DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed
DEDICATION

To my parents, my wife, my children, and to all those students in Saudi Arabia and around the world who believe that their natural talents will lead to a better world.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

I thank Allah for the successful completion of my thesis, and for the patience and resourcefulness that He granted to me along this complicated and responsible path.

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ABSTRACT

Saudi Arabia is a relatively young country, founded less than a century ago; therefore, the distinctiveness of its education system is still evolving. A challenge facing Saudi education is to be found in its current reliance on mutually exclusive educational paradigms. On the one hand, there is a strong focus on the provision of Western-style formal science education and, on the other hand, the traditionalist focus on Islamic studies concerned with religious and spiritual education. Initially founded on a British paradigm, yet continuing to be locked into its conservative Islamic roots, Saudi education has experienced a conflict between a Western reliance on reason, rationality, and formal science, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, universal Islamic values such as religiosity, strong moral character, and spirituality. Neither of these paradigms is particularly disposed to prioritizing gifted education. Saudi Arabia, therefore, has an urgent need to resolve the tension created by these mutually exclusive paradigms, and especially to address more satisfactorily the need to prioritize gifted education, as the education of the most gifted is clearly a major strategy for advancing any nation.

In an attempt to address this issue, this thesis will provide an analysis of the body of thought and research in both the Islamic and Western scholarly traditions, as they relate to the concept of giftedness, and how these might be applied practically to developing a stronger form of gifted education for Saudi students in the current era. The conjunction of these scholarships is considered necessary, granted that these are the two traditions that have influenced Saudi culture most obviously in recent times. The thesis will focus on the similarities and differences between the two scholarships concerning relevant and essential concepts such as wisdom, knowledge, intellect and
intelligence, and the diverse forms of intelligence recognized nowadays, such as emotional, spiritual, and moral intelligences.

By employing the Habermasian methodology of “three ways of knowing”, the researcher aims to uncover parallels and similarities in the seemingly conflicting Western and Islamic scholarships in order to develop an integrated approach to giftedness and education that can be derived from the reconciliation of these two traditions. Furthermore, the thesis will propose workable solutions for the Saudi Arabian educational system as to the efficient implementation of those ideas. The implications of this unified approach, the challenges for its practical implementation, and the consequences for teachers, students, and the overall educational structure of Saudi Arabia, are provided in the final sections of the study.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

The present chapter introduces the current research interest in gifted educational frameworks adopted in Western and Islamic scholarships, with a special focus on Saudi Arabia. It outlines the contextual background for the research project, identifying the problems that are to be addressed. The chapter then proceeds to detail the key purposes and objectives of the study and formulates the key research questions that will drive it, as well as the research methodology, design, and theoretical framework selected to fulfil the study’s needs. The section on the significance of the study describes the rationale for the research and the trustworthiness of its findings. The chapter then provides definitions of all the relevant terms in order to ensure that a consistent understanding of the major research themes and dimensions are conveyed. Finally, the chapter outlines the thesis structure and concludes with a brief summary of the chapters that follow.

1.2 Background of the Study

In the context of contemporary globalization, governments seek ways of achieving consistency in their domestic and foreign policies and strategies. In terms of education, the international community has reached a consensus on the importance and value of standardized curricula, promoting the development of analytical and critical thinking skills, along with basic literacy. The issue of gifted education remains a challenge for educators since it is impossible to categorize children simply as gifted or not gifted. When speaking about a gifted child, a high intellectual potential is implied, one that has been evaluated through a range of sophisticated testing (Matthews &
This thesis will maintain, however, that this is an overly simplified estimation of all the qualities entailed in giftedness, and that this is a realization yet to be achieved in the Saudi approach. In order to address all the special skills and abilities that might pertain to gifted children, scholars have developed a range of specific educational programs in order to uncover gifted potential in students.

For the past several decades, the concept of gifted education has received much consideration and review. At the end of the twentieth century, many scholars like Margolin (1994), Sapon-Shevin (1994) and Oakes (1985), opposed the practice of gifted educational programs, arguing that they were a means of promoting inequality. The recent reconsideration of gifted education has resulted in a perception of it as a way of developing the higher-level thinking and analytical abilities of students with potential (Borland, 2003). Today, governments across the globe promote and support the design of specific educational programs for gifted children in order to develop their talents (Robinson, Shore & Enersen, 2006).

Despite a variety of gifted educational programs being developed by the international educational community, two major approaches are apparent. The Western educational framework can be seen to rely heavily on a set of ideas of knowledge emanating from the ancient Greeks, principally Plato (427 - 347 BC), who advocated for the provision of specialized education for intellectually gifted men and women in his Republic (Plato, 2003). As Plato acknowledged, “the most gifted minds, when they are ill-educated, become the worst” (p. 110). Moreover, as noted by Hare (1982) in his famous account of Plato’s ideas, Plato saw the role of education as vital in making it possible for a person to live a good life, since people can become good and lead the best lives by two means, namely, either by acquiring the right opinions or by acquiring knowledge.
At the same time, Islamic educational thinking also relies, in part, on the ancient Greeks, but rests as well on the pioneering works of medieval Muslim scholars, typified by Al-Ghazali’s philosophy of education. Al-Ghazali’s work incorporated two types of knowledge, built on a Platonic dualistic idea of the world, namely, the rational sciences (al-‘ulum al-‘aqliyya) and the religious sciences (al-‘ulum al-shar’iyya wa’l-diniyya). He regarded the rational sciences as apprehensible through a reason that was innate in humans, or else was acquirable through effort and learning. The religious sciences, on the other hand, were not apprehensible purely by reason, requiring divine revelation, but nonetheless possessing an indispensable value for a person’s individual and communal development. Al-Ghazali considered the rational sciences to be akin to food for people’s physical nourishment, while the religious sciences were more like medicine for the soul, both being indispensable for human survival (Mahdi, 1964).

Plato was instrumental in establishing the elitist grounds for education in Western civilizations, proposing that knowledge was one of the major values of human society and so to be promoted by societies in order to ensure their stability and orderly development. All should be educated, but only according to their status and needs; the fullness of education was reserved for the elite classes: “A minority who have the best natural gifts … should have the best education.” (Plato, 2003, p. 133). Claiming that education’s primary goal is to develop a person intellectually and spiritually, Plato saw the educational process as a means of realizing the potential of human nature, at least as far as the upper classes were concerned. In his Republic, Plato mentioned that states should be ruled by philosopher kings, so they should acquire the entire scope of knowledge about “the good” (Republic, 505a, p. 228). Such education becomes a sort of illumination for the human mind, enabling it to see the true ideas behind things:
When it fixes itself on that which is illumined by truth and that which is, it intellects, knows, and appears to possess intelligence. But when it fixes itself on that which is mixed with darkness, on coming into being and passing away, it opines and is dimmed, changing opinions up and down and seems at such times not to possess intelligence. (*Republic*, 508d, p. 234)

In line with these ideas, Plato formulated the functions of educational institutions. First, they had to provide students with wisdom and cultural heritage in order to promote learning, knowledge sharing, and an analysis of their own life experiences. Second, educators should guide students in their intellectual and spiritual development in order to facilitate an expanding of the students’ gifts, while maintaining some equality among all students (understood to mean all those at the elite end). Plato also pointed out the necessity of providing students with superior cognitive abilities with a more comprehensive education than those students with lesser cognition (assumed to be the case when dealing with those of lower classes) (Batterjee, 2013). As Plato suggested, “Philosophers are the ones who can reach what always stays the same in every respect, and non-philosophers the ones who cannot, who wonder among the many things that go in every direction” (*Republic*, 484, p. 201). Hence, as one can see, Plato saw a complete and comprehensive education as not relevant to all people, but rather as a privilege for the few who possessed the natural talents for understanding the nature of the world and the gods.

From the earliest times of Islam’s existence, consistent with a Platonic view of the divided nature of the world, Muslim education has placed the study of the Holy Qur’an and Mohammed’s teachings, along with Islamic dogma and ideology, high on the agenda, as though no completeness of literacy can be achieved without it. In Islam, all knowledge matters but, of interest to this thesis and in an expanding of the ideas of
Plato, knowledge is for all followers, regardless of their cognitive ability or status. As seen above, Al-Ghazali (1058 – 1111 CE) can be regarded as the father of Islamic educational thinking, matching the way Plato is regarded as a patron of Western educational thought. Al-Ghazali defined the primary goal of education as being to assist a person in obtaining all aspects and dimensions of knowledge in order to achieve one’s true happiness (Batterjee, 2013). This was, therefore, an education that went beyond that of mere religious knowledge, as had been the dominant thinking in Islam up to the time of his intervention.

Recognizing the value of knowledge in its usefulness and real-life applications, this Muslim scholar promoted the formation of an intellectual elite, but on different grounds from those promoted by Plato. As clarified by Fakhry (1994), Al-Ghazali regarded happiness as attainable only if knowledge (ilm) is linked to action (amal), while the meaning of action was to harness the passions of the soul, control anger, and to curb those human manifestations of emotion by subjecting them to reason. It was, therefore, not so much natural talent that differentiated the gifted from the non-gifted, but more the capacity to translate knowledge into action. The gifted Muslim was the one who acted on their knowledge.

In common with Plato was Al-Ghazali’s belief in the imperative of the formation of cognitive capital, and hence distinguishing between two kinds of schools and education. Moreover, al-Ghazali is known to share many ideas with Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, since he shared an idea that a good educational setting provides a balance between human reason and the divine light of God. Nonetheless, in a departure from the emphasis to be found generally among the Greek-inspired West, Al-Ghazali regarded all children as having a capacity to learn: “knowledge exists potentially in the human soul like a seed in the soil; by learning the potential becomes actual” (in Tibawi,
Moreover, Tibawi (1972) provided an account of Al-Ghazali’s views on moral education as ensuring a person’s happiness in both the human and spiritual world.

Again, however, this division was not built around status and inherent inequality but merely around circumstances and location. Al-Ghazali accepted the reality that education in provincial centres must be dedicated to developing social, political, and educational leaders through facilitating the students’ analytical and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, education in rural areas should deliver a more pragmatic education to peasants, commoners and Bedouins (Batterjee, 2013). Again, however, there was no essential division in Al-Ghazali’s mind, as in Plato’s. The Muslim of whatever origins was free to move across locations and so to be accorded with a more comprehensive education. In a word, all Muslims were essentially equal, even if living in different circumstances. For Plato, in contrast, inequality was constructed by the gods for the greater good of a balanced society.

These revolutionary ideas of Al-Ghazali were not accepted in all Muslim regions, however, as most still limited their education to Qur’an reading, recitation, and writing. In some respects, the modern state of Saudi Arabia can be seen to have rested much of its educational thinking on this latter notion of education. Apart from its education system being far from the quality offered in the West, it is also still behind the stage of development of many other Muslim states by failing to recognize the importance of creating the kind of intellectual leadership proposed by Al-Ghazali. This is where the notion of gifted education becomes important. As Al-Ghazali noted in his writings, few people can understand both the internal meaning of religious law and the external commandments thereof, while the majority remain only with a limited understanding of the external religious law aspects. This is a notion that clearly fits well
with the vision of Al-Ghazali, while not in any way fracturing the essential equality of all Muslims that is central to Muslim ideology. Indeed, if one follows the line of Al-Ghazali’s thought, it is an essential feature of a sustainable society of any kind, including Islamic ones.

It is important, therefore, for Saudi Arabia to analyse and apply elements of both a broader Islamic scholarship, such as offered by Al-Ghazali, as well as Western scholarship which, while mainly resting on the assumptions wrought by a Platonic view of the world, has also been influenced indirectly through medieval Islamic scholarship as well as by the more recent developments in Western thinking. In turn, it is partly as a result of this Muslim influence that more modern, genuinely democratic ideas of education would develop in the Western Enlightenment period (Landau, 1962). Hence, the Western account of education is partially a result of Islamic philosophy, while the latter was also influenced by the former. This illustrates the necessity of investigating both scholarships – Western and Islamic – in order to determine which components of both scholarships should constitute a sound educational strategy for Saudi Arabia.

1.3 Identification of the Research Problem

Saudi Arabia, as a modern Muslim state, has a long-standing history of perceiving the Qur’an as the key source of knowledge and wisdom. Until the end of the twentieth century, the Saudi Arabian educational system followed what was understood at the time to be the traditional Muslim way, whereby Qur’anic texts played the central role in terms of forming the content of education. Beginning in the 1970s, however, the modernisation and diversification of education has become one of the priorities in the Saudi national development plan. The development of a modern Saudi educational philosophy and framework started with the expansion of its oil and gas production and
its entry into the international market (Wynbrandt, 2010). In 1999, for the first time, Saudi authorities began to pay attention to the issue of gifted education and the special needs of talented students (Alamer, 2014).

The twenty-first century has seen considerable enhancements to the Saudi educational system. Recent trends in scholarly and political debates demonstrate a recognition and comprehension of the high value of cognition and the necessity of producing a national cognitive elite through new educational programs. Recognizing human capital as a critical element of the state’s economic development, the Saudi Arabian authorities have focused on modernizing the educational system, integrating new subjects, utilizing technological advancements, and providing equal educational opportunities for both men and women. In 2007, King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz initiated the Project for Public Education Development which was targeted at reforming the Saudi educational system (Alyami, 2014). However, though the Saudi government invested heavily in that reform, some serious systemic problems still remain with it: the curriculum is heavily criticized; the inability of Saudi education to deliver at least a basic education is acknowledged; and the students’ proficiency remains catastrophically low, as compared to regional and global educational performance statistics (Khashoggi, 2014).

One of the major reasons for Saudi being slow to adapt to both its own wider Muslim traditions, and the best of Western educational directions, is owing to a certain reliance on the British educational system, which it incorporated into its general education throughout the twentieth century (Abaalkhail, 2013). Hence, the current educational system of Saudi Arabia can be said to depend on older European educational values, principles and practices, at one end, with, at the other end, little correlation with the wider Islamic educational culture, as explicated above. The
remnants of the British system of education practised by Saudis today can be said to be outdated and lacking the kind of relevance that is needed to address today’s issues, both global and national (Al-Seghayer, 2014). For the past one hundred years, British educational philosophy has expanded its exclusive focus on traditional subjects of learning. Modern scholarship (Damon, 2008; Gardner, 2011; Goleman, 2012; Hass, 2002, etc.), which has influenced British education, has pondered further on the issue of knowledge and giftedness, revealing a variety of forms of intelligence, such as spiritual, moral and emotional, as well as cognitive. In line with these insights, the British government has reformed the old educational system to introduce new subjects into the curriculum. In contrast to the changing and developing of education in Britain, the Saudi educational system remains attached to an old-fashioned dedication to mathematics and the sciences, neglecting the current educational need to facilitate emotional, spiritual, and moral intelligences (Rugh, 2002).

At the governmental level, there is no distinction between general education and gifted education in Saudi Arabia. Talented students undertake the same curriculum as average students, having no opportunity to advance their skills and abilities. In the context of government-based education, gifted programs only take place in the form of weekend and summer programs (Alamer, 2014). Therefore, Saudi talented students seeking ways of exploring their intellectual potential face the challenges of both the traditional structure and culture of the Saudi education system. As Alamer (2014) concluded:

In spite of some special programs for gifted children, such as summer enrichment programs and weekend programs, gifted students still face challenges and difficulties in Saudi public schools. This study attempts to explore some of these challenges: a) the nature of the Saudi educational
system, (b) the structure of curricula, and (c) the readiness of Saudi teachers to deal with gifted students. (p. 1)

Other obstacles preventing the proper development of the students’ gifts and abilities include a fixed curriculum structure, and an unpreparedness and reluctance on the part of Saudi teachers to treat gifted students in a special way (Alamer, 2014).

The non-governmental agencies of Saudi Arabia seem to possess a deeper understanding of the importance of high-quality education, especially for those with high intellectual potentials. For example, the Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (Mawhiba) of King Abdul-Aziz and his companions reviewed both ancient Western (essentially Plato’s) and pre-modern Islamic (essentially Al-Ghazali’s) educational philosophies (Batterjee, 2013), and that analysis has resulted in the launch of several education-related strategic plans. The 2012 Mawhiba Schools Partnership Initiative pursues the goal of revealing giftedness and encouraging creativity and innovative thinking among students (Batterjee, 2013). However, as a non-profit organization, Mawhiba lacks the pedagogical, financial, and political resources to address the specific educational needs of all of Saudi’s gifted students. This situation signifies the need for reforming the existing Saudi Arabian educational system through the integration of gifted programs.

In order to fully justify this claim, it will be necessary to investigate the concept of gifted education using an historical lens. This will be done in the thesis through a thorough review of the historical perspectives on gifted education in Western and Islamic philosophies, exploring the balance of influences (Western and Islamic) that Saudi Arabia requires for a sound educational policy and an implementation strategy. As a result, a literature review will form the foundations of the thesis, one that explores the concepts of gifted education in Western scholarship, uncovering the major themes,
and then attempting to find similar themes in traditional Islamic scholarship. In addition, the study will explore the general contribution of Western to Islamic and, in turn, Islamic to Western scholarships, in order to illustrate that there is an historic interface between the two scholarships that could well comprise an authentic basis for a new Saudi policy and practice in gifted education.

1.4 The Main Purpose and Specific Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the current research is to examine the Western and Islamic approaches to gifted education in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches. On the basis of this work, it is hoped to be able to define a framework for the Saudi educational system, while balancing the advancements of the Western world and maintaining the essentials of core Muslim cultural values. Hence, the task is to develop a sound educational policy and implementation strategy in the area of gifted education, one that will be seen to enhance the quality and relevance, yet cultural distinctiveness, of Saudi education generally. The formulated purposes of the study entail the achievement of several specific objectives:

1. To identify and classify different policies for planning and providing programs for gifted education in Saudi Arabia.

2. To conduct an in-depth review of gifted education in the Western context to uncover its major themes, and then to attempt to find similar themes in the traditional Islamic context.

