, but we are also poor compared to the non-Muslims in terms of research and advancements in science and technology too. In the development of moral values and personality, we are labeled not only as "extremists" but also as "terrorists". We become very weak in practicing the real teachings of Islam that will make us ambassadors of peace instead of extremism. Our failure to do Da'wah with true knowledge and beautiful wisdom reflects our weakness. Thus, non-Muslims do not appreciate the excellence of Islam; instead, they label it as an "evil" religion. The writers believe, this phenomenon in general, will further create another barrier with the West.

Mababaya (2005) also claimed that the root cause of the weakness of the Muslims is due to their having left the clear and pure religion of Islam. The proliferation of deviant groups of innovators has further weakened them, and they have become too weak to withstand the tests of time and humiliation. However, the writers believe as Muslims, we are not supposed to be weak. There is still a hope to revive the old Islamic spirit and glory. The Quran says: "Despair not of the Mercy of Allah" (Surah 39:52, Al-Zumar).

Does Education Help in Building Bridges?

During the British period, education was divided into religious and non-religious education. According to Rosnani (1994), the existence of two educational systems, the traditional, religious and the secular, national that ran parallel to one another created and started the secularization of education in Malaysia. She further quoted a well-known Muslim scholar, Ismail Al Faruqi who argues that there can be no revival of the Muslim Ummah unless

the dualistic education system is integrated and infused with the spirit of Islam.

Although the British did not intervene with the traditional Islamic education system, they did introduce two systems that ran parallel where there was little hope for Islamic education to survive in its real sense. On the contrary it was placed in a constant dilemma. Under the British influence, early education patterned on the lines of English education system and a different system of education emerged: the English school system for the foreigners and the Malay vernacular system for Malays. In addition, there were the Chinese and Tamil vernacular systems, organized by their respective communities for the preservation of their traditions, cultures and customs. There was no formal or uniform educational policy for the whole country. Formal educational policies came into place after Malaya's independence in 1957 (Hasan & Noraini, 2006).

Education during the colonial period formed a great barrier especially for the Muslims because of its curriculum and the goal of proselytisation. The curriculum was designed to serve the purposes of the colonial master and not to promote intellectual growth of the students. With the passage of time, the Muslims were alienated and their system of education suffered heavily. Generally, during this period Muslims can be divided into three groups:

The **first group** was the traditional group who was very rigid and had no tolerance or respect for religious traditions other than Islam. They openly espoused hatred to the West. They confined themselves to Malay and Arabic. They considered and interpreted the West as the source of all evil. The West stood for self-indulgence, and Aids, drugs, venereal disease, alcohol and tobacco abuse are plagues of the modern Western society. In terms of education, they usually came from pondok/ *madrasah* or *the traditional* system where the system of learning was to absorb rather than question; to assimilate rather than analyse; to memorize rather than try to understand. The graduates of such systems would, in turn, make legal rulings (*fatwaas*) for the masses which were usually likewise, not to be questioned. In contrast, the Quran invites people to question (21:7), and the tradition of early scholarship was that of questioning. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) often invited his companions to ask questions. In fact, the most famous prophetic tradition known as *Hadeeth Jibreel* in which the basic tenets of the religion were outlined in full detail began with the Prophet (pbuh) asking his companions if they had any questions they wished to ask about the religion. This can be considered as one of the barriers to the development of knowledge.

The **second group** of Muslims was those who can be classified as totally secular. They are Muslims who are very receptive to the economic and political models of the West. In fact, they believe that in order to be

progressive, one has to be modern and westernized. Ismael (2005) claims that many people in the Muslim world, including the majority of their political leaders, were eager to transform and restructure the socio-economic and political structures of their societies after the model of the capitalist West. The majority of political leaders, as well as a significant number of Islamic experts and intellectuals, viewed the rise of the modern West and its spread into their lands as inevitable historical developments that challenged them to chart their own programs of reform and development. Likewise, it is interesting to highlight the statement made by Karen Armstrong (2002), the author of a number of books on religious fundamentalism who points out:

