Chapter Five
Bias in Curricula and Course Contents

Hoda Hegazy

Educational institutions are considered the prime media for transmitting a cultural tradition. Such institutions must select from a limitless amount of data and ideas, and define for students a set of values that society at large has adopted. This matter raises a methodological issue: selecting from the body of knowledge a limited number of subjects students should learn, then deciding on the proper content to be taught at different educational stages. Curricula are usually formulated and set based on factors such as a society's prevailing ideology, educational philosophy, value system, and concept of human nature. Developing a curriculum necessitates a process of inclusion and exclusion.

School textbooks are therefore not "neutral" or "objective" and reflect the values and beliefs of their own societies. Therefore we should define the epistemological paradigm that underlies curricula when courses are prepared for instruction. When a perspective or paradigm is adopted, certain questions and issues are raised to the exclusion of others. On the other hand, when engaging in a comparative approach, only complete wholes can be subjected to comparisons, rather than two different systems or structures.

For example, Max Weber's work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* addresses what he considered the specifically Occidental phenomenon of rationalization. Occidental capitalism, if we accept the Weberian viewpoint, is specific to Occidental civilization. It was appropriate for Weber to use Occidental capitalism to further explore his culture but to use the same set of terms to explore the specific nature of another culture is misleading.

The level of research in the area of Islamic civilization was until recently monopolized by colonialists or zealous missionaries sure of their cultural and religious superiority and unaware of their epistemological biases. Only recently have we begun to read works by European social scientists who look at Islamic civilization not as an antique to be admired or condemned but as a social process susceptible to the universal laws of change. A general language and analytical categories

are needed, external to all systems and structures but applicable to all. Rather than capitalism, rationalization might be a more general and appropriate term regarding the study of Islamic civilization.

A course on the subject would deal with relevant issues and ask questions such as: Can Islamic society adopt science and technology without losing its unique identity? How can Islam mobilize the masses to achieve the transition from societies based on agriculture and low levels of technology to those bent on mastering nature? In this way, the whole structure, approached from within, can begin to yield its secrets and give us its laws, which will no longer be considered defective or wrong. When evaluating, we should not accept as a criterion the degree of proximity to Occidental civilization. The totality of human-kind's experience in the East and the West, past or present, should be the only standard.

Chapter Six
An Exploration of the Nature of Human and Artificial Intelligence & the Qur'anic Perspective

Mahmoud Dhaouadi

The ongoing controversy over artificial and human intelligence (HI) is characterized by open disagreement regarding whether artificial intelligence (AI) can become equal or superior to human intelligence. The gap between HI and AI is bound to remain considerable in the short- and long-term, as demonstrated by human cultural symbols and the Qur'anic vision of HI. Humanity's ability to manipulate cultural symbols, upon which the HI phenomenon depends, is a unique human characteristic. This uniqueness is the direct result of a divine decision, not of evolution. This uniqueness contains mysteries hardly accessible to humans. Hence, how could researchers include them in the design of AI machines?

In the last two decades, research in the field of AI has progressed on the theoretical and applied levels. In the field, neurophysiologists and various social scientists have also studied HI and AI. As AI infra-structures continue to expand in modern and postmodern societies, specialists in other areas will also have to become involved. AI research helps relieve individuals of many tedious tasks, while the increasing