3. To explore the mutual influences of Islamic and Western educational philosophies in order to display a history of the interaction between, and mutual impact on, the two approaches, so as to provide an intellectual foundation for a gifted education policy that relies on both philosophies.
1.5 Key Research Questions

In line with the study goals, the researcher has formulated a set of research questions to be answered in the work. These research questions are to guide the research process and to align it with its specific objectives. The overall scope is comprised of four research questions:

1. What are the primary educational concepts adopted by Western and traditional Islamic scholarships?
2. What is the contribution of the Islamic educational philosophy to the Western education system?
3. How has the traditional Islamic educational perspective affected global thinking in relation to gifted education?
4. What elements of the Western and Islamic educational systems does Saudi Arabia need to develop in order to implement a balanced and comprehensive policy for gifted education?

1.6 Research Methodology, Design, and Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate the link between the Western and Islamic perspectives on gifted education, the study will be conducted by use of a qualitative methodology, principally through documentary and conceptual analyses. A qualitative research methodology of this kind can be used to explore the perceptions of large population groups in relation to certain phenomena (Merriam, 2009). In the context of the current study, the research aims to explore the similarities and differences between the Western and Islamic perceptions of concepts, issues and themes related to gifted education.

As the current research focuses on the discovery of how Western and Islamic educational philosophies have formed and developed throughout history, the most
appropriate method for data collection appears to be document collection (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). With a concentration on the works of Plato and Al-Ghazali, the concept of giftedness will be explored through their works, and the texts they referred to, along with related works in both cases. Relying on the wisdom of their ancestors, the Greek philosopher Plato and the Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali formulated ideas that inspired subsequent generations in Western and Islamic civilizations to ponder on the issue of education in general and, around some of these ideas, the concept we now know as gifted education. Hence, this study utilizes primary and secondary data to examine the roots of, and elements that affected the formation of, the gifted education frameworks in the Western and Islamic worlds.

According to the research design, the study will proceed through three major stages: (1) the formulation of research goals and questions; (2) an extensive review of official documents and academic publications, including material from reputable websites; and, (3) an analysis of the information related to Western and Islamic gifted education perspectives (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). The researcher has classified selected sources of data collection into three groups, consisting of primary, secondary, and auxiliary documents (Altheide, 1996). The primary data sources encompass the historical writings of the Western and Islamic worlds, including original works by Plato and Al-Ghazali, and official Saudi documents. The secondary data sources include modern publications concerning gifted education and the works of both Muslim and non-Muslim writers. The auxiliary data sources comprise works focused on the description of the social, cultural, historical and spiritual particularities of the Muslim world.
Habermas’s “ways of knowing” theory provides a theoretical framework for the study’s data collection and analysis procedures. The theory of knowing introduced by Jurgen Habermas (1972), is, according to his own interpretation:

The task of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporates a technical interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a practical interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporates a practical interest and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the emancipatory cognitive interests. (p. 308)

Habermasian theory is a powerful instrument for analysing the values of education and transforming people’s beliefs and perceptions in relation to education. Dedicated to producing an effective educational policy for the Saudi educational system, the researcher has chosen to apply the theoretical framework of Habermas in order to: (1) investigate the concept of giftedness in Western and Islamic scholarships (empirical-analytic knowing); (2) search through historical texts for the language used to describe the concept of giftedness (historical-hermeneutic knowing); and, (3) draw connections between the Western and Islamic philosophies of gifted education to apply in the case of gifted education in Saudi Arabia (critical-self-reflective knowing).

1.7 Significance of the Study

The current study is expected to contribute to the quality and relevance of Saudi education and to improve its consistency with global educational systems. The issue of education has become the primary concern of the Saudi government in its attempt to increase national literacy rates, to improve educational quality, and to develop a proficient labour force with skills relevant for the international market (Al Shaer,
Operating under the motto “Education for All”, the Saudi government has made multiple efforts to enhance its education system through offering equal educational opportunities to male and female students. The Saudi “Every Child Needs a Teacher” strategy reviews the role of the teacher in the student’s academic progress and establishes high pedagogical standards to ensure teacher qualifications (Al Shaer, 2007). During the last decades, the Saudi educational system has experienced significant progress and evolution. Nonetheless, much remains to be done in the context of educational efficiency, and in particular in gifted education.

The absence of special educational programs for gifted students prevents these students from revealing and developing their intellectual abilities. Neither the school curricula, nor the teachers, address the needs of talented students (Alamer, 2014). As cited by Batterjee (2013), the contemporary talented students of Saudi Arabia do not receive the required amount of educational care and support they need. Furthermore, the modern educational system of nine-year programs, focused on maths and the sciences, does not allow gifted students to reveal their intellectual potential. Non-profit gifted educational programs, like Mawhiba, require financial and legislative support to satisfy the educational needs of all gifted students in Saudi Arabia (Batterjee, 2013). Hence, the present research is expected to indicate the way forward for Saudi educators and policymakers, in terms of adopting an effective strategy and framework on gifted education, based on advancements in the Western educational system and the values and particularities of Muslim culture.

The significance of the study relies on its trustworthiness, which depends on the criteria of research credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Credibility refers to the accurate description of the settings or events, the participants’ feelings and thoughts, and the processes affecting the investigated phenomenon.
Since the current study relies, in part, on secondary data, the issue of credibility is achieved through an accurate representation and citation of historical texts and official data. Dependability implies the ability of others to track the processes and procedures taken for data collection and interpretation (Klenke, 2008). In the methodology chapter, the researcher will provide a detailed description of the search and analysis procedures, along with precise references for each data set. Transferability refers to the probability of applying the current research findings to other similar settings and situations (Klenke, 2008). In the context of the Muslim world, with the majority of states lacking a quality education system, and for gifted education in particular, the recommended gifted education framework could well prove to be beneficial for other Muslim states. Finally, confirmability is the extent of the results’ objectivity and the possibility of their confirmation by other scholars (Klenke, 2008). In the present research, confirmability is achieved through the study’s reliance on secondary data collected and validated by earlier research.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

**Giftedness.** A variety of definitions used to describe the term deal with the cognitive capacities of a person. Mendaglio (2012) defined giftedness as intellectual capital of a superior level, and multiple manifestations might be accepted or not in society. In this context, giftedness only refers to human intelligence, having no correlation with one’s performance. Another definition understands giftedness as one’s recognized achievement, describing the quality of an individual’s contributions (Silverman, 2012).

**Gifted Child.** The term “gifted child” refers to a person with superior intellectual abilities and extraordinary potential, as revealed through a successful
high-score passage through multiple tests. As indicated by Matthews and Foster (2009), gifted children are smarter in some areas and closer to average in others. This assumption illustrates that gifted children are not perfect in all subject areas; their special abilities allow for achieving superior results in certain subjects while performing at an average level in others. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2015), a gifted child is naturally endowed with a high or extraordinary degree of abilities in specific spheres of activity or knowledge.

**Gifted Education.** By the term gifted education, scholars and policymakers refer to specially designed programs or academic services aimed at fostering the development of one’s extraordinary creative and intellectual abilities, which are not integrated in standard educational programs (Pennsylvania State Education Association, n.d.). Special education for gifted students might take place through grouping persons by their abilities. In addition, gifted education might vary from regular education programs in terms of the curricula, academic resources, class size and goals (Gallagher & Reis, 2004).

**Curriculum.** As a rule, the term “curriculum” refers to a planned or intended academic experience. This academic experience comprises a range of educational experiences, ranging from a single session on a certain subject to an entire training course (Kern, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010). Curriculum design sets up academic goals, generates experiences, develops content, and assesses learning outcomes (Saracho & Spodek, 2002).

**Knowledge.** The term “knowledge” combines two notions of learning, a simple acquaintance with facts or figures and an understanding of their nature. In other words, when a person knows the cause of a phenomenon or situation, and no other cause is possible, then a person possesses knowledge (Harari, 2004). Thus, knowledge is the
result of one’s experience with a phenomenon that transforms a belief or account of something into comprehension (Hoitenga, 1991).

**Intelligence.** The term is defined in relation to one’s ability to succeed in life in the context of one’s personal standards and within one’s particular society. This ability for success relies on maximizing one’s strengths and skills to compensate for, or correct, weaknesses. This capability of balancing abilities serves to adapt to, or shape, environments. Thus, life success results from one’s intelligence balancing creative, analytical and practical skills (Sternberg, 2003).

**Wisdom.** The term refers to the ability to apply intelligence and creative thinking to the achievement of a common good through establishing a balance between interpersonal, intrapersonal and extra-personal interests over either long or short periods. This maximization of various interests serves to adapt to environments, to modify existing environments, and to select new ones in a balanced manner (Sternberg, 2003).

**Emotional intelligence.** The term implies one’s potential to be aware of, and to utilize, multiple emotions in one’s communication with the self and others in order to ensure an understanding of the emotions required for the management and motivation of self and others. In other words, emotional intelligence refers to the skill of using one’s emotions to assist oneself in making choices and decisions and being effective in controlling oneself and affecting others (Wharam, 2009).

**Spiritual intelligence.** The term is defined in the context of the inner life of the spirit and mind, and its correlation to the world. Spiritual intelligence refers to one’s ability to apply wisdom and compassion to deal with various circumstances, while maintaining an individual’s inner and outer peace (O’Doherty, 2015).
**Moral intelligence.** The term implies the ability of a person to act in compliance with moral principles and standards. It is one’s ability to process moral information and to regulate oneself to achieve desirable moral goals in performance. A morally intelligent person refers to someone striving for moral targets and applying self-regulatory skills and moral standards to do something good for others or society in general (Christen, van Schaik, Fischer, Huppenbauer, & Tanner, 2013).

**1.9 Overview of the Following Chapters**

Chapter One presents an introduction to the research, setting up the contexts to the study and indicating the research problems, its objectives, and the questions formulated. It presents the chosen research methodology and framework to guide the data collection and analysis procedures. The chapter points out the significance of the study, relying on its contribution to the field of gifted education in Saudi Arabia and the trustworthiness criteria. The chapter also defines all relevant terms used in the work.

Chapter Two is a comprehensive literature review of the Saudi educational system. Beginning with a brief overview, the chapter proceeds with a detailed examination of the formation and development of the Saudi education system, and its adoption of the British educational system. It then continues with a precise analysis of gifted education in Saudi Arabia, covering aspects of its history, cultural constraints, political and practical challenges, and outcomes for gifted students. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the Saudi education policy in relation to gifted students.

Chapter Three demonstrates the methodology chosen and employed during the research process. After restating the research objectives and questions, the chapter discusses Habermas’s theory of ways of knowing, which has been selected as a major plank in the study’s theoretical framework. The section provides an insight into the
theory, touching upon relationships between ways of knowing and education, schools, curriculum, teacher and learner, and scholars’ communication. The chapter also describes the procedures for data collection and analysis in detail.

Chapter Four applies Habermas’s ways of knowing theory to Western scholarship in gifted education. As a part of empirical/analytic knowledge, it reviews the ancient scholarly works of Plato, in the first instance, as well as the related scholarships of Pythagoras, Heraclitus and Aristotle, in relation to concepts and themes germane to the issue of gifted education. The overall historical paradigm of Western gifted education scholarship is completed with the medieval works of Thomas Aquinas and the modern writings of Francis Galton and others. Historical/hermeneutic knowledge results from a precise analysis of the texts, followed by a self-reflective discussion on the topic.

Chapter Five is dedicated to studying Islamic scholarship on gifted education, also employing Habermas’s theory of ways of knowing as the principal lens on the topic. Empirical/analytic knowledge is achieved by a review of the scholarship of Al-Ghazali, the main source being employed in analysing Islamic scholarship. The chapter will also explore the evolution of Islamic scholarship through the ancient texts of Pythagoras, the medieval writings of Farabi, ibn Rushed, and the modern ideas of Iqbal, Abdu and Alafgahni. A comprehensive analysis of these texts forms the historical/hermeneutic knowledge on the topic, followed by a self-reflective discussion.

Chapter Six offers a precise examination of the concepts and principles of the modern gifted education scholarships adopted in the Western and Islamic worlds. The chapter provides an overview of the multiple educational theories and concepts proposed by both Western and Islamic scholars to develop the educational sciences and
philosophies. It is then dedicated to an investigation of the six core concepts of education adopted in Western scholarship and their counterparts in Islamic scholarship.

Chapter Seven discusses the research findings in relation to the formulated research questions. First, it indicates how the study results answer the questions of the primary educational concepts of traditional Western and Islamic scholarships. Second, it provides evidence from the data collected to demonstrate the contribution of Islamic scholarship to Western thinking. Third, the chapter discusses how traditional Islamic educational perspectives have affected global thinking in relation to gifted education. Finally, it determines the elements of the Western and Islamic educational systems that Saudi Arabia needs to employ to develop and implement balanced, comprehensive and culturally appropriate policies for gifted education.

Chapter Eight details concise recommendations for the application of a gifted education policy in the Saudi educational system. Chapter Nine draws conclusions on the research undertaken, restating the key themes and findings of the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter commences with a brief discussion on the historical background of formal education and an overview of the educational structure in Saudi Arabia and its connections with authentic Saudi culture and history. Saudi education has its roots in the British educational system, and the chapter contains a brief overview of the latter to identify the issues that this presents for the thesis. Further on, the chapter contains data on gifted education in Saudi Arabia, namely, the lack thereof, and on the influence of the broader culture, and especially the Islamic religion, on this situation. Special attention is given to a discussion of Mawhiba – the recently established and actively developing Saudi initiative for developing talent and addressing educational needs of gifted Saudi students. The specific challenges in the implementation of gifted education curricula, and the consequences of such inconsistencies for gifted Saudi students, are also discussed in detail. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings on the overall Saudi educational structure and the influences on its development and current form, as well as on gifted education gaps in Saudi Arabia, and the ways in which they might be addressed for the provision of adequate gifted education to Saudi students.

2.2 A Brief Historical Background of Saudi Arabia

The roots of Saudi Arabia go back thousands of years to the earliest of civilizations (Stair & Ferguson, 2003). However, it was only in 1932 that Saudi Arabia was unified under this name by King Abd Al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman Al Saud. At present, Saudi Arabia is one of the largest nations in the region, having a population of 27.3 million people, as of February 2014 data (ESCWA UN, 2014). It occupies an area
of around 2,250,000 square kilometres, covering almost four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is situated at the centre of the old world, that is, Europe, Asia and Africa. Its boundaries touch the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba in the west, the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain in the east, Jordan, Kuwait and Iraq in the north, and Yemen in the south. It is the site where the religion of Islam is said to have originated, and so all Saudi citizens are Muslims.

There is a high degree of cultural homogeneity in the country, with the most significant cultural attributes being strong family ties, tribal links, and submission to Islam (Alsalloom, 1995). Arabic is the official language of the country, however, English is also widely spoken, particularly in medical contexts (Aljabber, 2004). Until the discovery of oil in the 1950s, Saudi Arabia did not have any natural resources, and its people led a simple life. People did not have any kind of technology at their disposal and lived a traditional Bedouin life, with scarce attention being paid to education (Aljabber, 2004). However, the discovery of oil and its exploitation led to improvements in the quality of the Saudis’ lives and the active participation of Saudi Arabia in regional and international affairs. These developments naturally pointed to the need for Saudis to obtain formal education, which was important for professional employment and intelligent communication, both inside the country and in international relations with business partners.

2.3 The History of Education in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian Directorate of Education was established in the early years of the country’s existence, formally ushering in the era of formal education; it was responsible for supervising curricula and organizing the Saudi educational system. The Ministry of Education was established in 1953 to replace the Directorate in its
functions, and its outreach was expanded to policy-making, planning, and the budgetary staffing of schools (Alnujaidi, 2008). The Egyptian education model had been developed in the footsteps of the British educational model of the time; hence, the Saudi educational model was indirectly constituted along the lines of the British education system as well (Alromi, 2000, p. 4).

The number of students who enrolled in Saudi schools started to increase, but the schooling system was not sufficiently large or comprehensive to meet all the population’s needs. Even though there was an increase in the number of schools and students from the 1930s onwards, the rate of illiteracy in Saudi Arabia continued to be high until the 1950s (Alromi, 2000).

At present, there is a centralized education system in Saudi Arabia, with the Ministry of Education having supreme authority, and only limited powers being given to the schools. Due to religious and cultural reasons, there is gender segregation at all levels of education. The Ministry of Education has been responsible for regulating the education of boys from its inception in 1953, whereas the General Presidency of Girls had the responsibility of regulating the education of girls, which was quite distinct from that of boys (Ministry of Education, 2004). However, in 2002, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz integrated the Presidency of Girls’ education with the Ministry of Education, after which the same curricula, teaching methods and instructions, and evaluation procedures were used for both genders. In Saudi Arabia, general education normally consists of four levels: kindergarten, primary, intermediate and secondary (Ministry of Education, 2004). Children in the age group of 3-5 years go to kindergarten; however, it is not necessary to attend kindergarten to get enrolled in the first grade of primary education, since it is not part of the official education route. The primary level starts at the age of six, and comprises six years of learning. It offers basic
knowledge and skills to children in the fields of mathematics, science, arts, religion, health and social sciences. The intermediate and secondary levels comprise three grades that result in a norm that sees the students finishing high school by the age of 19 years. Students have to pass the national General Secondary Test (GST) before receiving their high school certificate. After receiving the certificate, they are eligible to enrol in universities or other institutions of higher education – either to one of the 14 universities of Saudi Arabia or to foreign higher educational establishments (Al Qarni, 2010).

The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing these four levels of education. Apart from this, it is also responsible for teacher training, special education, and adult education (Ministry of Education, 2009). Another authoritative body is the Ministry of Higher Education, which was set up in 1975 to enforce higher education policy by managing scholarships, international academics, universities, and academic offices in foreign countries (Al-Abdulkareem, 2004; UNESCO, 2011). Finally, the General Organization of Technical Education and Vocational Training is the body in the Saudi educational system that manages industrial, commercial and agricultural education, technical foremanship training, and commercial training (Al-Abdulkareem, 2004; UNESCO, 2011).