About a hundred years ago, almost every leading Muslim intellectual was in love with the West, which at that time meant Europe. America was still an unknown quantity. Politicians and journalists in India, Egypt, and Iran wanted their countries to be just like Britain or France; philosophers, poets, and even some of the ulama (religious scholars) tried to find ways of reforming Islam according to the democratic model of the West. They called for a nation state, for representational government, for the disestablishment of religion, and for constitutional rights. Some even claimed that the Europeans were better Muslims than their own fellow countrymen since the Koran teaches that the resources of a society must be shared as fairly as possible, and in the European nations there was beginning to be a more equitable sharing of wealth (page: 45).

They may be seen as those who try to build bridges with the West but at the same time created barriers for the Muslims.

The third group fell between the first and second, neither religious nor secular. In contrast, they act with circumspection. They make every effort to appear to non-Muslims and the West as law-abiding, cultured, and responsible citizens. They have been liberal from the time of their initial contacts with the capitalist west more than two centuries ago. This group of Muslims was quite receptive to the economic and political models of the modern west but they were quite selective. This mild approach permitted them to administer educational program toward integration of knowledge and educational reforms carried out by the government. This can be considered as trying to build the bridge with the West.

After gaining independence, the Muslim countries including Malaysia gave due importance to education which was previously dominated by the colonial master and created barriers in the Muslim world. Many schools and institutions of higher learning were established. However, to date, the

Malaysian educational institutions and systems are still influenced by the western education paradigm. It was realized that one of the barriers of the Muslim scholars was their lack of expertise and inclination toward science and technology and thus the governments made efforts to send students abroad for further education especially in economics, science and technology. However, we also have to be concerned about the long-term implications of sending Malaysian students to study in the colonizing countries vis-à-vis its impact on the social and cultural development of the students. In view of the above situation, pertinent questions have been raised such as can educational institutions play an important role and act as the potential tool in building bridges with the West?

Educational Goals: The Clash Between the Islamic and Secular Perspectives

In Islam, seeking knowledge is compulsory for all Muslims, men and women. Islam puts considerable emphasis on its followers for acquiring knowledge. The Prophet (PBUH) has stated “He who leaves his home in search of knowledge, walks in the path of God.” Islamic education is based on *iman*, (faith), *aqidah* (belief) and *tawhid* (oneness of God) and is guided by the teachings from the Holy Qur'an, the *Sunnah* (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and *Sharia* (Islamic law). Hassan (1989) describes Education from Islamic perspective, as a long life process of preparing an individual to actualize his role as a vicegerent (Khalifah) of Allah on earth and thereby contribute fully to the reconstruction and development of his society in order to achieve well-being in this world and hereafter.

Education has long been recognized as a central element in development and a means of earning a respectable life in this world. The fundamental difference between the Islamic approach to education and the secular one is that secular education is basically geared to prepare students to fulfill their material needs and those of the society in which they are raised, while the Islamic approach focuses on training and preparing human beings to be vicegerents (khalifah) in this world and to be rewarded in the hereafter. Although education is sometimes described as a neutral transferal of information, it is more generally defined as society's formal mechanism for the transmission of its culture and values.

This is clear from the recommendation of the first World Conference on Islamic Education held in Mecca, Saudi Arabia in 1977, which states that:

“Education should aim at balanced growth of the total personality of man through the training of man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses. The

training imparted to a Muslim such as faith is infused into the whole of his personality and creates in him an emotional attachment to Islam and enables him to follow the Quran and Sunnah and be governed by Islamic system of values willingly and joyfully so that he may proceed to the realization of his status as Khalifahtulah to whom Allah has promised the authority of the universe; Education should promote in man the creative impulse to rule himself and the universe as a true servant of Allah not by opposing and coming into conflict with nature but by understanding its laws and harnessing its forces for the growth of a personality that is in harmony with it.”