### 2.4 Influences on the Saudi Educational System

Saudi Arabia adopted its educational system from other countries, as is normally the case in any newly established country. As noted by Algosaibi (2013), the Egyptian educational system influenced the formation of Saudi education, and it still exerts a powerful influence on it. The present-day four-stage educational structure of Saudi Arabia (comprising primary, preparatory, secondary, and university education)
emerged in Egypt, and gradually spread out to the majority of Arab countries. However, despite the fact that such a system, while created in accordance with the British model, nonetheless proved efficient in the Arab world, yet it failed to keep pace with the state’s development, and it was not reformed or modified for many decades. Al-Otaibi (1993) also mentioned the strong impact of Western educational systems, specifically those of Britain and France, on the Saudi educational system, and the growing exposure of Arab students to the Western world’s effects, mostly because of the close ties between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

An overview of the British education system makes it apparent that the Saudi education system borrowed heavily from it. There are essentially five stages of education in Britain: early years, primary, secondary, further education, and higher education. According to UK legislation, full-time education is mandatory for all children between the ages of 5 (4 in Northern Ireland) and 16. Compulsory secondary education does not necessarily have to be provided at schools, and some parents choose home schooling for their children. Before reaching the compulsory school age, parents can decide to send their children to a nursery; however, there is limited government funding for such places. Further education is also not mandatory, and involves non-advanced education that can be obtained at further (including tertiary) education colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Euro Education, 2015).

The British system of education evolved into an integrated system that incorporates new fields like moral education, spiritual education and emotional intelligence. Its integrated system of education seeks to provide equal opportunities for all children to gain access to education. Specific attention is given to the education of gifted students; as stated by Tony Blair, the advantages of birth or privilege are not reasonable in education, so British children are mostly judged in accordance with their
talents and aptitudes. Hence, an official UK position regarding education involves tailoring the educational processes to fulfil children’s diverse needs and improve their potentials (Eyre, 2004).

The influence of the Ottoman system of education is also evident in the Saudi Arabian educational structure. As clarified by Shukri (1972), Arabia has mostly been an independent country, though subject to the impact and influence of the Ottoman Empire, though not to the degree that the latter affected other Arab countries. Thus, the Ottoman and Hashemite regimes affected education and economic and social progress in the region of Hejaz. As soon as the occupation of Hejaz ended and the unity of Saudi Arabia was achieved in 1925, Hejaz exhibited a much higher degree of sophistication in administration, and revealed the systematically organized system of education already in place as a result of the impact of Ottoman rule over the territory. However, Ottoman influence was mostly limited to that region only.

The Saudi Arabian educational system also places much importance on the acquisition of basic skills by its students. However, a specific aspect of Saudi education is its explicit focus on religious education. According to the Saudi embassy:

…the study of Islam is at the center of the education system of Saudi Arabia; however, the modern Saudi education system also offers quality instruction in diverse fields of arts and sciences. This diversity allows the Kingdom to make its residents ready for life and work in a global world. (Saudi Embassy, 2015)

There is evidence of the Saudi authorities’ efforts to adopt an integrated differentiation approach to education. As clarified by Van Tassel-Taska (2008), an integrated differentiation comprises a method of designing a curriculum for advanced learning, one that tends to emphasize higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills by the
exposure of students to the world of great ideas and themes. Nevertheless, it is notable that even though the Saudi Arabian educational system follows an integrated approach, there are gaps in its practical application which affect the overall quality and outcomes of education in the Kingdom. This observation was supported by Hussain (2007), who pointed out that Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, lack an integrated vision of the educational process and its objectives, while a neglect of differentiated instruction was noted by Munro (2012). These shortcomings illustrate the discrepancies between the British and Saudi educational systems, showing how the British progressed and embraced the latest changes in perceptions of intelligence and giftedness in their curricula (e.g., the emotional intelligence findings of recent decades). These are the lessons from which Saudi Arabia might well learn, in the interests of making its integrated approach to education more efficient and productive in order to address all students’ needs. The shortcomings of the Saudi educational structure will be discussed in the forthcoming sections.

2.5 The Curriculum Innovations of Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia: Mawhiba

The current Saudi King, Abdulaziz, recognizes the need for Saudi education’s standards to keep pace with twenty-first century global educational standards because such education is necessary for personal, societal and state development. In Saudi Arabia, the term ‘giftedness’ is described as being “present in someone who has exceptional academic skills and who requires specialized and different education as is being offered in regular classrooms” (Al Nafi, AlQatiee, AlDibaban, AlHazmi & AlSaleem, 1992, p. 25). With respect to the Saudi system, exceptional academic skills are attributed to those students who consistently achieve high grades, meaning that they regularly achieve more than 90% in tests in school. Teachers nominate these students
for Group IQ tests (Terman, 1925) to determine special abilities, Torrance tests (Torrance, 1980) for creativity, and WISC-R tests (Wechsler, 1974) for intelligence, in order to identify the extent of their giftedness (AlFahaid, 2002).

To meet the needs of gifted students, the Saudi authorities have created the Mawhiba project that formulates strategies and conducts planning for fostering giftedness, creativity, and the support of innovation in education. Mawhiba was established after a thorough analysis of 20 countries’ experiences in gifted education, and consideration of 90 international bodies’ activities. As a result of such intensive work, Mawhiba emerged as an entity with a vision of “transforming the Kingdom into a creative community of young, gifted, and innovative leaders and cadres with a distinctive education and appropriate training” (Mawhiba Introduction, 2015, para. 5). This vision is carried out for the sake of transforming the Saudi population into a knowledge society and achieving the sustainable development of Saudi Arabia; this vision is revised every five years to fit the entity’s strategies for particular educational needs.

The targeted education of gifted students is a considerably new concept in Saudi Arabia (Mawhiba: Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia (Part 1), 2014). Saudi Arabia is one of the first countries in the Middle East that has incorporated the concept of ‘gifted education’, however, it is still in the preliminary stages of providing education for the gifted. In 1970, the General Document of Educational Policy was enacted by the Saudi government, which included various regulations pertaining to the fostering and development of gifted learners. It particularly included the following statement:

It is vital to determine and identify the gifted learners amongst all Saudi young children and youth, foster them using all possible means to uncover their potentials, and give more attention and make greater efforts to expose them to special programs and relevant opportunities that can easily
be incorporated into the public education system of the country.
(Mawhiba: Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia (Part One), 2015, para. 38)

By approving such a plan, King Abdulaziz boosted giftedness and creativity in Saudi Arabia to a new phase and enabled the accomplishment of Mawhiba’s strategic mission. He also attended the 2008 presentation of that strategic plan made by the committee selected from the Board of the Foundation’s Trustees - HRH Prince Khalid bin Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Their Excellencies Dr Abdullah Al-Ubaid, Dr Hashim bin Abdullah Yamani, Mr Abdullah bin Ahmed Yousif Zainal and Dr Khalid bin Abdullah Al-Sabti (Mawhiba: Adoption of the Plan, 2014). This plan’s goals were formulated as follows:

1. Improvement and expansion of what gifted education offers;
2. Increase of the Saudi community’s awareness on education and innovation; and,

Based on these goals, which were directly related to Mawhiba’s vision, a number of initiatives emerged to embody those aims, which include:

1. A variety of targeted audience programs in elementary, middle, secondary schools, colleges; programs for adults;
2. The target of reaching the top 3% of Saudi students;
3. Programs fostering creativity, leadership, critical thinking, advanced competency development;
4. Establishment of collaboration with private and governmental institutions; and,
5. Programs for increasing awareness of Mawhiba activities and education on creativity and giftedness. (Mawhiba: goals of the plan, 2015)

However, it took some time for the policy to be practically implemented. Significant efforts were made by the Ministry of Education between 1990 and 1996, with the help of King Abdul Aziz and his Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (KACGC), more commonly referred to as Mawhiba, which resulted in the creation of the National Research Project for Identifying and Nurturing Gifted and Talented Children. Mawhiba provided funding to a well-recognized group of researchers at King Saud University and the Ministry of Education to carry out a research project in 1996.

The Ministry of Education started the Gifted Identification and Fostering Programme between 1997 and 1999 in some Saudi schools in large cities. The program for male students commenced in 1997, and one year later for female students. The goals of this programme were to:

- Change the school environment and provide special services and education to gifted students;
- Provide services and programmes to fulfil the requirements of the gifted;
- Initiate and assess enrichment activities;
- Offer school students flexible, equal educational opportunities to progress and contribute to themselves, society and the world; and,
- Educate and prepare teachers and other staff members to have a professional relationship with gifted learners. (Al-Makhalid, 2012, p. 98)

In order to accomplish these goals and objectives, an independent body was established in the Ministry of Education in 2001 to supervise and manage the education
of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. This body was known as the General Administration for Gifted Students. The Gifted Care Centre was also set up by the Ministry of Education to take care of the educational, social and psychological needs of gifted students. All across Saudi Arabia, 31 centres were established for male students, while there were 20 centres for female students, and these centres were under the jurisdiction of the General Administration for Gifted Students. By the end of 2004, 264 male and 97 female students received the benefits of the gifted education programme (Alwasruh, 2005).

In order to implement the various stages of development, the Ministry of Education and Mawhiba came up with a new strategic plan for gifted individuals in society, including gifted students, known as “Mawhiba”. The goal of this programme was to generally help society become more creative by developing a critical number of gifted and talented youngsters who are innovative, well-educated and well-trained, in order to facilitate the sustained growth of the country. The goals of the Mawhiba are to:

- Nurture giftedness and creativity and encourage innovation;
- Improve national potential to come up with innovative ideas;
- Discover leaders amongst the young people who are creative and talented in natural sciences, mathematics, technology and medicine;
- Encourage and offer enriched educational activities for gifted and talented Saudi students;
- Create awareness amongst the public (teachers, parents, employers) and educate them about the ways gifted individuals can be fostered; and,
- Provide assistance to educational and professional institutions across Saudi Arabia in developing comprehensive programmes for gifted and talented individuals. (Mawhiba, 2015)
The Saudi gifted education system is not yet developed fully in the country, however, it has managed several accomplishments. First, Saudi Arabian educational policy now highlights the significance of using appropriate methods to recognize and foster gifted students and their skills (Ministry of Economic and Planning, 2010). In addition, it mentions that the Government should encourage gifted and talented students by paying more attention to them, developing their abilities and giving them an opportunity to attain their potential (Ministry of Education, 2008). Gifted education at the present time is targeted towards both genders. Third, since 2003 there has been an increase in the number of centres that help nurture gifted students.

There was a dramatic increase in the number of schools implementing gifted programs from 2004 to 2009. Furthermore, apart from the government programs for gifted students, private donors also initiated certain activities for developing gifted individuals (Al-Salloom, 2004). However, even though the Saudi Arabian educational system considers giftedness in various fields, special importance is given to maths and science. In addition, education for gifted individuals is carried out within the mainstream inclusive education system, mostly through the use of ‘withdrawal from the classroom’ methods. Such an approach defines the specificity of gifted education in Saudi Arabia and gives rise to challenges. These challenges will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

2.6 Mawhiba in the Saudi Arabian Cultural Context

The culture of Saudi Arabia is affected to a large degree by Islam, and all educational policy and the school systems try to preserve the fundamental features of Islam (Al-Muslat, 1994). In addition, Islam recognizes that human beings are unique with respect to their abilities. Various verses in the Holy Qur’an acknowledge the
different levels of intellectual ability possessed by different people, and recognizes differences in both their mental and physical aptitudes (The Holy Qur’an, Al-Anam, 165; Az-Zumar, 9). Therefore, the Saudi curriculum is strongly focused on human development, but still places a strong emphasis on the religious aspects of education.

All individuals were encouraged by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to seek knowledge from ‘cradle to grave’. The Holy Qur’an also highlights the importance of learning, and the very first word that was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) was Iqra, meaning “read”. This suggests that acquiring worldly and religious knowledge is extremely important in Islam. Allah has ordered all Muslims to make intelligent contributions to society, which is why reading, learning and obtaining knowledge becomes the duty of each and every Muslim. This duty coincides with the Islamic ideals of justice and equality, therefore education should be equally accessible for male and female, young and old, rich and poor. In addition, the gifted, as well as the less able, should have access to education. The Islamic ideal of social justice is achieved when everyone in a society is provided with the opportunity to fulfil their own potential.

2.7 The Challenges for Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian gifted education system faces many challenges nowadays, which are a result of the overall nature of general education in Saudi Arabia, as well as the specifics of its structures. There are also some problems specifically connected with the provision of gifted education, and they are exacerbated by an absence of sufficient numbers of professionally trained teachers and staff for the provision of education for the gifted in the country. Each of these challenges and barriers to the development of gifted education in Saudi Arabia is discussed in further subsections.
Saudi Arabia currently faces a number of challenges on the way to implementing high-quality gifted education. They include the increasing need for innovation and distinctiveness, increasing rates of youth unemployment, and increasing competition in the international labour market. These challenges, exacerbated by a major lack of highly skilled personnel, create highly unfavourable conditions for young Saudis in both the domestic and international labour markets. A systematic look at these challenges points to one larger-scale challenge that Saudi Arabia faces in the context of the knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century – namely, an urgent need to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the Saudi economy, which can be achieved only by means of ensuring competitive education and full-scale talent development in the country (Presentation of Mawhiba strategic plan, 2007).

2.7.1 The Nature of the General Education System

In Saudi Arabia, both general education and gifted education are undergoing fundamental change and development, even now (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). The country faced a significant challenge in eliminating the Ottoman system of education, focused solely on religion and subordination, as it was seeking to develop its own educational identity, in keeping with its political and social objectives of both a regional and global expansion of international relations and economic ties. The first formal educational institute set up in Saudi Arabia in 1925 depended on Islamic instruction as the key source to develop the educational system in all schools across the Kingdom (Aleisa, 2009). This has meant that religious education has been at the centre of the educational system of the country, even through to the present time (Rugh, 2002). It was found by Aleisa (2009) that the percentage of religious education and
Arabic language classes in Saudi schools is greater in comparison to other subjects such as science, mathematics and social studies.

Additional challenges emerge because of the approach to teaching, as memorization and lecturing are mostly used as the style of learning and teaching. This not only leads to less participation by graduates of Islamic and Arabic studies in scientific studies and research, but also prevents gifted children from acquiring knowledge of an international standard. The core reason for such out-dated study methods is the extreme reliance of Saudi education on religious teaching. According to Aba Alkhale (2014), the lecturing, memorizing and recalling styles, which are typical of religious education, are also used in mathematics and scientific subjects.

Saudi general education also lags behind globally accepted standards because of its principles and general objectives, which revolve around a correct and comprehensive understanding of Islam. The Ten-Year Strategic Plan of Education presented by the Ministry of Education (2004 - 2014) states that the goals of the education system are as follows: to inculcate Islamic morals and values in students; to develop their conduct in constructive directions; to develop society in the economic and cultural sense; and, to make the individual play a vital role in developing the community (UNESCO-IBE 2011). Hence, it is apparent from this vision that the key focus of the Saudi education system is on Islamic values. However, reform is needed in Saudi Arabia’s educational system, which is evident from a large gap between Saudi educational efficiency and that of developed countries. It has to catch up with the social and economic developments of the state, and should integrate a balanced, flexible, and sophisticated approach to meeting student needs, with improvements in attitudes towards learning, thinking and technology use (Alnahdi, 2014). If these elements are combined with Islamic values and principles, and furthermore include the spirit of
loyalty and social coexistence inherent in Muslim cultures, the integrated approach will be effective.

As the evidence suggests, the country is not willing to give up its cultural and religious values, which poses a challenge for it as it attempts to develop a structure for education that is consistent with global standards. Saudi Arabia still hinges education centrally on its cultural heritage and religious values, which is apparent in the restrictions placed on its educational reforms to date.

2.7.2 The Structure of Saudi Curricula

As noted above, a large proportion of educational time is spent by students on religious education and learning the Arabic language. In addition, since memorization is the central method used in these studies, it leads to the acquisition of information without understanding it. A qualitative study carried out by Boyle (2006) in three different Islamic countries found that most students had memorized a large portion of the Qur'anic verses; however, they were unable to understand or explain them. This problem is mainly rooted in the domination of religious teaching that is incorporated in scientific fields of study as well. However, the present technological age has introduced advanced methods of education elsewhere in the world, and the exclusive use of traditional educational methods does not let Saudi students meet contemporary educational standards at the international level (Alnahdi, 2014).

Apart from this, another problem is the fact that only teachers make decisions about curriculum content and its delivery methods. Saudi education follows a standard educational approach in which learners are passive consumers of information during the educational process. Such a teacher-centred approach is not practised in the majority of developed countries anymore, since it deprives students of an ability to co-create their knowledge together with their teachers acting merely as scaffolds and
facilitators of learning, rather than implementers of direct instruction (Alamer, 2014; McGrail, 2005; Reynolds & Miller, 2003). Hence, to let Saudi students take advantage of contemporary forms and frameworks of learning, it is important to provide them with an opportunity to play a significant role in the educational process, and to adopt a learner-centred structure of education which, as suggested, is so far non-existent in the Saudi educational system (Weimer, 2013).

Mawhiba introduced its gifted curriculum in the form of specific enrichment programs for the targeted fostering of gifted students’ needs. As initially planned, the enrichment programs were of three types: after-school programs for grades 4 - 12, summer programs for the same grades, and open-access competitions with awards covering all 12 school grades and the university level. Additional curricular options include participation in the Young Leadership and Scholarship program open to all students at the final grade of high school, and a variety of Creative Work Environment initiatives. Mawhiba has also been actively involved in the establishment of partnerships with a variety of public and private schools aimed at the creation and integration of special curricula for gifted students in Saudi schools, at grades 4 - 12 (Mawhiba: Gifted education in Saudi Arabia (Part 2), 2015).

2.7.3 Problems Related to the Provision of Gifted Education

Several obstacles are faced in fulfilling the objectives for gifted education established by the Ministry of Education and Mawhiba. The most important challenge pertains to the limitations of the policies and the provision of the gifted education system itself, as the Ministry of Education and Mawhiba are still unable to formulate and adopt certain standards and laws for developing gifted education in order to fulfil the needs of gifted and talented students (Bushnak, 2007). Alqefari (2010) examined
the effectiveness and shortcomings of gifted programs in Saudi Arabia and concluded that there is insufficient and inconsistent educational provision and policies for gifted students. It was also earlier asserted by Bushnak (2007) that there is a lack of clarity in the provision of gifted education in Saudi Arabia, with a concentration, to a large degree, on the development of the science and technology aspects alone, and the major focus being on the education of gifted males.

Schools are supposedly at the forefront of gifted education in Saudi Arabia, but they are unable to promote it because of the lack of gifted curricula, a lack of resources for gifted students, and other inconsistencies, making schools unprepared for addressing the needs of the gifted. It was asserted by Al-Ghamdi (2007) and Alqefari (2010) that schools are essentially responsible for recognizing and developing gifted students, despite the fact that the system does not support gifted education and that there are insufficient school facilities. It was similarly found by Hanoreh (2003) that schools are not adequately promoting gifted education and do not play an active role in developing critical thinking abilities amongst students.

Crucial to the provision of gifted education is the ability of the Saudi educational system to promote integrated education. As clarified by Loepp (1999), this form of education presupposes a unity between the different forms of knowledge and the respective disciplines. Integrated education possesses many advantages, both for students and for the community, since it increases student engagement with the educational process (which is problematic in a discipline-based approach, with students interested in some subjects and completely neglecting others), and raises the perceived importance of education. This form of education may be organized in accordance with several models, such as, for example, the problem-based model (more favoured for technology-based education) and the theme-based model (integrating several core
themes from different subjects into educational blocks (Loepp, 1999)). An illustrative example of the problem-based model of integrated education is the ArtScience program introduced in 1994 and piloted in the USA to integrate arts and sciences in an interdisciplinary inquiry fostered through creative inquiry, self-paced learning, problem-solving and the critical thinking of its participants (Siler, 2011). Theme-based curriculum samples may be found in the US National Centre to Improve Practice (NCIP), located at the Education Development Centre, Inc., which enable educators to link disciplines so that students develop big, important ideas in the course of learning. The major ingredient in the theme-based curriculum’s success is that themes are developed in a developmentally appropriate and socially engaging manner, in order for students to remain motivated in their studies (NCIP, 2015).

Numerous researchers (e.g., Anfara & Stacki (2002), Loepp (1999), Tomlinson (2002), and others) have advocated the use of integrated approaches to curriculum design because of their indisputable benefit in comparison to traditional curricula. For example, Anfara and Stacki (2002) emphasized that integrated education helps students to make sense of their school experiences and connect them to life experiences. In addition, integrated education empowers teachers and helps to overcome the fragmented, disconnected view of knowledge created by conventional educational approaches. Siler (2011) also clarified that integrated education fosters integrated, holistic thinking, which suggests that students assume a wholeness of knowledge and study in a learning environment in which everything is relevant.

However, notwithstanding the model selected for implementation of integrated education, Saudi authorities should keep in mind the implications that integration brings into the educational process, in terms of the teachers’ qualifications and approaches. This change requires teachers to shift from their deductive way of thinking
to a constructivism, so allowing students to construct their knowledge independently and creatively. Furthermore, teachers have to undergo special professional development and training to be able to work in a teaching team in order to produce coherent and inclusive integrated education (Loepp, 1999). Tomlinson (2002) pointed out that for an integrated curriculum to be successful, it should focus on the macro concepts of education, such as diversity, the continuous search for knowledge, and the interdisciplinary skills of observation and gaining a critical perspective. The exposure of students to an integrated education teaches them to make connections between content areas and visualize learning as an interconnected process (LaVerdiere, 2008). Other requirements for an integrated education to work include the teachers’ participation in the learning communities, communication of the new educational paradigm to families and the larger community, the introduction of new suitable assessment strategies, and the provision of the necessary resources and educational support (Loepp, 1999).

As the evidence presented above suggests, an integrated education approach has a number of evident advantages for the provision of a favourable, stimulating environment fostering the creation of a holistic image of knowledge, and a vision of the world in which everything is interconnected. Therefore, gifted education requires an integrated approach, and developing recommendations for this is one of the primary purposes of this thesis. An integrated gifted education may take the form of a learning process in which not only the learner and the teacher, but also the learner’s family, are involved. However, the gifted education curriculum in Saudi Arabia has been weak in this respect because of the insufficient attention given to the integration of parents into the educational process. It was found by Al-Alola (2004) that most gifted education systems across the globe stress the involvement of families in the process. There are
many successful integration experiences in countries such as the USA, Japan (Wong-Ratcliff & Ho, 2011), the UK (Hayes, McAllister, & Dowds, 2006; NICIE, 2015), Australia (Integrated Education & Communication, 2015), and other countries. They are mostly related to the integration of students, regardless of issues of race, ethnicity, religion, or special versus general needs. Such models seem also to have the potential to address the challenge of the integration of religious and secular education, such as required in Saudi Arabia.

One of the first starting points for Saudi Arabia to achieve a sufficient level of educational integration is to foster larger family and community involvement into the educational process. So far, the role of the Saudi families in the planning, enforcing, or even supporting gifted programmes is highly underestimated (Al-Qarni, 2010; Alqefari, 2010; Shavinina, 2013). Mawhiba has taken a radically different approach to family participation in gifted education, and has integrated the learners’ family members into the educational framework as one of its important constituents (Presentation of Mawhiba strategic plan, 2007). In addition, enrichment programmes for fostering giftedness are applied from fourth grade onwards in the elementary phase, with the lower grades neglected in this regard (Ibrahim & Al-jughaiman, 2009). These measures may become the first step towards the achievement of greater integration mentioned by Loepp (1999), and involve the introduction of students’ families and the larger community into the integrated educational process in order to foster greater levels of equity and provision.

A strong best practice model for the establishment of a high-quality gifted education system in Saudi Arabia may be found in England, a country directing efforts towards the fulfilment of individual potential through a diversity of provision. The English model for gifted education recognizes the need for diversity and uses it with
respect to the gifted and talented. The English model creates a balance in equality and meritocracy (Bakken, Obiakor, & Rotatori, 2014). It gives special attention to the under-represented groups, partially by working through the school system to enhance the general education offered, and also by using school data to recognize individual gifted students from under-represented groups, and intervening to provide high quality opportunities and the support they require for attaining their potential. This is attained by using a mix of school-based systems and access to wider schooling opportunities (Eyre, 2004). However, as discussed above, this is lacking in the Saudi education system, and some of these examples of the successful integration of gifted students into the educational system, together with addressing their individual educational needs, may be taken as an example for Saudi Arabian authorities to improve their outreach to gifted Saudi students as well.

The Mawhiba strategic plan aims to support the success of such national plans and initiatives, as discussed in this section. Such a proactive approach is considered more effective in facing the challenges that Saudi Arabia now experiences. A plan of action was communicated by Mawhiba authorities (see Figure 1).

Figure 2.1. Mawhiba Strategic Plan
2.7.4 The Readiness of Teachers

Prospective teachers in Saudi Arabia spend four years in college studying various subjects. From the day of graduation, teachers mainly come across two key issues. The first one pertains to the structure of the curriculum they studied from the first grade up to college, in addition to the domination of the lecturing and memorizing styles, which negatively affects their eligibility for, and involvement, in scholastic settings. Second, there is a gap between what potential teachers were taught at school and what they teach to their students, which stems from an absence of adequate preparation for professional teaching during college years (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). As pointed out by Loepp (1999), teachers play a key role in spearheading and implementing integrated education in daily educational practices, so their professional
development in this domain, participation in learning communities and continuous provision of adequate resources and support to students are vital for integration to work. All of these aspects should be considered in the process of designing an integrated curriculum for Saudi Arabia, and they have potential to guide an efficient implementation thereof, ensuring that practices are properly informed by scholarly evidence and the best practices from other countries.

Thus, the present lack of competence and professional preparation of teachers, in terms of integrated education strategies and their implementation in Saudi Arabia, highlights the importance of creating improvements in the curricula to raise teaching competency levels. In addition, teachers need to be prepared to become facilitators, and not dominators, and should not be the sole source of knowledge (Alamer, 2014; McGrail, 2005; Reynolds & Miller, 2003; Rogers, 2002). Loepp (1999) envisioned this change in teachers’ belief systems as constituting a shift from a deductive way of thinking to a constructivism, i.e., seeing each student as constructing his or her meaning and knowledge on their own. This suggests that there should be a greater use of technology and self-improvement methods in order to be capable of facing all of the educational challenges within and outside classrooms. Saudi Arabian classrooms obviously need to keep pace with present-day educational advancements that presuppose a learner-centred approach to education, the active use of technologies, and a strong focus on self-development and the acquisition of knowledge, which will make Saudi students independent and its critical thinkers competitive in the global labour market (Shoult, 2006).

Another problem with the Saudi teachers’ training and preparation is concerned with the low level of their motivation for teaching. It was found in research by Altayar (2003) that Saudi teachers exhibit low levels of responsibility and enthusiasm for
teaching and have inadequate skills that do not help them in lesson-planning or in classroom management. Al-Magid (2003) also examined the nature of the gifted programme provision in Saudi Arabia, and deduced that teachers had a negative attitude towards the education of gifted students. It was also found that there was unfavourable environments in schools, as teachers did not change the curriculum to improve the thinking and creativity of students, did not encourage students to come up with questions without fear or embarrassment, and were not using modern scientific techniques (like computers) to enhance their creativity (Al Garni, 2012; Al Qarni, 2010; Hudson et al., 2010; Loepp, 1999; Shavinina, 2013). Thus, it is evident that the poor levels of the teachers’ competency and professionalism are to blame for the poor outcomes of the teaching process, and that teacher training should be provided to raise their self-esteem and equip them with the arsenal of skills for a proper education provision.

The issues related to teachers, including teachers involved in gifted education, were examined by Alhammed, Zeadah, Alotaiby and Motawaly (2004). They concluded that: (i) many teachers are not adequately qualified and do not have the required knowledge and skills to teach; (ii) teachers are not fully aware of student needs regarding the content, psychology and existing educational approaches to attain the required goals and also have insufficient knowledge of key ideas, like rewards, punishment, evaluation and classroom management; and (iii) there is a gap between teachers’ theoretical knowledge and practice (applying their knowledge to practical situations). This problem becomes even more pronounced as soon as one realizes that teachers play a critical role in the development of gifted education. Hence, teachers need to undergo adequate training to be able to plan and execute special programmes
for gifted students in the classrooms. Teachers should know how to enrich the
curriculum and use different teaching methods to fulfil the needs of gifted children.

The Saudi Arabian authorities obviously realize the strategic need to improve
the quality of education, and have made various efforts to introduce enhancements. The
government has spent large sums of money to develop education and the curricula, and
has set up various educational plans to train teachers. However, the negligence and
insufficient knowledge of certain Saudi teachers are said to be the reasons why Saudi
students are facing so many issues (Tawalbeh & Ismail, 2014). Another obstacle faced
in the development of gifted education is a lack of the educational devices needed for
gifted students’ programmes and a lack of expertise amongst the mainstream teachers
in developing and implementing gifted programmes (Alemselm & Zainal, 1992, b). If
these problems were properly addressed, the Saudi education system could advance to
higher levels of quality, and so be in a position to meet the needs of gifted Saudi
students.

2.8 The Consequences for Gifted Students in Saudi Arabia

Gifted students have specialized learning needs, which require a creative
curriculum and experienced educators. Recognizing suitable curricula for gifted
students is a challenge faced by educators all over the world (Feldhusen, 1989; Finley,
2008; Gagné, 2005; Hudson, Hudson, Lewis, & Watters, 2010, Van Tassel-Baska,
2008). The gifted students in Saudi Arabia face similar issues to gifted students all over
the world, however not much attention is being given to studying the challenges

In an effort to improve the quality of gifted education, the Saudi Arabian
authorities established two professional bodies, namely: the General Department for
Gifted Students at the Ministry of Education, and the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity. However, the needs of gifted students are still not being met. The ultimate objective of these organizations is to “recognize gifted children so that they can be given all of the knowledge that fulfils their requirements” (Alamer, 2010, p.2). When this objective is considered practically, one can see that there is still a huge gap between the theory and the practice, particularly in the aspect of granting gifted students the entire scope of resources for fulfilling their potential.

Gifted education is a challenge in Saudi Arabia, mainly due to the absence of a specific curriculum for gifted students. They still have to attend regular classrooms even though various theorists and researchers in the field of gifted education have advised schools to have a different curriculum for gifted students so that their needs can be met (Finley, 2008; Gagné, 2005). Saudi lawmakers are aware of this fact, and it is clearly stated in all regulations enacted for recognizing gifted students. However, apart from a few attempts made by teachers to alter mathematics and sciences to become more attuned to the requirements of the gifted, there is no specialized curriculum for gifted students.

Since gifted students have to attend normal classrooms, schools are strongly recommended to offer different curricula and instruction, according to their specialized needs (The National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2014). Offering an appropriate curriculum to gifted students would not have any significance unless these students are under the supervision of teachers who are “knowledgeable and informed about this category of students and about the instructional practices that encourage differentiation” (Finley, 2008, p. 80). An illustrative example for Saudi Arabia may be found in the inclusive curriculum offered to gifted students in England, which provides
specialized curricula whenever required, and offers well-trained teachers for addressing the gifted students’ needs and potentials. Unfortunately, the absence of specialized teacher training in Saudi Arabia for meeting the gifted students’ educational needs also becomes a strong challenge to establishing this type of curriculum. To date, there are no specialized classes for prospective teachers in Saudi universities. In this regard, it is suggested that gifted students should be placed under the supervision of teachers who have achieved a minimum of 12 university hours of professional training (Van Tassel-Baska, 2008, p. 17).

2.9 Analysis of the Data Collected from Saudi Education Policies

A review of the literature indicates that the main problem with Saudi educational policies lies in the nature of its education system. In particular, the fact that gifted education in Saudi Arabia is embedded within general education, and is not specifically addressed with separate curricula, makes the educational system weak and indiscriminate (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). This is attributed to the fact that Saudi education policy has mainly focussed on general education since its establishment, and its implementation is characterized by many gaps. Studies reviewed in this chapter conspicuously highlight the inadequacy of the Saudi education policy in meeting the diverse needs of gifted students. The related literature also indicates that there is a poor implementation of Saudi educational policies. However, if the aspirations of the Mawhiba project come to fruition, it will be possible to speak about a well-functioning infrastructure fostering giftedness and creativity, supporting innovation in Saudi Arabia, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of Saudi Arabia development in line with the knowledge-based social requirements of the twenty-first century (Presentation of Mawhiba strategic plan, 2007).
Policy implementation is a vibrant process that requires support from all stakeholders. However, the Saudi educational system is beleaguered by weak ownership and poor support from its stakeholders, poor communication, a lack of commitment, particularly by the implementing bodies, a lack of cooperation and collaboration, and an inconsistent approach towards the attainment of policy goals (Al Qarni, 2010). The literature reveals that there is no clear policy follow-up, in spite of the existence of legislation that regulates the implementation of appropriate programs for gifted learning. Consequently, the inadequate communication, cooperation and coordination between the implementers and the stakeholders causes serious obstacles to an effective policy implementation for gifted and talented students (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). Furthermore, unclear policy directives that do not include initiatives for evaluation and follow-up are a prerequisite for failure. The UK’s N.A.C.C.C.E. (1999) emphasized that clear and precise policy directives result in creativity and adaptability, which enhances effective implementation.

Attitudes are a key influential factor in any policy’s implementation. In Saudi Arabia, most emphasis is directed towards Islamic and Arabic studies (Alamer, 2014). Arts are also considered inferior to the sciences because of a perceived lack of job opportunities (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). Because of such the strong focus on some subjects, and a common neglect of others, students gifted in the field of the arts may have their educational needs largely unaddressed because of a common public neglect for these fields of education. In addition, the attitudes of teachers to the educational process, generally, constitute another barrier precluding gifted education from normal development and reform in Saudi Arabia. Studies, such as that conducted by Alamer (2014), found that teachers have a negative attitude towards gifted students and gifted education in general, and that this is mainly due to the fact that they are not
well trained in handling gifted education, and hence do not understand it (Alamer, 2014). Consequently, the negative attitudes of teachers comprise a strong barrier to gifted education reform because teachers are not motivated to participate in gifted education programs and to cater for the needs of gifted students.

Financial issues may also be regarded as a challenge on the way to establishing a well-functioning Saudi gifted education program; special education programs require extra financial resources to be committed in terms of hiring specialists and training teachers on how to deal with special students. Al Qarni (2010) found that one of the main reasons for the poor implementation of the policy on gifted education in Saudi Arabia is the shortage of financial support for gifted education, from both the ministry and the private sector. Although gifted education in Saudi Arabia has received substantial support within the country and a considerable amount of expertise from the international community (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013), the support is not in a financial form. Thus, the pronounced deficiency of financial resources limits the ability of most public schools to set up gifted education programs in their schools.

Even in cases where the financing is sufficient, and gifted education programs are put in place in Saudi Arabia, their administration is weak and have many gaps affecting the educational outcomes. While some programs have been successfully adopted, such as the endorsement of the Oasis Enrichment Model (OEM) by the Saudi Ministry of Education (Aljughaiman & Ayoub, 2012), and have been adopted by many schools and gifted centres to enhance gifted education, nothing is being done by the directorates of education and school heads to ensure that these programs are running effectively. In addition, it has been found that the science process skills variables in this program are not being well implemented because of a lack of emphasis on the importance of science process skills by the ministry, schools, and society in general.
The weak administration machinery is actually a major reason that gifted education has not been strengthened in Saudi public schools (Alamer, 2014).

It is also notable that Saudi policymakers are not committed to ensuring an effective implementation of gifted education. The inappropriate training of teachers, their negative attitudes, a shortage of financial support from the government, and insufficient evaluation programs indicate a lack of political will among key stakeholders (Alamer, 2014; Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). This is a significant barrier to successful implementation of Saudi gifted education policy. Hence, all these specific challenges and barriers have to be taken into account in order to tailor the gifted education program to the Saudi Arabian educational realities by means of addressing the identified flaws and weaknesses at all stages of its integration into the general educational curriculum of the country.

2.10 Justification for Selected Methodology

As one can see from the problems identified above concerning the Saudi education system’s out-dated and ineffective nature, there is a need to seek comprehensive, flexible, and effective solutions for its development and advancement in order to fit the needs of gifted students. In connection with this, the researcher has selected the research paradigm of Jurgen Habermas, titled “three ways of knowing”, or “three kinds of knowledge”, to research a vast sphere of human knowledge - that of education. Based on this paradigm, humans have three kinds of interests – technical, communicative (practical), and emancipatory – from which all three kinds of knowledge are derived. Educational practice and research are the fields in which Habermasian theories are most widely applied, mainly due to the fact that education is essentially about knowledge (Wang, 2014).
The first type of knowledge, technical knowledge, refers mainly to the ways in which people manipulate and control the surrounding environment and predict physical and social events, which informs their taking of appropriate action. At this level, knowledge is established through reference to external reality with the assistance of the human senses. In the field of education, this level of knowledge relates to empirical knowledge gained through experimental or quasi-experimental methodologies, providing objective evidence and answering questions about cause and effect. In this research, this level of knowledge helps to establish the cause and effect of the emergence of certain scholarships and the process of development of Western and Islamic theories about the nature and features of giftedness, intelligence, intellect and wisdom.