According to Ibrahim (2002), in the Western World the purpose of education is to provide for the economic prosperity of a nation. At a personal level, the purpose of education is to acquire academic and professional skills that enable one to earn a respectable living with riches and fame, and also a luxurious and comfortable life. For a Muslim providing economic prosperity of a nation does not contradict his/her Islamic beliefs, however, focusing the goals of education solely on the purpose of money making is unpalatable.

Thus it is clear that the educational goals of secular democratic societies are strongly influenced by the economic objective of profit maximization. In such systems, its members are educated to raise prices in accordance with increases (or decreases) in supply and demand. As a result, social responsibility, compassion, piety, sacrifice, and good deeds are not compatible with profit maximization theory. This will become a barrier to Muslims’ purpose of life if they are influenced by these educational goals.

The Western colonizers of Muslim countries knew the importance of taking Islam out of the minds of Muslims, and achieved this by secularizing the educational institutions starting from schools to higher institutions in Muslim countries and teaching the Islamic subject only in an historic context sometimes at the end of the school day when the students’ concentration was at its lowest. The results of this can be seen in many Muslims countries including in Malaysia. Thus it is not a surprise to learn that despite the weaknesses of Islamic religious schools, many concerned Muslim parents are still interested in enrolling their children in these school due to a variety of reasons such as they feel that religious subject at the national school is not adequate or has failed to meet their expectations and they are worried about the moral decadence (social ills) in the society especially among the youth.

Some of the Issues and Concerns That Have Dominated Discussions and Debates in Malaysian Education System

The potential of educational institutions in building bridges

Throughout the 20th century, many scholars have argued that traditional religious schools should offer a more integrated education, including modern scientific subjects such as IT in their curriculum. In this respect, Zahid (1981) states that Muslims 'must create institutions where the education of the Quran, Hadith, and Shariah, goes side by side with the education of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, engineering, economics, and other sciences' (p. 92). In addition, there is a need to enhance the language abilities of students enrolled in traditional religious schools, to better equip them to access information from both Islamic and non-Islamic traditions.

Ahmad (2000) explains that the problems of literacy, technical expertise, attitude and language are connected to the kind of education many Islamic scholars are receiving. Many scholars in Islamic disciplines are graduates of traditional religious schools that have focused on memorizing of the Quran, Hadith and basic Islamic rituals, rather than the application of such knowledge to meet the changing and growing needs of Muslim societies. Traditionally, such schools have placed little emphasis on scientific and technological education. He further claims that throughout the 20th century however, these schools have increasingly come under attack for not producing graduates capable of responding to the changing needs of the Muslim ummah. Their excessive focus on memorization, rather than understanding, applications and problem solving, has also come under fire, particularly now that the Quran, books of hadith, fiqh (jurisprudence), tafsir (exegesis) are easily available in CD format or on-line. Thus, what can we learn from the west to bridge this gap? It is clear that we need their knowledge, science and technology, its awareness of the need for discipline and its frame for reference built on logical analysis but we are not suppose to imitate their western culture and way of life.

Educational dualism in Malaysia

According to Rosnani (1994) the two existing educational systems are mutually independent upholding mutually exclusive and possibly contradictory educational philosophies, which operate simultaneously, thereby creating conflict between the two systems and their school children and graduates. Meanwhile, Asraf (1979) already mentioned the problem of educational dualism in the Muslim world more than 25 years ago and called for the urgency to address the issue, which he called a 'crisis' in Muslim education. This educational dualism, according to Nor (1989), bears

negative consequences for Muslims where both systems of education produce half-baked Muslims who do not possess the integrated Islamic personality. It is even worse when graduates of both systems who subscribe to opposing worldviews, cannot see eye to eye on social, economic and political problems. He continues to explain that in terms of employment, because of the nature of modern professions which require knowledge of Science, Mathematics, English and Commerce – fields least commanded by students from the Islamic school system, their scope of career is also limited. There is a fear that graduates from the religious system are lagging behind because components of higher thinking such as analysis, interpretation, synthesis and coherence, which are all important aspects of the Islamic concept of knowledge, are not emphasized. Thus, as a consequence, Naquib (1978) claimed that the position of leadership in society which graduates of the Islamic school system once held is beginning to slip in the hands of Western-educated professionals and the religious school graduates could not contribute significantly to solving societal problems. Modern Muslim professionals who have been secularized in the process of acquiring their education are beginning to hold prestigious positions in the society. Being influential in society, these secularized Muslims perpetuate their secularized and false ideas of knowledge, thereby creating confusion in the Ummah.