The second level of knowledge, that of communicative understanding, provides an interpretive paradigm for this study, based on the researcher’s social knowledge and subjective interpretations. Hence, the level of study applied to the present research is targeted at describing, not predicting. It is based on qualitative methods directed at understanding the nature of a particular experience, in this case the essence of the mutual influences of Islamic and Western scholarships on each other, with regard to giftedness education. Finally, the third level of knowledge is emancipatory knowledge, since it questions both the instrumental and communicative knowledge and constructs a self-reflective critical body of knowledge representing the researcher’s critical self-awareness about the research field. This body of knowledge is considered genuine and unbiased, so it is the most highly valued level of knowledge, in terms of seeking truth and providing valuable research findings.

Because of the multi-levelled comprehensive nature of inquiry that the Habermasian methodology of “three ways of knowing” provides, this method was
selected as a guiding methodology for this research. By the means of getting more
critical with each stage of an inquiry, and gaining additional insights from a variety of
research perspectives, the researcher will gain a true and unbiased knowledge of the
concept of giftedness and the core concepts associated with it. These concepts have
developed throughout history, both in Islamic and Western thought, and have informed
the development of an effective methodology for gifted education in the present-day
educational context. More details on the essence and procedures of this Habermasian
methodology are provided in Chapter 3.

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the history and present state of the Saudi
Arabian educational system, the roots of its emergence, and the core influences of the
Egyptian and UK systems of education in its formative stages. The professional bodies
responsible for overseeing and reforming Saudi education were discussed, and their
inability to address the needs of gifted students was identified, on the basis of numerous
critical studies. The challenges to the implementation of a proper system of gifted
education in Saudi Arabia were enumerated, including the nature and structure of Saudi
education, the incompetency of professional Saudi teachers, a lack of political
motivation for reform, and the overall negative public attitude to the modernization of
Saudi education. In addition to these barriers, researchers have also identified the
absence of professional teacher training for the provision of gifted education, an
absence of financial support from the Saudi Arabian authorities for advancements in
education, and weak administration and evaluation mechanisms that disable the current
Saudi education system’s leadership, in terms of evaluating its policies and practices.
Mawhiba was discussed as the most relevant and promising initiative in Saudi Arabia
for the provision of adequate, high-quality education for gifted students. It is the organization collaborating with a variety of public and private educational institutions nationally and worldwide for the provision of additional educational opportunities for gifted Saudis. Corresponding recommendations, such as the provision of improved teacher training, the development of distinct gifted education curricula, and urging the educational lawmakers and decision-makers to spearhead Saudi educational reform, were provided. The concluding section provided a brief presentation and justification of the Habermasian methodology used in this research, by showing how relevant it is in the educational research field, and how it will be applied to eliciting an objective body of knowledge relevant to this study. The following chapter is devoted to laying the grounds for this application.
CHAPTER 3: THE HABERMASIAN METHOD OF "WAYS OF KNOWING"

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will describe and analyse the method that will be used to investigate the research questions in the thesis. The chapter describes how the selected method has helped to establish succinct findings in the thesis’ study area. The Habermasian method will be used in this thesis since it offers the most suitable methodological approach for dealing with issues of knowledge, including across cultures. This method will enable the thesis to search out, investigate and illustrate the practical means by which an area of Saudi education, namely, gifted education, can achieve an integration of Western and traditional Islamic concepts of knowledge. Since the main feature of the Habermasian method concerns the harmonization of two divergent conceptual worlds, it will provide a methodology for the thesis by which to connect Western and Islamic scholarship in the Saudi context. The “ways of knowing” which are the basic components of the Habermasian method will enable the research to offer an approach for understanding the key thesis components, which are important for the conceptualization of gifted education in the Saudi context. The ways of knowing proposed by Habermas will be discussed and elaborated on in the next subsection, as well as their application in answering the thesis questions.

3.2 Research Questions

As has already been discussed in Chapter 1, the present study is guided by the following four research questions:
1. What are the primary educational concepts adopted by Western and traditional Islamic scholarships?

2. What is the contribution of the Islamic educational philosophy to the Western education system?

3. How has the traditional Islamic educational perspective affected global thinking in relation to gifted education?

4. What elements of the Western and Islamic educational systems does Saudi Arabia need to develop in order to implement a balanced and comprehensive policy for gifted education?

3.3 Research Design

This study uses the process of hermeneutics analysis to gather and interpret data and uses the Habermasian “ways of knowing” method, which has the capacity to analyse knowledge claims in three different ways: empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic, and critical/self-reflective (Habermas, 1972, 1974). This qualitative research method is particularly effective for examining and explaining historical documents, so it was applied to both the Islamic and Western materials.

An investigation of documentation from a historical perspective involves working with extant material (Aldridge, 1998). For this study, the relevant data consisted primarily of Al-Ghazali’s works and those of other Muslim scholars who wrote on issues relevant to gifted education. Similarly, the method was applied to relevant Western works on education, both historical and contemporary. Therefore, the analysis was conducted along the following lines:

1. Review and analyse gifted education history and policies to clarify the gaps and challenges;
2. Extract the main points of the perspectives on gifted education from Western scholarship;

3. Extract the dimensions and concepts of giftedness and examine the ways that they are dealt with in Islamic scholarship;

4. Extract the connections between Islamic and Western scholarship in order to clarify that there is a long history of interaction between the two approaches;

5. Compare the Islamic and Western scholarships to find similarities, differences, and links;

6. Link the concepts together to create new culturally appropriate dimensions in gifted education programs for Saudi Arabia; and,

7. Recommend the changes needed for the improvement of the approaches to gifted education in Saudi Arabia.

3.4 Habermasian Theory: "Ways of Knowing"

In an effort to identify the possibilities of obtaining reliable, objective knowledge, Jurgen Habermas developed a theory of three ways of knowing, incorporating the empirical-analytic (technical), the historical-hermeneutic (communicative), and the self-reflective (critical) (Habermas, 1972, 1974; Douglas, 2012). Habermas proposed these three ways of knowing, proffering that each way of knowing was driven by a cognitive interest (Dahlberg, 2014). The empirical-analytic way of knowing developed as a result of the cognitive interest in the gathering and storing of important facts and figures for the ability to manage one’s world (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013). A cognitive interest in finding meanings in the facts and figures resulted in the historical-hermeneutic way of knowing, or, in other words, the interpretive knowing wherein the major objective was to conceptualize one’s world
(Lovat, 2004). Finally, the critical self-reflective way of knowing resulted from the cognitive interest in being emancipated, free in one’s knowing, so that one could come to know one’s self (perhaps for the first time) and the surrounding world for what it truly is. Attaining the self-reflective or critical way of knowing was the only way of knowing that assured access to reliable knowledge, while the first two ways of knowing allowed an acceptance of party/partisan knowledge that was often accepted non-critically (Douglas, 2012).

According to Lovat (2004), all three areas of knowing proposed in Habermasian theory can be applied in any area of study. In whatever situation, our need for technical control causes us to seek knowledge in the facts and quantifiable figures involved in the subject of the study, which calls for empirical analytical knowing. Similarly, Lovat and Douglas (2007) indicated that people’s need to conceptualize the significance of the study area usually forces them to investigate their inner constructs through comparison and interrelation, involving the historical-hermeneutic way of knowing. Finally, the need to reflect on the subject area and assess it critically involves the critical self-reflective way of knowing, giving access to the most reliable knowledge on the subject.

The three ways of knowing were utilized strategically in answering the thesis questions. The subject matter of the thesis involves a conversation between approaches to gifted education in Western and Islamic scholarships and its integrated application in the Saudi educational context. The empirical-analytic approach to knowing assisted in the identification of key primary philosophers, thinkers, and educators who produced the foundational texts and knowledge on gifted education, in both Western and Islamic scholarships. The historical-hermeneutic way of knowing was applied to identify the impacts of Western and Islamic scholarship on gifted education programs, and to delineate the core concepts within each of the traditions for their integration into an
enriched and unified gifted education program for Saudi education. Moreover, this way of knowing was also helpful in determining the need for a dialogue between Islamic and Western scholarships for the production of an efficient and productive gifted education program, since this rationale was found in the varying interpretations of giftedness and gifted education produced by thinkers of different civilizations. Finally, self-reflective or critical knowing enabled the researcher to establish whether all the collected information was authentic, unbiased and, in that sense, ‘true’, and to identify alternative directions of research in the defined area. This approach provided an opportunity, as well as the motivation, for the researcher to assess and appraise the obtained data for its reliability, as well as to identify his own positioning in the research, so as to see the influences of any misinformation or biases that could potentially lead to false conclusions.

According to Dahlberg (2014), Habermasian theory allows us to be assured of a true knowledge of the facts through the application of the third way of knowing, since true knowledge demands that we be free in our conscious deliberations. The first two ways of knowing leave gaps in this freedom, where we might be controlled or shielded from critiques or ideas beyond the immediate spectrum of the study. This, therefore, makes the third way of knowing the highest imperative for the study. The solutions to the proposed thesis questions will be fully guided by the Habermasian school of thought, which served as a critical review for all data. As a part of this, the approach enabled a critical review of the very concept of merging the Western and Islamic gifted education systems for the Saudi context, and further facilitated the researcher’s answering and authenticating of the formulated research questions.
3.5 Ways of Knowing and Education

Education is the main underlying feature in the thesis, so it is important that it be subject to review in the light of the Habermasian ways of knowing (Lovat, 2004). According to Ryan and Ryan (2013), effective education cannot be focused exclusively on technical learning if it is meant to be for the maximum benefit of students, and society at large. In the Habermasian school of thought, social commitment is focused on developing praxis and independent learning, so an educational system should be focused on the needs of students and the overall social benefit that they are to bring to society after completion of their studies. According to Morrison (2008), Habermasian thought propels one towards the idea that a proper education system should be inclined to focus on the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, as well as the moral good of its recipients. This notion of education thus encompasses both the teachers and the schools, since they are entrusted with the task of educating intelligent individuals with such skills as integrity, critical thinking and creativity, as well as independent decision-making for personal, social, and emotional development. In connection with this, the present study aims to design a culturally appropriate focus that may combine all the Habermasian ideas by aligning the relevant aspects of Western and Islamic education in order to focus on the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and moral aspects of the education of gifted students.

According to Habermas, the goal of any educational system should be the incorporation of cultural and individual values into the learning process so that the ethical and moral components of education are strong in educating worthy members of a society. The researcher determined that education should not be tied only to education academics, but should rather represent a holistic, inclusive pedagogy, of an interdisciplinary nature, providing knowledge for students in all spheres and domains
of their lives (Romanowski, 2014). Only such an educational system can foster human growth and lay the foundations for the further development of learners (Lovat, 2013; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013). Understanding the ways of knowing in education is important to this study, since it provided the analytical tool for answering the research questions. An understanding of the ways of knowing related to education enabled the researcher to identify the core concepts of gifted education in the Western and Islamic scholarly traditions, and to distinguish similarities and differences within these two fields. Moreover, this theoretical paradigm provided an opportunity for a critical investigation of both educational systems in order to produce recommendations on the ways of combining them into an integral, holistic and comprehensive system that could enhance gifted education in Saudi Arabia and address all the needs of gifted Saudi students.

3.6 Ways of Knowing and Schools

Most learning and education takes place in a school where learners are gathered for the common goal of enhancing their intellectual capacities. The Habermasian understanding of a school is an institution where values are thought about, talked about, taught, reflected on, as well as endorsed (Romanowski, 2014). Since Habermas’s ways of knowing seeks to explicitly review a certain perspective, idea, or scenario, and to derive its meaning, the researcher included the concept of schools and the focus on giftedness in this study’s analysis to determine the Saudi schools’ ability to produce meaningful and socially acceptable gifted educational results (Stuckey, Taylor & Cranton, 2014).

The application of Habermas’s paradigm of ways of knowing to an analysis of the concept of schools and giftedness enabled the researcher to answer this study’s
research questions by means of establishing the significance and relevance of the Islamic and Western gifted education concepts for the Saudi educational system. A critical approach to Saudi schools’ analysis is able to reveal whether they are able to provide sufficient value-based education for Saudi students. This, in turn, pointed to the crucial concepts from Western and Islamic scholarships on gifted education that need to be integrated in the Saudi educational system to make it more effective. Finally, an analysis of Saudi school policy through a Habermasian perspective revealed the implications of integrating Western and Islamic scholarship concepts into the Saudi everyday curriculum, and both the challenges and advantages of such a reform of Saudi schools’ functioning.

### 3.7 Ways of Knowing and Curriculum

As Ngara (1995) clarified, a curriculum is what is taught and the methods of teaching it; hence, the curriculum has a direct relationship with ways of knowing because it codifies ways of approaching teaching in each specific educational establishment. An application of Habermasian theory to the study of curriculum allows an identification of, and reflection on, current educational practices in order to determine their correspondence with the national and individual interests of the involved stakeholders. Therefore, Habermas’s ways of knowing may be a helpful perspective for analysing the Saudi gifted education curriculum and the related policy initiatives in regard to their correspondences with the practical goals of addressing each student’s needs, developing his or her potential, fostering human growth, and instilling authentic cultural, moral and ethical values into the educational paradigm (Lovat, 2013). By means of applying the Habermasian approach, the researcher also analysed various Western and Islamic approaches to curriculum design, identified best practices
in this field, explored the mutual influences of Islamic and Western curriculum traditions, and determined the best curriculum choices from both traditions in order to produce the optimal and most productive Saudi Arabian gifted education curriculum.

3.8 Ways of Knowing and the Teacher and Learner

The teacher facilitates the use of curriculum to achieve educational goals for the learners. It is therefore important to evaluate the significance of the teacher and the learner in respect to the ways of knowing, particularly for gifted students. Based on the Habermasian assumptions, the implications for the roles of the teacher and those of the learners are different with the application of each of the three ways of knowing (Morrison, 2008). With the first way of knowing, the teacher identifies and facilitates technical knowledge. In the second way of knowing, both the teacher and the student are equals and are concerned with the manner with which the teacher provides the knowledge and how the learner interprets and understands such knowledge. The third way of knowing involves a critical reflection on the authenticity of the learning process, and on the suitability of the teacher to provide comprehensive knowledge to the learner (Stuckey et al., 2014).

An evaluation of the teacher and learner, based on the ways of knowing, is relevant for the present study because it denotes an important indication of educational quality. The Habermasian ways of knowing are organised so as to build learner independence towards transformational knowledge. Once the teacher is able to teach his/her students to become independent critical thinkers, who are able to distinguish how knowledge is applied differently according to a range of contexts, the goal of education may be considered accomplished. Hence, Habermas’s theory of the ways of knowing was applied here for a critical assessment of the teachers’ ability to enhance
the independent knowledge acquisition for their gifted students, and their learner-centred approach of guiding and motivating students for independent scholarly inquiries. The ways of knowing lens was also applied to the interactions between teachers and learners in both the Western and Islamic gifted education systems. These interactions were seen as an important feature of gifted education, and successful learning experiences underpin the researcher’s goal of developing an integrated system for effective gifted education in Saudi Arabia.

It is also notable that communication is a vital aspect of the overall education process. According to Dahlberg (2014), teachers and learners are participants in a learning experience whereby effective communication necessarily comprises inferring meanings and their discussion to ensure mutual understanding. The next subsection hence discusses ways of knowing and scholarly communication for gifted students.

3.9 Ways of Knowing and Scholarly Communication for Gifted Students

Habermasian theory indicates that education systems, and in particular gifted education, should enhance communication that is free of any manipulation for specific outcomes from those who have the opportunity and power to misinform others (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2013). Effective cognitive communication for gifted learners needs to harness the three Habermasian ways of knowing, which is facilitated by the teacher’s knowledge of their learners and through the effective development of interpersonal communication skills. Skilled interpersonal skills thus underpin the historical-hermeneutic way of knowing for both teachers and students as they both become aware of their prejudgments and presumptions about various learning experiences. Critical self-reflectivity is the most crucial part of the process since it allows a critical assessment of whether both the teachers and the students have equal
access to knowledge. Scholarly communication must address all ways of knowing and can stimulate discussion with others (Romanowski, 2014).

Ways of knowing and scholarly communication are hence strategically important for this research, given the goals of Saudi Gifted Education, Mawhiba, to build citizens for a global context and to provide a culturally appropriate gifted curriculum. In the light of the ways of knowing and scholarly communication, the empirical-analytic way of knowing was used in assessing the perceptions of Western and Islamic scholars towards their respective education systems, which therefore enabled the identification of concepts related to gifted education, and is thus vital in the Saudi context. The historical-hermeneutic way of knowing enabled the researcher to ascertain any prejudgments of the Western and Islamic scholars towards their respective systems of education through an evaluation of their communication and interrelationships. Finally, critical self-reflectivity facilitated the present research by the researcher’s personal ideas on the potential for integration of conflicting Western and Islamic educational concepts into a singular, comprehensive system.

3.10 Data Collection

As an Islamic researcher, I sought to identify links between the Islamic and Western traditions in relation to gifted education. In Islam, all education has a theological component. Hence, I drew information from the Holy Qur’an and the Prophetic sayings (ahadith) to explain how or why something is as it is, using the Islamic scholarly perspective. The use of sacred religious texts is a fundamental approach in Islam to support any research findings. Muslims maintain that knowledge separated from its proper action is useless (Von Denffer, 1996). Thus, including references to the Holy Qur’an and the ahadith was appropriate for this research because
a famous Islamic researcher and thinker, Al-Ghazali himself, referred to, and was strongly influenced by, his spiritual orientation. Accordingly, it would be impossible to discuss Al-Ghazali’s teachings without making such references.