It is understood by the public that schools are places where our future generation receives its formal education and where the behaviors of these young people are being moulded. Hence, the education system plays an important role in ensuring that positive values are instilled in our children. However, the school curriculum, placing greater emphasis on examinations has failed to mould students to realize the noble vision and philosophy envisioned by the government. Moreover, the school systems are not keeping the student involved. Teachers are often themselves engaged in earning additional income and lack the time and motivation to interact with and guide students after school hours.

Social and moral issues

Malaysia like any other developing country is not free from various social problems (such as drug addiction, and juvenile delinquency). Just take, for example, drug addiction. Malaysia is now paying a very high price in its efforts to arrest drug abuse in the country. There are 28 drug rehabilitation centers in Malaysia, on which the government spends roughly RM40 million a year. According to the National Drug Agency, the number of drug addicts had gone up to no less than 1 million by 2004, of this alarming figure, 300,000 addicts have been detected and documented. In addition, according to the current statistics, for every 1 case reported, there are 4 other cases that remain undetected. Moreover, the relapse cases have been extremely high at over 80% among former drug addicts who are discharged from various

government rehab centers. As the country advances, these problems continue to escalate at an unprecedented scale. Noraini & Suryani (2006) identified some of the main causes of the problems. Among them are: lack of true religious understanding and practices, attitudes of parents towards their roles, the breakdown of the marriage institution, rapid economic growth, the educational system, attitudes of the teenagers as well as the influence of the peer-group. They put forward some remedial measures to combat the problems, such as parental responsibility, moral and personality development of the youth, the roles of education, teachers and school, the mass media, and those in authority.

Unemployment

Employment has always been an important element in a country's economy. In economics, a person who is able and willing to work yet is unable to find a paying job is considered as unemployed. It is a sad state of affairs when so many of Malaysian graduates are unemployed. It was reported in the *New Sunday Times* (14th March, 2006) that there are around 60,000 unemployed graduates while another Source, NST February 22, 2005 – Public Services Commission states that there were 80,000 unemployed graduates nationwide. This is considered a problem serious enough to warrant the attention of the government and our educators and calls for a radical overhaul of our education system. The writers believe that greater numbers of unemployed will lead to potential social and political problems and is closely tied with poverty. Although poverty is a complex issue with many intertwining cases and links, but empirically, economists and educationists believe that providing basic education is the necessary prerequisite in the battle against poverty. On the other hand, there are problems of youths entering employment with some sectors which they think of low social status. For example, many undergraduates do not want to work in the agricultural, construction and manufacturing sectors as such sectors are considered “non-glamorous” Is it true that graduates are choosy? Some put the blame on Ministry of Education for mis-match between supply and demand in the courses offered at the Universities and vacancies in the job market. But does this fully address the question, “Why are so many of our undergraduates un-employed?”

Job vacancies in the labour market have created enormous difficulties for graduates in seeking employment. To the writers this situation partly reflects the crisis of education and training which is insufficient to tackle the unemployment problems and to promise a better future for the graduates. Thus, as Malaysia moves with the changing times, we will need to improve on productivity by enhancing education and training which in turn will provide the industry with skilled workers of the highest caliber. We urged the government to take full responsibility to create ample job opportunities

for its people. This could be done by exploring the key issues and problems pertaining to career, development and unemployment problems and improvement of the present education system and economic situation.

Globalization and the youth

It is an undeniable fact that advances in telecommunication and sophisticated technology and the openness in the today's globalized world is one of the important factors contributing to the prevalence of social ills in the society (Noraini & Suryani 2006) While Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) claim that human lives continue to be lived in local realities, these realities are increasingly being challenged and integrated into larger global networks of relationships. The forces of globalization are taxing youth, families, and education systems worldwide.

With these global challenge and transformations, youth is required to develop new skills that go beyond what most educational systems can now offer. New and broader global visions are needed to prepare Muslim children and society to be informed, engaged, and be critical in the new millennium. Here, we may argue that globalization plays no less important role in shaping the character of our Muslim youth and broaden the minds and senses of the youth. It also encourages our youth to blind imitation or copying the life-styles of Western teenagers. The development of ICT through sophisticated communication has made the world a borderless space and village, has undoubtedly brought negative effects on the development of youth if they go unchecked. In fact, it is of no surprise to know that some school teenagers are aware about sex services and how to gain access to these information easily.

Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) clearly stated that an education for globalization should therefore nurture the higher-order cognitive and interpersonal skills required for problem finding, problem solving, articulating arguments, and deploying verifiable facts or artifacts to substantiate claims. These skills should be required of children and youth who will, as adults, fully engage the larger world and master its greatest challenges, transforming it for the betterment of humanity regardless of national origin or cultural upbringing. Therefore we must ensure that the education system plays an important role in ensuring that positive values are instilled in our children.

Removing the barriers between the Muslim world and the west

It is quite difficult to talk about the educational links between the Muslim World and the west because this agenda requires not only changes in education but also includes the cultural, educational, geo-political, and economic aspects. This paper puts forward some suggestions as remedial

measures to minimize the barriers and bridge the gap between the west and the Muslim world such as possible policy changes which include political, diplomatic, social, economic and educational institutions. For its survival the Muslim Ummah need to work hand in hand with the rest of the world who are suffering from the same predicament as that faced by the Ummah:

In the political arena, we have to review the meanings of terms, which have been circulated freely such as democracy, which is up to the day still following the old Greek traditions of discriminating between the citizen and the slaves. Now, we have democracy for the white and no democracy for the black, democracy for those who possess and not for the majority of people, democracy for men and not for women, and democracy and human right for the Jews and not for the Muslims. We cannot view human rights in isolation. We urge all the international community including the Muslim world and the west to bring to justice those who abuse other people's human rights. Thus, we also believe that to enable people to realize their human rights fully, we need to provide an environment in which all citizens can enjoy the basic freedoms of thought, conscience, religion, association and expression, and can participate in democratic institutions. The Muslim world and the west have a duty to act for the betterment of all their citizens and to do so they have to be just, transparent, and accountable.

On the economic front, we need reforms that include developing financial sector institutions; reducing bureaucracy and the cost of doing business; upgrading human capital through better education; helping small and medium enterprises on issues related to financing, marketing and management, as well as designing entry and exit strategies; and taking focused measures to alleviate poverty. In the economic arena the only policy which has any future is the one, which can solve the deadliest problems faced by mankind such as unemployment, migration and hunger in the world.

For Example, toward the establishment of the **New Bandung** grouping to face the new realities. The new Bandung concept is necessary so that the twenty-first century will be the landmark of the end of the animalistic nature of mankind, where the wealth of the world is monopolized by a small minority that demands dependence, exploitation, as well as the death of the majority of the population. The first Bandung group aimed at non-alignment toward the bipolar world. But the conditions have changed because we are now living in a unipolar world, but we have to defend our identity, from culture to economics, against the single power who intend to dominate the world through the game of the single global market, which makes the market, or the money, as the one and only manager of social relations.