My study included different sources of data, mainly official governmental documents and academic publications, which included publications in the field of gifted education, scholarly books, articles, and reputable Internet documentation. These sources yielded three classes of information: primary, secondary, and auxiliary. These classifications correspond to those proposed by Altheide (1996). The first group included:

1. Historical writings: (primary sources) recorded by Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Al-Razi, and Ibn-Sina (including translations made many years after their deaths), which are the primary documents to be analysed; and,

2. Government documents: such as Saudi national reports on education and school policy to identify and classify different approaches for planning and providing programs for gifted education in Saudi Arabia, including Mawhiba.

The second group included secondary documents: contemporary works written by both Muslims and non-Muslims interested in Islamic philosophy, focusing on the works of Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Al-Razi and Ibn-Sina. These researchers asserted that there is an opportunity to integrate many of the Islamic scholars’ ideas into modern education because they are still applicable today. In addition, the academic publications included publications in the field of gifted education.
The third group of documents focused on the primary Western documents and writings of outstanding philosophers and educators who worked on the issue of gifted education. The set of works used as primary evidence for Western approaches to gifted education included the writings of Aristotle, Plato and Pythagoras as representatives of ancient times, the works of Thomas Aquinas as the most outstanding medieval thinker on the issues of education, and a large set of modern writings related to giftedness as a concept and approaches to the effective education of the gifted. Their analysis shows how the attitude to giftedness evolved across time in Western civilization, how it is treated nowadays, and in which ways fostering the multi-dimensional and full development of gifted individuals is proposed in accordance with Western thought.

The third group included auxiliary documents (resources that support primary data, but are not the main focus of the research). For the purposes of this study, these auxiliary documents included background information on the cultural, spiritual and historical environments among Muslims, in order to explore and understand the content in the context of its production.

### 3.11 Procedures

For the establishment of the authenticity and accuracy of all the sources of data, documents were examined, interpreted, and critically appraised. I applied the method of hermeneutics for material processing, which involves the interpretation of texts (i.e., Islamic scholars’ sacred texts and publications) (Kneller, 1984). Some theologians have used this technique to interpret scriptures and sacred texts, and judges use it when applying legal precedents to new cases. Michrina and Richards (1996, p. 7) offered a description of the three-step cycle in the hermeneutic method:

1. Collection of data by the investigator in a stepwise manner from a
variety of sources (written texts, dialogues, and behaviours);

2. Attributing meaning to data (interpretation); and,

3. Construction of understanding of the entire dataset, adding more detail to data interpretation with every cycle of the method.

### 3.12 Data Analysis

This study employed a qualitative methodological approach, in the form of the hermeneutical techniques utilized to interpret the selected texts. According to Radnitzky (1970), focusing on the meaning of a text is the primary aim of the hermeneutical approach. Indeed, the term ‘hermeneutics’ comes from the Greek language, meaning ‘to interpret’. The Greeks used this technique to understand the legends of their gods. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Western philosophers have expanded (Kneller, 1984) and developed the use of this technique. This approach can be treated as an underlying philosophy and a special mode of analysis, since it is a dynamic philosophical approach to social understanding (Bleicher, 1980) and is also viewed as a philosophical grounding for interpretation and a process by which hidden meanings can be exposed. According to Braaten (1966), the hermeneutical technique can show how words or events in the past can become meaningful in our own time.

It is believed that our past traditions and ancestors can never be at a total distance from our present time (Gadamer, 1989). Obviously, everyone is influenced by the traditions which come from their ancestors. In this study, the concept of giftedness, from the point of view of ancient Muslim scholars (see, e.g., Al-Farabi, Al-Razi, Avicenna), cannot be completely separated from its origins, which were introduced by Western scholars such as Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle. Thus, by adopting a
Habermasian approach to the development of critical knowledge, his framework is applied to the analysis and interpretation of historical descriptions of giftedness from both Western and Islamic scholars. Using different approaches, I achieved an understanding of giftedness from a variety of perspectives and developed an integrated approach to present-day gifted education. The interpretation of, and self-reflection on, giftedness is explained in the findings section.

Ultimately, this approach suits the purposes of this task because it makes the objectives clear. To the extent that it is an historical text (Anderson, Hughes & Sharrock, 1986; Taylor, 1976), in that it attempts to look at the past as a source of inspiration, in terms of understanding the interaction between Western and Islamic scholars regarding the definition and research of the phenomenon of giftedness. For this reason, Habermas’s methodology was applied because it provided the researcher with a way of understanding the different ways in which two cultural interpretations can be understood within their respective cultures, and whether there is any ways in which they can interact meaningfully. The Habermasian theory of ways of knowing was applied to the study of giftedness in this thesis as follows:

1. Empirical-analytic: to know how the West and Islamic scholarship have defined and dealt with giftedness, and what language they use for it. In this way, I am searching for the key words that come out of the literature;

2. Historical-hermeneutic: to understand what that language means, by searching through the historical documents. I am looking for what these terms mean in their respective historical contexts, and what they therefore might mean today; and,
3. Critical/self-reflective: to understand the differences, and any ways in which interaction is possible, between the Western and Islamic interpretations of giftedness. I will apply the findings to my work on gifted education in Saudi Arabia.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The present chapter has laid out the methodological foundations of this thesis by reiterating the research questions, explaining the research design, and presenting the hermeneutic research method and the Habermasian theory of “ways of knowing” as the backbones of this study. According to Habermas’s study, several ways of knowing presuppose an evolutionary path towards obtaining true knowledge. By proceeding from the technical and then the historical-hermeneutic types of knowledge, any researcher can obtain a self-reflective or critical stance to a certain area of knowledge, thus acquiring access to true and unbiased knowledge. Habermasian theory was applied in constructing critical perspectives regarding education, schools, curriculum, relationships between the learner and the teacher, as well as in the construction of scholarly communication. Relevant details were provided regarding the processes and procedures of data collection, data analysis, and other methodological concerns important for understanding the research process of this scholarly endeavour.
CHAPTER 4: APPLYING HABERMAS’S “WAYS OF KNOWING” TO WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP ON GIFTED EDUCATION

4.1. Chapter Overview

The present chapter contains a detailed discussion of Western scholarship on the concept of giftedness across time, from ancient times until the modern era, and employs Habermas’s three ways of knowing. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to the acquisition of technical, or empirical-analytical, knowledge about the concept of giftedness and its components, based on the ideas of the ancient Greek philosophers, medieval philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas, and modern researchers and thinkers. This section also pays specific attention to the issue of measuring giftedness and the validity of standard IQ tests in doing so. The present-day perspective on giftedness as a multi-aspect phenomenon, one that is both quantifiable and has qualitative features, is highlighted in the light of recent research on multiple intelligences, contemporary models of intelligence, and research on giftedness as a socio-cultural phenomenon. This stage of the analysis also involves a delineation of aspects of giftedness such as emotional, moral, and spiritual intelligences that also play a crucial role in the development of a gifted person.

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to Habermas’s second way of knowing, namely, historical-hermeneutic knowing. At this stage, the researcher attempts to interpret the views of ancient, medieval and contemporary thinkers on the identified dimensions of giftedness: wisdom, knowledge and intelligence of various types. Links are drawn to connect these aspects of giftedness to modern education, and recommendations are made as to how they are relevant in the construction of effective
educational programs for the gifted. The final stage of this chapter is directed towards the critical self-reflective way of knowing, a veritable critical account of the evidence derived from the researcher’s personal assessment of the data and provision of true, unbiased, and evidence-informed conclusions on the subject. This final section delineates the ways in which specific ideas from different periods of Western scholarship are appropriate for the designing of effective educational programs in the present-day Saudi educational system in order to fit the specific and diverse needs of Saudi students. At the same time, it incorporates the philosophy of a complex, heterogeneous, and multi-level concept of giftedness that evolved through time under the careful attention and wise direction of modern educational approaches and teacher scaffolding and guidance.

4.2. Empirical Analytic: Review of Gifted Education Across Time in Western Scholarship

Empirical-analytic knowing is the first way of knowing in the Habermasian methodology, essentially comprising a technical accrual of facts. The knowledge analysed at this stage is developed and tested through the systematic and rigorous procedures of scientific research, mainly concerned with the parts of knowledge that can be tested and verified, thus relying most on the experimental and quasi-experimental methods of study (Taylor, 2010). Such an approach ensures that knowledge can be tested over and over again, and similar results are received in that process. This level of study regards knowledge as being as free as possible from the distorting and biased influences of people’s opinions and prejudices. Thus, the present section contains an attempt at an objective and unbiased account of the research field of
interest – that is, the history and evolution of Western thought on intelligence, education, and giftedness.

4.2.1 Ancient Scholars: Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle

In this section, ancient perspectives of the concept of giftedness are presented. Moreover, the theories of five eminent philosophers have been taken into consideration. The concepts of learning, knowledge, wisdom and education are discussed with reference to these philosophers’ ideas for the sake of clarifying how they envisioned the education of individuals and what transformative power they saw in making education fit to the individual talents.

Pythagoras. Pythagoras was a famous mathematician, scientist, and mystic; he studied numbers, and classified them as even numbers, odd numbers, triangular numbers and perfect numbers. Pythagoras formulated the Pythagorean theorem, a theorem in geometry that was one of the first mathematical theorems. However, his most outstanding contribution to the field of education was the high value that he attributed to knowledge acquisition, and the opinion that education differentiated people from beasts, Greeks from barbarians, and free people from slaves (Stanley, 2010).

Bernard (1958) made a clear differentiation between learning, knowledge and wisdom, but prioritised the first two. While learning for him was the memorization of second-hand information, knowledge was seen by Pythagoras as embracing experiences, not human assumptions and beliefs. Furthermore, Pythagoras saw wisdom as the distilled essence of everything that people have learned from experiences, something that makes life worth living. Thus, for Pythagoras, the aim of human life is to inculcate the wisdom of living instead of second-hand book knowledge. These ideas
were regarded as revolutionary for his time, and made him a distinguished moral and social reformer, as well as a founder of a new educational system for the cultivation of a harmonious culture of men (Bernard, 1958). In relation to giftedness, Pythagoras’s philosophy emphasized the importance and primary obligations of humans to search for knowledge. The scholar asserted that knowledge is a product of multiple learning experiences that accumulate human understanding of the universe and nature (Riedweg, 2005). In his analysis of learning and knowledge acquisition, Pythagoras drew a line between knowledge and wisdom: “Wisdom is knowledge of things truly existing, not of those equivocally existing, since corporeal things are neither knowable nor admit of firm knowledge, being devoid of limit and not comprehensible by knowledge” (Riedweg, 2005, p. 24). Therefore, the scholar distinguished two levels of knowledge, signifying wisdom as the superior knowledge requiring a certain effort and time to come into an individual’s possession.

Pythagoras’ contribution to the fields of education and sociology is enormous; he created a unique educational institution on the hill near the city of Crotone. It combined a college and living facilities, and proposed a unique educational system focused on harmonious physical, intellectual and spiritual education. The overall aim of the Pythagorean school was the self-perfection of each individual and a wider reformation of the entire society. Through advanced education to the most gifted and talented students, Pythagoras tried to develop future political and social leaders that would form scientific governments to replace the corrupted politicians in the Italian city-states (Bernard, 1958). These ideas and practices of Pythagoras thus laid the pioneering foundations for gifted education and its far-reaching positive social implications for wider social transformation.
It is also notable that Pythagoras saw giftedness as a very multidimensional concept and recognized the links between the various aspects of science and learning that are not readily seen, even nowadays. As articulated by Shabkie (2015), Pythagoras claimed that maths and music are made of the same fabric more than 2,500 years ago, and he successfully applied combined studies of maths and creative/performing arts for his maths students. In this way, Pythagoras thought, students’ minds may be stimulated in a variety of ways, and their thinking skills may be effectively enhanced through creativity and adaptation.

In addition, Pythagoras indicated a connection between “contemplative inquiry into the world (historia, theoria) and a particularly eager effort to acquire wisdom” (Riedweg, 2005, p. 97). Analysts confirm that by calling himself a philosopher, the one with a prominent mind, Pythagoras intended to distinguish his advancements in cognitive development from other skills. Hence, initially, wisdom was defined as sophia (“skills”); this fact explains the synonymous nature of concepts of philosophy and wisdom in the ancient Greek position (Santinello, 2013). In his philosophy, Pythagoras united knowledge, insight and experience to place these notions above one’s ability to remember. However, the scholar stressed the importance of memory as a means of “spiritual power” required by a human “in the Underworld to remember Pythagoras’ advice ‘regarding the move from here’ and to choose a good life when being reincarnated” (Riedweg, 2005, p. 34).

**Heraclitus.** Heraclitus personally believed that the soul of a knowledgeable person is composed of fire which should never turn dry or wet. Heraclitus believed that a knowledgeable person with a dry soul has self-control and wisdom as a gift or virtue, and is in turn able to make wise decisions (Russell, 2008). This ancient thinker structured his findings on physiological and cosmological studies. He believed that
transformation might take place which may witness a change from the condition of ‘hot’ to ‘cold’; this also takes into account the consequential status of death by fire (Russell, 2008). In relation to education and giftedness, Heraclitus developed his theoria ("viewing", "contemplation") of the world (Riedweg, 2005, p. 96). The scholar united a superior stage of knowledge with learning, claiming that “men who love wisdom (philosophoi) must see and know (histores) many things” (Riedweg, 2005, p. 96).

The most notable contribution of Heraclitus to the development of Western thought on education was his philosophy of logos; the philosopher developed logos as a dynamic change concept, the denotation of unity and multiplicity, and personally characterised it as the essence of existence, order, virtue, morality and justice (Sweet, 2007). Heraclitus is also credited with developing educational philosophy as a distinct discipline, with his ideas serving as inspiration for Plato, Hegel, Nietzsche, Locke, Kant, Rousseau, Marx and other greater thinkers. Heraclitus’ ideas about “experience”, “change”, “moral and character education”, and “mental training” laid the foundation of many further educational ideas and reforms in the West (Tasdelen, 2014).

Heraclitus also connected logos with wisdom, which meant a connection to the essence and nature of everything else (Heraclitus, 1959). Thus, education in the view of Heraclitus is logos-centred, as stated by Tasdelen (2014):

Heraclitus’ teaching that there is the unity of logos as the basis of law empowers the view that logos inside and outside of man is actually the one and the very same logos … in that case education is uniting the mind with the unique structure of logos and training the mind in a way to hear and follow its call. (p. 914)

Thus, for Heraclitus, education transforms and adapts the individual to logos, with the level of sophistication of that adaptation equalling what Heraclitus referred to as
‘wisdom’. For him, wisdom is the ability to establish a dialogue with *logos*, to listen to the voice of *logos*, to comprehend it, and to develop awareness of its existence. As asserted by Tasdelen (2014), this aspect of Heraclitus’ teaching on education is highly similar to Plato’s theory of ideas and knowledge. However, while Plato (1987) postulated that wisdom might be developed through meticulous training and inner purification, Heraclitus (1959) made a more explicit emphasis on people’s development of awareness of *logos* and a discovery of oneself in it.

**Socrates.** Though the philosophy of giftedness and knowledge is mostly associated with Plato, the ground for it was prepared by his predecessor Socrates. Socrates asserted that the human soul is initially imprisoned in the body; its release is possible only through a philosophical purification of the soul and a deprival of the senses (Riedweg, 2005). In other words, Socrates believed that only knowledge and continuous learning equip the human soul with the powers to observe and explore the world, to comprehend its laws, and to ensure a decent human life.

Socrates is credited with developing the notion of giftedness in education; his student and follower Plato laid out Socrates’ ideas about gifted education in his works, thus giving Socrates a pronounced place in the field of giftedness education research in Western thought. One fragment of Plato’s *Republic* gives a detailed account of Socrates’ ideas on giftedness as a natural blessing of individuals, making them distinguished, and requiring specialised treatment and education:

Socrates: You remember, I said, how the rulers were chosen before …

Glaucon: Certainly [he said]

Socrates: The same natures must still be chosen, and the preference again given to the surest and the bravest, and, if possible, to the fairest; and, having noble and generous tempers, they should also have the natural gifts which will facilitate their education.
Glaucon: And what are these?

Socrates: Such gifts as keenness and ready powers of acquisition … Further, he of whom we are in search should have a good memory … he must have natural gifts. (Plato & Sigler, 1997, p. 31)

Furthermore, the Socratic method is still considered the best applicable technique for fostering critical thinking, with teachers providing students with questions, not answers to them, thus stimulating inquisitive minds to a continuous probing of the subject of interest (Catholic Education Office, 2013). Socrates advocated learning through inquiry as the most efficient method of independent, self-paced learning which enabled the learner to comprehend the world around him or her, and to construct his/her identity in that world.

Taking into account the ideas of Socrates above, one may see that they are highly relevant for this thesis. Socrates was the first to delineate the need for gifted education not based on the privilege of birth or wealth, but based on the intellectual potential and capabilities that an individual possesses. Furthermore, Socrates called for a recognition of intellectual capacity as a natural giftedness that has to be recognised and developed, while other researchers focused more on the need to develop and train these skills among those able to access education. Balchin, Hymer and Matthews (2013) also pointed out that the Socratic dialogue is a widely used educational technique nowadays, especially for gifted education, since it has an emphasis on the free expression of ideas by the student not limited by prescribed instructional ends. The role of teachers in such a method is that of questioners, while the student’s voice asserts itself in unpredicted and challenging ways.

Plato. Platonic literature is considered to be the first instance of an explicit mentioning of giftedness. As clarified by Dubey (2005), Plato spoke about
exceptionally able individuals in his writings, though referring to different kinds of talent. The thinker placed leadership and political power in the hands of philosopher kings who possessed the greatest measure of rational intelligence. In this way, Plato laid the foundations for the belief that gifted individuals, when their talents and capabilities are nurtured with due attention, may contribute to social well-being, may become wise rulers, and may transform civil society for the better by directing their unique aptitudes.