On the educational level, efforts are needed to promote literacy, support vocational and technical training, and to bridge the wide digital divide that separates Muslim societies from the developed western world. On the

educational level, the most crucial challenges, especially at tertiary level, are as follows:

- The challenges of philosophy and epistemology
- Social and cultural challenges
- Political challenges
- Infrastructural challenges
- Economic challenges
- Technological challenges
- The challenges of religion and spirituality

These are the main challenges faced by the Ummah in the early part of the 21st century to which, hopefully, education will be able to give a right response. We must create immediately an atmosphere of freedom and justice so that you can live and find out for yourselves what is true, so that you become intelligent, so that you are able to face the world and understand it, not just conform to it, so that inwardly, deeply, psychologically you are in constant revolt; because it is only those who are in constant revolt who discover what is true, not the man who conforms, who follows some tradition. It is only when you are constantly inquiring, constantly observing, constantly learning, that you find truth, God, or love; and you cannot inquire, observe, learn, and cannot be deeply aware, if you are afraid. So the function of education, surely, is to eradicate, inwardly as well as outwardly, this fear that destroys human thought, human relationship and love.

Conclusion

The dichotomy in education, politics and economics in the Muslim countries must be put to an end. We cannot move forward without revamping our educational system. We cannot fully establish Islam in our societies without producing the educated leaders, young generations and citizens needed for an Islamic society. It is now time to develop integrated Islamic curricula and remove the dualism and secular biases from all of our education in schools as well as in higher institutions. Merely establishing more schools and universities and increasing the investment in computers is not the answer. Developing educational institutions that can teach *every* subject in the wholesome Islamic context is essential. It is a monumental and difficult task. But without it we'll continue to spread ignorance in the name of education and continue to create barriers in the Muslim world. From the above discussion, we need to understand the web of relationship arising from the entire living system that gives rise to barriers between the Muslim World and the west. The pictorial web of relationships below shows that these problems are neither localized nor can they be treated in isolation with the complex system involving the whole world and its surroundings.

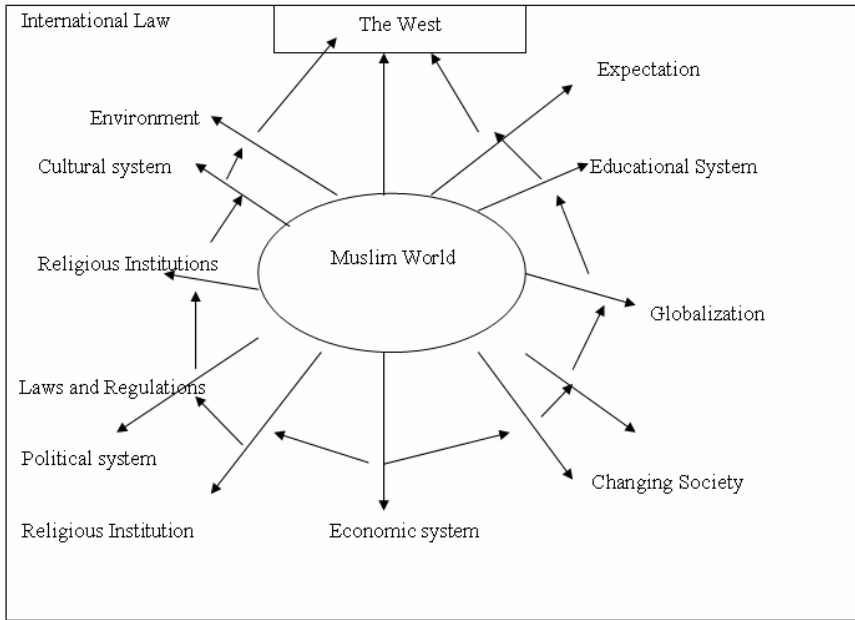


Figure 1: Web of Relationships between the West and the Muslim World

Thus we need to be able to study the problem and causes of these barriers. In short, the barriers stem from multiple and complex variables and many remedies have been suggested in order to overcome them. However, it is important that the root of the barriers should be ascertained if the bridge is to be built with the West. Policy changes and other changes should be considered in a holistic framework that will include political, diplomatic, social, economic and educational issues. Reform policies will achieve optimal results and growth can be realized only if the lack of security from which we have suffered for decades is removed. We also demand a serious review of the Western foreign policy towards the Muslim World. The revised policy should reflect the values of democracy, justice, freedom, religious and cultural diversity. It should aim at promoting peace, not war. It should create friends, not enemies and it should aim at building bridges not creating barriers with the Muslim world.

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