Plato’s most famous and influential work on giftedness and the education of the gifted is *The Republic*. In this work, Plato grouped society into classes, based on their intelligence levels, and claimed that only those who performed superbly in advanced studies could be selected for further training to become philosopher kings. Moreover, Plato considered higher education subjects such as geometry, astronomy, etc., as worthy of being taught only to naturally gifted students – “the surest and the bravest” – as only they could gain the genuine benefit of those disciplines (Plato & Sigler, 1997, p. 31). Freeman (1980) described Plato’s approach to people’s grouping by intellect (as ‘men of gold’, ‘silver’, ‘iron’, and ‘brass’) as follows:

Plato’s golden children would be boys who came from the Patrician class; he could only draw them from a select, tiny percentage of the population, while the rest would mostly not even learn to read. He advocated special education for these boys to increase their capacity for leadership, though many of them would have been given leadership irrespective of their gifts, because of their birth. (p. 3)

Overall, Freeman (1980) criticised Plato for never considering all children as having the right to education. However, Plato held an opinion that the overall existence and survival of the Greek democracy depended on the education of excellent citizens to
occupy leading positions, which indicates how high the importance of education was for him (Balchin et al., 2013). Hence, his ideas are highly consonant with those of Socrates and Pythagoras regarding the transformative potential of gifted individuals as soon as their unique talents are recognized and developed. His theories are also highly valuable and relevant for this work, since Plato was one of the pioneers of gifted education, and asserted the need to give educational resources in accordance to students’ aptitudes and interests, without a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The present study is also concerned with this issue, so an appreciation of Plato’s ideas on a distinct system of gifted education and its transformative social values may inform the analysis and argumentation profoundly.

**Aristotle.** In *De Anima*, Aristotle defined intellect, reason or the human mind as “the part of the soul by which it knows and understands” (*De Anima* iii 4, 429a9–10; cf. iii 3, 428a5; iii 9, 432b26; iii 12, 434b3). Aristotle generally regarded intellect as divine, and his theory of ethics is largely associated with his ideas on education. Aristotle assigned superiority to the intellectual virtues of understanding, science and wisdom over moral virtues, and followed the ideas of Plato about schools’ primary purpose being to cultivate the intellect. Aristotle did not regard vocational, practical training as education, which he referred to rather as “training of the hand”. Aristotle’s suggested curriculum was largely similar to that propounded by Plato, and included reading, writing, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, physical education, and civics in the early formal educational structure. For him, the completion of this educational program was enough for all students, except the gifted. The latter were transferred to secondary and then higher education, which mostly focused on teaching the quadrivium and philosophy (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).
The ideas of Aristotle are additionally valuable for this study because, similarly to Plato, he advocated the use of an assessment of the students’ intellectual abilities and achievements in academic subjects as the only means of selecting students for advanced schooling. In this way, an assessment-based notion of giftedness took form, making students subject to higher education not only based on the privilege of belonging to the higher socio-economic class, but also by aptitude. The assessment criteria and principles developed and advocated by Aristotle and Plato may thus serve as a strong basis for modern gifted assessment and curricular design, based on needs, skills and interests.

As a descendant of Socrates and Plato, Aristotle borrowed many of their ideas for his philosophical works. In the context of gifted education, Aristotle claimed that both knowledge (scientia) and wisdom (sapientia) are achieved through learning general and universal principles (Santinello, 2013). Hence, the scholar emphasized the value of metaphysics and reference to the divine design of the universe as the key source of knowledge. Relying on Plato, Aristotle equipped his concept of knowledge with a certain spiritual dimension that facilitates an individual’s achievement of wisdom (Santinello, 2013).

An overview of the philosophies generated by ancient Greek scholars reveals their focus on knowledge and cognition as the key drivers of human evolution. With Pythagoras being the first to acknowledge the need for providing specialised instruction for some naturally gifted students, these ideas were further developed by ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle and Heraclitus. Pythagoras saw the primary aim of education being in acquiring wisdom, which was conceptualized as the distilled essence of everything that people learn throughout their lives, which makes a life worth living, while Heraclitus developed a well-articulated educational philosophy
based on the comprehension of logos through education. His ideas about change and
dynamism of education and self-discovery within the universal body of knowledge
laid the foundation of much of the later Western thought, and parallels to it are also
detected in Plato’s theory of ideas and knowledge.

Plato and Socrates were the first to speak openly about education for the gifted;
though Socrates never wrote about that in his lifetime, he shared those ideas with his
student Plato, who later laid them out in *The Republic*. These two philosophers’ ideas
are still regarded as topical and relevant for gifted education, since they established
unique methods of self-paced, independent learning and self-discovery that students
may go through on the path to self-perfection and multifaceted development as
personalities. These ideas were further refined in the writings of Aristotle, who relied
on Plato’s educational ideas and proposed the skills-based form of assessment to
identify gifted students and to provide advanced education to them. Hence, all these
ideas have become the foundation for Western approach to the identification of gifted
students, a definition of giftedness as a unique social, political, cultural and economic
potential, and the development of gifted individuals as excellent citizens in order for
them to foster social reform, transformation and improved well-being.

4.2.2 Giftedness and Wisdom, the Influence of Medieval Scholars: Thomas
Aquinas

After the end of the Ancient Greek era, the works of the Greek philosophers
mentioned in the previous section were translated into Arabic at the Abbasid Caliphate
to preserve the legacy of that ancient civilization. At that time, there were also a
number of publications produced by Islamic scholars such as Al Kindi, Farabi, Ibn
Rushd Al-Ghazali, and others (Russell, 2008). Al-Ghazali’s work heavily influenced
the works of medieval scholars such as Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas (Burrell, 2008). More than that, Ghazanfar (2004) has even claimed that Al-Ghazali was the most significant inspiration on Thomas Aquinas, produced both directly through his writings and through his teacher, Albertus Magnus. For this reason, Thomas Aquinas was selected in this review of medieval thought on education and giftedness, since his writings may serve as a bridge between Western and Islamic thought, and may show how these two trends existed in dynamic interaction through time.

The ancient civilization that Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Heraclius and Socrates represented ended in the fifth century AD, with the conquest and termination of two mighty empires – the Roman and the Greek Empires. After this epoch, the Middle Ages started, and lasted for over 1,000 years until the 1450s and the onset of the Renaissance. The first centuries of the Middle Ages are referred to as the Dark Ages because there was major chaos and disorder upon the destruction of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. During this period, very few people could read or write, and a lack of knowledge led to the cultivation of religious superstitions and fanatical religious piety. This was the time of the Christian Crusades, barbarian invasions, the raids of the Mongols, and numerous epidemics that took the lives of almost a half of the European population (Kleiner, 2015).

Obviously, these were times of illiteracy and superstition, but the situation began to improve in the thirteenth century, especially through the works of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. The latter is especially credited for synthesising Aristotelian and Christian thought and creating the foundations for late medieval Catholic philosophy, theology and science (Tirri, 2007). Therefore, Thomas Aquinas is considered the classical writer, thinker and theologian of the Middle Ages who shaped
the European academic vocabulary on the subjects of virtues, gifts and talents for centuries to come.

His work on the reconciliation of Greek philosophy with Christianity was profound, especially taking into account the challenges of bringing together Aristotle’s ideas on human skills and talents with the traditions of Jesus, and specifically the Christian apostle, Paul. For Aristotle, advanced intellectual skills are virtues of the highest order, emerging as a result of constant exercise and educational training. He also regarded the human soul as the formal cause of human nature, making them similar and devoid of positive individual differences, which is totally incompatible with Christian ideas which place a divine centrality on the human soul. Thus, Thomas Aquinas developed a complex hierarchy of virtues and gifts, together with their interactions, in his *Summa Theologica*, to show giftedness as spirituality that is instilled in people through “divine inspiration” (Aquinas, II/1 q68 a1). Training driven by human reason develops virtues in the human being, and talents are given to a person through inspiration and developed by means of education. In this context, it is essential to note that Thomas Aquinas distinguished between virtues and gifts, referring to the former as non-achieved, that is, naturally possessed, and to the latter – as God-given, that is, evolutionary, non-naturally-possessed, and able to be acquired (Tirri, 2007).

Aquinas held interesting beliefs about the specific process of knowledge acquisition as he regarded knowing as an inner experience, an independent starting point of human inquiry, but still guided by God’s will. With the focus of learning on the human soul, Aquinas envisioned human beings as immersed in their acts and in the world. In this way, the inner knowing derived from God’s will led people to an active engagement of the intellect with the world and to ask questions about things (Hibbs, 2007). However, these ideas should be analysed in the context of Aquinas’s extreme
religious piety and full devotion to God throughout his life and work. Faith, for Aquinas, was not an irrational belief in divine will, but a matter of believing something on the basis of divine authority (Feser, 2010). Hence, Aquinas regarded the acts of learning and inner knowing as those of unity with God, so he saw them as prayer and apprehension of God connected with positive emotions derived from getting close to God (Watson & Burns, 2008). His ideas on giftedness were heavily influenced by his religious ardency, and he referred to giftedness mostly as God’s gift that can complement the naturally possessed virtues of an individual. Nevertheless, Thomas Aquinas’s work is of unique value for this study because it is the only comprehensive combination of ancient Greek and Medieval ideas on giftedness, which is very informative for a chronological analysis of the evolution of giftedness as a concept, its sources, nature, and the approaches to developing giftedness in individuals.

4.2.3 Modern Scholars: Definition of Giftedness in Modern Western Scholarship

Giftedness in the twenty-first century is not viewed as a purely inherent and quantifiable measure of intelligence. Instead, it is viewed both as quantifiable and qualitative characteristics, subject to environmental influences, such as the social and economic conditions. Those who see creativity as an aspect of giftedness encourage creative opportunities for all students in the school system (Robinson, 2001). Thus, as one can see, there are still debates regarding the nature and measure of giftedness, which makes the development of an all-inclusive and universal theory of giftedness unapproachable (Persson, 2012).

Giftedness is an intricate concept, and the definition of what characteristics comprise giftedness continues to be debated among scholars and researchers (Borland, 2008; Dai, 2010; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Department of Education, 1993; Persson, 2012;
Riley, 2005; Robinson, 2001; Schroth & Heifer, 2009; Wechsler, 1939, etc.). The debate has waged on over many years, and the proposed form and essence of giftedness has changed over time. Initially, it was considered to be an accurate and quantifiable entity when it was seen as grounded in the concept of intelligence. Intelligence has generally been viewed as the ability to learn from experience by using metacognitive processes, and a facility in adapting to the environment and different social and cultural contexts (Sternberg, Jarvin & Grigorenko, 2011).

In 1912, William Stern introduced the concept of an intelligence quotient, a score derived by testing those qualities deemed to constitute intelligence. The IQ score was decided by a simple mathematical formula, showing how simply and superficially giftedness was measured. A child’s mental age as determined by the standardized test was divided by his chronological age and the result was to be multiplied by 100. This method of identifying an IQ score became a norm that compared children with their peers, and it was regarded as a norm-referenced test, which means that its assessment is based on the comparison of an individual with a normative sample considered to be representative of a specific population.

Another standardized, yet more sophisticated, testing approach was given prominence by the nineteenth and early twentieth century research of Francis Galton and Alfred Binet, which highlighted intelligence as a quantifiable characteristic of giftedness. The work of Lewis Terman (Terman, 1925; Terman & Oden, 1959) gave further focus to the relationship between intelligence and giftedness. Intelligence, and the scales designed to measure it, were embraced, particularly because they provided measurable guidelines for an unbiased judgement and comparisons amongst individuals. The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales (Terman & Merrill, 1937; Thorndike, Hagen, & Sattler, 1986), and the later development of the competing
Wechsler Intelligence Scales (Wechsler, 1939; 2003), became widely used standards of measurement for intelligence. The use of standardized tests which focus on quantifiable measures of intelligence became known as the ‘conservative view’ of giftedness, initiating what Castles (2012) termed the “IQ wars” since the introduction of IQ scales by Binet. With conservatives seeing IQ tests as an engine of opportunity, liberals saw a tool for unfairness, injustice, and discrimination against the poor and racial minorities.

However, alongside the unbiased and standardized quantitative approach to measuring giftedness, an alternative ‘liberal view’ was developed to include qualitative characteristics in the determination of giftedness. Characteristics such as creativity (Lubart, 1994; Robinson, 2001) have been included in the discussion of what constitutes giftedness. Apart from this, some researchers have proposed that giftedness is not a static quality; instead it could be viewed as a dynamic entity which could be developed over time (Tapper, 2012). Thus, giftedness has become linked with external influences, and the influence of environment on brain development has been a focus of neuroscience (Greenfield, 2003).

One of the most comprehensive definitions of giftedness was offered by the US Department of Education in 1993. It stated that gifted children were those who possessed outstanding talents and had the ability to achieve exceptional results at high levels, when compared to those who belonged to the same environmental setting, age group, or had the same level of experience. According to this definition, gifted children have an excellent grasp of specific academic disciplines, possess exceptional artistic, creative and intellectual abilities, and are born leaders. Children from all economic classes and cultures may possess such extraordinary attributes that can be applied to different areas of the human life (US Department of Education, 1993). Such children can achieve learning tasks that go beyond what is usually taught at schools.
The last decade has seen continued research activity revolving around the notions of giftedness, with models for explaining and measuring it undergoing various changes, however no consensus has yet been reached on any particular definition (Borland, 2008; Dai, 2010; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Riley, 2005; Schroth & Heifer, 2009). The way giftedness is conceptualized by researchers in the field of giftedness has not provided a uniform definition of the state of giftedness and, therefore, has not provided a uniform approach to the concepts of education and nurturing the gifted ones as well. This lack of a consensus about giftedness continues to perplex educators and families who place a special importance on the understanding of the concept as they need to take care of their children’s social, educational and emotional needs (Phillipson, 2007). Some agreement on the nature of giftedness is also essential for educational purposes, since the curriculum and teaching methodologies are based around this notion (Miller, 2008).

4.2.3.1 Current Views on the Concept of Giftedness

An overview of the three most widely accepted arguments that have an impact on the conceptual understandings of giftedness at the present time are given below:

**Developmentalism versus Essentialism.** The early studies by Lewis Terman gave rise to the conventional essentialist view of giftedness, the basis of which is a belief that the definition and measurement of giftedness result from a precise formula (Dai, 2010). Those who are ‘gifted’ possess fixed traits that provide them with a level of intelligence making them stand out from the rest (Tapper, 2012). These traits are genetically inherent, and when the right environmental conditions are present, this high level of intelligence is ultimately going to lead to success (Balchin, 2009; Dai, 2010; Horowitz, 2004; Kaufman & Sternberg, 2008; Matthews & Folsom, 2009).
The developmentalist view, in contrast, claims that giftedness has a dynamic nature and can change over time due to the interactions between the individual and his/her surroundings (Tapper, 2012). The neuroscientist Susan Greenfield (1997; 2003) focussed her research on the human brain and the way in which they are sensitive to the unique characteristics of environment. In her turn, Greenfield proposed that people are humanized and made unique by their own experiences. Such research has implications for giftedness and for educational programs where children can be changed through their unique experiences.

**General versus Domain Specific Traits.** The early notions considered giftedness to mean that a child would possess particular traits that would pertain to all dimensions of their abilities. This is referred to as the generalized view. This approach considers giftedness as an extraordinary ability to reason, have abstract thought processes, resolve problems, and attain knowledge (Dai, 2010). The domain-specific approach to giftedness, on the other hand, considers giftedness to be much more diverse and narrowly focused. It is not necessary for the gifted individual to possess outstanding abilities in all domains; instead, he/she can possess excellence in at least one domain (Tapper, 2012). This view is in line with the developmentalist notion of giftedness (Matthews & Folsom, 2009). However, the approval of this model has received some scrutiny, mainly due to the fact that its advocates do not consider additional psychological processes in this model of giftedness and generally do not regard them as necessary (Pfeiffer, 2008). Despite such apprehensions, the domain-specific approach is the most widely accepted view in the majority of Western educational settings (Van Tassel Baska, 2005; Ziegler & Heller, 2000).

**Giftedness as a Socio-Cultural Phenomenon.** Giftedness was traditionally viewed as a construct that was measurable and based on certain traits. Giftedness is
currently viewed by some scholars as a socio-cultural phenomenon. This view takes into consideration the aspects of diversity in cultural, economic and social circumstances. Socio-cultural norms vary from one society to another; hence what is viewed as giftedness may also vary from one society to another (Tapper, 2012).

The impacts of culture on the interpretations of giftedness and talent are being increasingly recognized in several studies (Cohen, Ambrose, & Powell, 2000; Ford, 2003; Phillipson, 2007; Sternberg, 2007). The pedagogical activities of a multicultural society are affected by such interpretations of giftedness. The traditional Saudi perspective, for example, of viewing giftedness in religious terms, ascribes the features of giftedness to students distinguished by strong spiritual and religious aptitudes, such as the recital of Islamic prayers, etc. The Saudi system of education is now undergoing a considerable transformation towards a more objective, science-based approach in education, which comes into conflict with the traditional Islamic values related to intelligence and giftedness (Alamer, 2015). Educators and administrators are especially interested in discerning which particular talents individuals of a particular society develop in specific socio-cultural settings, so that they can formulate an educational programme for talented youngsters in a culturally specific manner (Phillipson & McCann, 2007; Tapper, 2012). Thus, as one can see, it is not possible to have a single definition of giftedness that can be applicable across all cultures and times (Phillipson, 2007). Moreover, the concept of giftedness undergoes continuous change, in terms of time, which makes it contextually and temporally situated, and this aspect will be discussed in the following section. As a result, six theoretical models of giftedness have been developed, and they are discussed in the subsequent sections.
4.2.3.2 Changes in the Meaning of Giftedness over Time

A thorough review of the relevant literature reveals that there has been no consensus on a universal definition of giftedness since the term came into existence in the early half of the previous century. The concept of giftedness has, however, evolved using both conservative and liberal points of view (Renzulli, 2002). From the conservative viewpoint, intelligence tests have extreme cut-off points to put a limitation on the notion of gifted individuals. The notion of giftedness is, on the other hand, extended by the liberal viewpoint as it considers other criteria to determine the high levels of human capabilities. This section traces the development of the concept of giftedness, from the conventional to the liberal perspectives.

The concept of giftedness has revolved around high levels of intelligence and extraordinary performances since the start of the twentieth century (Gottfredson, 1997; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008). However, at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, using only an IQ test score to recognize gifted children was recognized as superficial and limiting (McClain & Preiffer, 2012). There has been a realization of the need for a more wide-ranging and sophisticated approach, one which incorporates multiple criteria (McClain & Preiffer, 2012).

According to Terman (1916; 1925), gifted individuals were “the top 1 percent level in general intellectual ability, as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or a comparable instrument” (1925, p. 43). Terman’s view led to the historical belief that gifted individuals were only those who had high IQ scores (Brown, et al., 2006; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Gordon & Bridgall, 2005; Renzulli, 1978). However, Renzulli (2002) argues that Terman’s definition was later considered to be quite restrictive, since it concentrated only on academic achievement, while disregarding those who might be creative, artistic, or possess leadership skills. Thus, other aspects of
giftedness came into consideration in the late 1950s, including creativity, academic aptitude, leadership, music, and visual artistry, raising the need for further study in the area of giftedness. As a result, experts felt that IQ test scores would not be able to measure this broad range of performance dimensions.

Scholars advocated ceasing to rely completely on IQ tests and to come up with a more flexible definition of intelligence, one which would allow for the expansion of the notions of giftedness, and would lead to “more flexibility in the interpretation of both test and non-test performance” (Renzulli, 2002, p. 68). Witty (1958) was one of the first to come up with reservations regarding equating giftedness with IQ test scores, feeling that the conservative view of giftedness did not include other dimensions of giftedness, and was therefore limited in its scope. He introduced a new position in recognizing giftedness by refocusing attention and including other dimensions of performance, which led to the extension of the conventional viewpoint of giftedness. This view would later be considered as the liberal definition of giftedness:

The exceptional performance of children in the field of art and writing or in social leadership makes it possible to establish their potential. We hence recommend the extension of the concept of giftedness and to include those children in the definition of giftedness who perform exceptionally well in potentially valuable dimensions of human activity.

(Renzulli, 2002, p. 62)

However, the interest in examining the performance of gifted children increased almost two decades after Witty’s explanations. This led to a shift in the conservative view, which based giftedness on high IQ test scores, to focus more on continuous performance assessment rather than IQ test results.

The work of Marland (1972) was a pioneering study to broaden the concept of giftedness. A definition was established through the outcomes of Marland’s study...
which was accepted and implemented on a wide scale in the United States and other countries of the world. Marland’s definition, as it came to be known, states the following:

Those who have extraordinary abilities to perform exceptionally well are recognized as gifted and talented individuals by professional experts. In order to recognize the contributions these individuals make to the society and to themselves, these children call for differentiated educational programmes and services that go beyond what are usually provided through the regular school programmes. Those children who have the ability to perform well, showcase their achievement and possess exceptional abilities in any of the following dimensions:

- Skills for a particular academic domain;
- General intellectual aptitude;
- Creative or productive thought processes;
- Visual and performing arts;
- Psychomotor ability; and,
- Leadership skills (cited in Brown et al., 2006, p. 70)

Not only was the concept of giftedness extended through the works of Witty (1958) and Marland (1972), but subsequent researchers were also pushed to take into consideration various aspects of giftedness while formulating its definition. Renzulli (1978; 1988), for example, conducted a conservative to liberal analysis of the definition of giftedness. He asserted that the focus of the conservative perspective was solely on the intelligence criteria, while other aspects like “music, leadership, art, creative writing and public speaking” (p.180) were not considered. Extremely high cut-off points are set in this perspective for establishing one as a gifted person. Such a single measure for giftedness was rejected by Renzulli (1988). His theory viewed giftedness as an interaction of three fundamental human characteristics, and included an above-average
general ability, a high level of creativity, and a high level of task commitment. A high level of IQ was not specified in his model:

Giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits – these clusters being above-average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance. (Renzulli, 1978, p. 184)

Renzulli (1978) further emphasized the significance of including a broader range of traits, for example, courage, optimism, sensitivity to human concerns, physical/mental energy and a vision of the future, in his definitions of giftedness (Renzulli, 2005).

Another theory was presented by Renzulli in 2009 regarding the different aspects of knowledge that can be taught to gifted students or even to students in general: knowledge regarding facts, conventions, latest developments and procedures, classifications and categories, standards, principles and generalizations and theories and systems. Three kinds of enriched instruction methods that are going to assist gifted children have been proposed by Reis and Renzulli (2009):

- The first kind of enrichment, Type I enrichment, includes general exploratory activities that aim to inspire new interests in gifted children.
- Type II enrichment involves group training activities which aim to enhance critical and creative analysis and learning-to-learn skills.
- The third type, Type III enrichment, involves an analysis of real issues at the individualistic and small group level in order to create creative and research skills at a higher level.
4.2.3.3 The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) was first presented by Gardner in 1983. Eight intelligences have been discussed in this theory, which may help in the identification of gifted children’s abilities in each field:

1. Intrapersonal intelligence (“self smart”);
2. Interpersonal intelligence (“people smart”);
3. Spatial intelligence (“picture smart”);
4. Musical intelligence (“music smart”);
5. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence (“body smart”);
6. Logical-mathematical intelligence (“reasoning/number smart”);
7. Naturalistic intelligence (“nature smart”); and,

According to Gardner (1998), a couple of deductions can be made from the MI theory. The first is that all humans can demonstrate these intelligences. The second is that no individual is identical to another, and “all of them have distinct personalities and dispositions, and so have differing levels and types of intelligences” (p. 21). Hence, the MI theory contributed to the extension of the giftedness concept and makes it increasingly possible to identify extraordinary traits in people. This theory helps in the identification of giftedness in children in one or more of the eight kinds of intelligences, and it also provides a valuable insight into human capabilities (Chan, 2004).

4.2.3.4 WICS Model of Giftedness

Sternberg (2003) was apprehensive with respect to the dependence on IQ test results in the identification of giftedness in children. He asserted that giftedness cannot
be gauged through IQ testing alone. A model of gifted knowledge was suggested by him that included three elements: wisdom, intelligence and creativity, synthesised (WICS). He presented the following arguments: “Without a synthesis of these three attributes, someone can be a decent contributor to society, and perhaps even a good one, but never a great one” (p. 112). Sternberg’s model has produced a substantial impact on the development of present-day notions of giftedness, and widened the definition to include those who display gifted behaviour apart from the achievement of high scores in IQ tests. This model also denounced the widespread view that giftedness is “an inherited static trait”, and that the latter came to be considered as “distinctively dynamic” (Dai & Schader, 2002, p. 141). According to Sternberg (2003), the following skills are supposed to be possessed by intelligent and talented individuals:

1. The ability to attain one’s objectives in life with respect to their socio-cultural conditions;
2. By effectively utilizing the strengths and working on the weaknesses;
3. To mould, choose, and adjust to environmental conditions; and,
4. Through an integration of analytic, creative and practical skills.

(p. 112 - 113)

Another essential part of Sternberg’s model is creativity, which is thought to be “as much as a decision about and an attitude toward life as it is a matter of ability” (p. 117). According to Sternberg, young children are more likely to demonstrate creative abilities than elders, due to the inhibitions of their society. Three intellectual capabilities can be advocated to improve the potential for creativity, as Sternberg (1985) suggested:

1. analytic ability, that is the ability of being able to analyse and interpret a problem;
2. synthetic ability, that is, the ability to possess insights, intuitions and creativity; and lastly,

3. practical ability, that is, the ability to implement analytic or synthetic abilities to the daily concerns.

Wisdom is the final element, and even though it is placed at the beginning of the acronym (WICS), it was elaborated after intelligence and creativity (Sternberg, 2003). This was done as Sternberg believed that the conception of wisdom went “beyond intelligence and creativity” (p. 112). According to his belief, people did not have to be wise to be smart or creative. Wisdom was described by him as:

Applying the value-centric capabilities of creativity and intelligence to attain a common objective by creating a balance between (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extra personal interests, over long and short time durations, to realize an equilibrium between (a) adjusting to the present environments, (b) moulding the present environments, and (c) selecting environments. (Sternberg, 2003, p. 123)

A fusion of the three concepts of intelligence, creativity and wisdom as a conception of giftedness has been presented by the WICS model. Traditional methods considered gifted children solely with respect to belonging to the top one or two percent of the IQ test results. However, this model has a different perception of intelligence, considering intelligent individuals to be those who possess extraordinary skills to adjust to the environment in order to attain a superior objective in life by using their strengths and rectifying their weaknesses. Similarly, creativity is considered in the model to be an amalgamation of three intellectual skills. A creative individual has the ability to resolve issues (analytic), portray insightful and intuitive behaviour (synthetic) and apply the previous abilities to real-life situations (practical). Wisdom is the final element
elaborated in this short review. The model considers it to be an ultimate skill that requires a high level of intelligence and insightfulness.

In Sternberg’s (2003) description of the element of giftedness, there are echoes of Gardner’s (1998) multiple intelligences theory, which states that gifted individuals must be self-smart, people smart, and smart when interacting with the environment. In both the MI and WICS theories, the characteristics of giftedness become more complex than in earlier models. A gifted individual should be able to operate effectively in the intrapersonal, interpersonal and extra-personal levels. Scoring well on a test of reasoning is not viewed as a measure of high intelligence nor of giftedness.

4.2.3.5 How useful are the Contemporary Models?

To sum up the arguments, it can be stated that two vital issues have surfaced during the formation of the notion of giftedness. First, IQ testing cannot be the only basis of identifying gifted individuals. Second, the concepts of giftedness need to be extended to concentrate on the performance of gifted children rather than just gauging their abilities on the basis of their IQ test scores.

The contemporary models of giftedness presented in recent years are more detailed and promising than the ones that were presented earlier (Davidson, 2009). According to Sternberg’s definition of successful intelligence (2005), the presented models utilize the strengths of the previous models and are correcting or avoiding several of their weaknesses. The new models of giftedness adjusted to the changing needs of society and science and have considered giftedness to be something more than what traditional intelligence test scores suggested. Our notions of giftedness have advanced due to these new models, which now consider gender, personality traits,
chance, cognitive skills, as well as characteristics regarding social responsibility in their definitions of giftedness (Davidson, 2009).

These contemporary models consider giftedness to be a broad, multidimensional concept, which takes into account the heterogeneity of giftedness, while also considering its homogeneity in certain areas like motivation and information processing. These models also play a part in recognizing and developing the traits of giftedness in ways that will be beneficial for society (Davidson, 2009). They have helped in future aspects regarding the scope of giftedness and provided a deeper understanding of the nature of this obscure notion. These models have also provided a solid foundation for future models. However, there is a chance of the multidimensional models not being productive anymore if they cannot be challenged in their entirety and contrasted with one another. Hence, there needs to be an agreement on the precise working definitions of giftedness-related constructs so that valid and consistent measures of testing can be applied. These models need to be defined more clearly and accurately so that they can be compared with others, removing the unessential parts and maintaining only the adequate, necessary aspects thereof (Davidson, 2009).

Contemporary models of giftedness have not, however, avoided criticism. Borland (2005; 2009) described giftedness as a myth, or unreal conception. Borland claims that giftedness is a social construct, and that programs designed for gifted students are a mere waste of educational resources that may be more effective in educating all students. He also cited evidence that “gifted programs” have been unsuccessful in achieving their goals. Borland’s work has been described as an anti-model of giftedness. He proposed that programs should be built to allow giftedness for all students rather than building special “gifted” programs for individuals. A survey
of the actual practices of school systems in the Western world would find that many
appear to adhere to Boland’s argument. In egalitarian societies such as Australia,
Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, a focus is placed on
the equality of educational opportunity and elitist programs are not given widespread
funding.

However, considerable research, including the present study, is focused on the
concept of giftedness in Western society and continues to foster interest in the
development and advancement of educational programs for the gifted. Educational
researchers have identified emotional, spiritual and moral intelligences as significant
affective dimensions of the gifted. In addition, the field of gifted research has embraced
the clinical approaches and theories of neuroscience, which searches for physiological
and pathological explanations for gifted brain functioning. These important elements of
giftedness research are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

4.2.3.6 Emotional, Spiritual and Moral Intelligences

Recent giftedness research has seen the inclusion of the concepts of emotional,
spiritual and moral intelligences, which signify the importance of affective attributes
when giftedness is defined. These attributes are considered necessary if the successful
implementation of cognitive intelligence is required. These attributes can also be
acquired, and hence, the importance of environmental factors in the growth of
“giftedness” in individuals is also a topic of discussion. These models also provide a
practical view of giftedness, which includes the manner in which individuals portray
their gifted nature and use it to the benefit of their society.

Emotional Intelligence. Human emotions have historically had negative
connotations, and ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle considered
them a sign of weakness, while Thomas Aquinas also underscored emotions and praised the power of reason and rationality. The interest in emotions and their positive role in human development has only recently gained prominence in global thought. The book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) by Daniel Goleman has led to an increase in the interest around this phenomenon. The most widely accepted definition of emotional intelligence, presented by John Mayer and Peter Salovey, is the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Reuven Bar-On, another well-known researcher in the field of emotional intelligence, was the one who defined the term “emotion quotient”. He had a somewhat different viewpoint, and considered emotional intelligence to be the way one understands oneself and others, and adjusting to the immediate surroundings so that one can successfully deal with environmental changes (Bar-On, 1997).

The characteristics identified by Rueven Bar-On are consonant with those of Gardner and Sternberg in highlighting the importance of abilities for the gifted individuals to operate effectively at an intrapersonal, interpersonal and extra-personal level. Thus, research indicates that the gifted individual cannot operate in one dimension, but instead, must be sound within self, with others, and with the environment. Obviously, such characteristics would be categorized as qualitative, thus broadening the scope of the giftedness definition, and any programs designed to identify and educate the gifted would take into consideration the qualitative elements.

**Models of Emotional Intelligence.** Present-day emotional intelligence experts draw evidence for their research from the works of early theorists like Thorndike and Gardner (George, & Shari, 2012). The models of emotional intelligence are based on either of the two perspectives: the ability model or the mixed model (Stys & Brown,
2004). In the ability model, emotional intelligence is purely a mental ability. However, in the mixed models, personality characteristics like well-being and optimism are combined with mental ability (Mayer, 1999). John Mayer and Peter Salovey (1997) produced the only ability model, while there are two mixed models of intelligence. Reuven Bar-On discussed a model that stresses the co-dependence of the ability dimensions of emotional intelligence, along with personality attributes and the ways that they are applied to personal well-being. Daniel Goleman, on the other hand, presents a mixed model that is based on performance, which integrates the abilities and personalities of individuals and uses their respective effects on performance. This is outlined as follows:

1. Self-awareness (ability to understand one’s emotions and their influence, finally reaching decisions through one’s gut feeling);
2. Self-management (restricting one’s emotions and impulses and adjusting to the changing environment);
3. Social awareness (ability to comprehend and respond to the emotions of others through an understanding of social networks); and,
4. Relationship management (managing conflict as well as inspiring, influencing and developing others). (Goleman, 2001)

Each of the constructs of Goleman’s model of emotional intelligence includes a range of emotional competencies. These are not inborn talents; instead they are capabilities that can be acquired and effort must be made to develop them to attain exceptional performance. According to Goleman (1995), general emotional intelligence is present within individuals from birth and its level determines their capability of acquiring emotional competencies.

**Measures of Goleman’s Model.** Goleman’s model of emotional intelligence, and their corresponding competencies, can be measured through:
• **Emotional Competency Inventory**: This is a multi-rating (360 degree) instrument that considers a range of behavioural indicators of emotional intelligence to provide self, manager, peer ratings and direct reports. It measures the four constructs through 20 competencies; and,

• **Emotional Intelligence Appraisal**: This tool measures emotional intelligence in a quick and effective way and is used in various settings. It uses 28 competencies to measure the four key constructs of the model discussed above. (Goleman, 1995)

**Stress in Gifted Individuals.** Gifted adults usually face stress about being considered intellectually different from other people in their group. They face both positive and negative pressures from the external environment. Emotional intelligence is one way of coping with these stressors so that the individuals can carry on a successful life (George & Shari, 2012).

**Spirituality and Intelligence.** Spiritual intelligence was described by Emmons (2000) as the utilization of spiritual data for real-life problem-solving and goal-achievement tasks. Five elements of spiritual intelligence have been suggested by him:

1. The ability to surpass the physical and material elements;
2. The ability to go through heightened states of consciousness;
3. The ability to purify everyday experience;
4. The ability to make use of spiritual resources to solve issues; and,
5. The ability to act in a virtuous manner. (Chin, Anantharaman, & Tong, 2011)

Spiritual intelligence was recognized as an inborn human potential by Noble (2000; 2001), who was also in agreement with the essential abilities presented by Emmons (2000). Two further components were proposed by him:
1. The physical reality is consciously identified as being part of a bigger, multidimensional reality which individuals interact with on a momentary basis; and,

2. Psychological well-being is consciously pursued, not only for its own sakes, but also for the sake of the global community. (Chin et al., 2011)

George (2006) believed that there are many reasons which make spiritual intelligence essential. It helps individuals find the deepest and innermost resources through which they find the capacity to care and the power to tolerate and adjust. A steady sense of identity can also be obtained through spiritual intelligence (Chin et al., 2011).

**Spirituality in Education.** According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), spiritual intelligence is:

> the way in which we deal with and resolve issues of meaning and values, place our behaviour and lives in a broader, deeper and more meaningful context, and the way in which we can evaluate and compare the importance of a particular action or life-path over another. (pp. 3 - 4)

This definition makes spirituality an important issue for educational bodies (Vialle, 2007). The enhancement of the world-views of students has been expressed by many schools as being one of their key objectives. However, spirituality has not been explicitly recognized as a duty of schools. Two reasons are suggested for this situation, which arises through considering spirituality to be the same as religion. First, in some countries like Australia, there is a separation of state and religion, and, second, the tense environments that arose from the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001, in Bali in 2002 and in London in 2005, as well as the tensions in the Middle East, have led to a
prevalence of conservative attitudes with respect to religious expression that deters the inclusion of spirituality in school curricula (Vialle, 2007).

There are four important themes pertinent to the tasks of schools, in terms of spiritual education:

1. Spirituality takes part in our cognitive, social and emotional development (through an integration of the heart, mind and soul) to create meaning and purpose;
2. Spirituality stresses the relationship between all things (thoughts, people, other life-forms, nature, and so on);
3. Spirituality consists of taking ethical and compassionate decisions; the resolve to live a ‘superior life’ is taken into account; and,
4. Spirituality is represented by evaluating our inner selves and going beyond our physical realities. (Vialle, Lysaght & Verenikina, 2005)

Nevertheless, some cultural-specific characteristics of Western society create a hindrance to the inclusion of spirituality in the conceptions of gifted individuals (Ubani, 2007). One of the largest cultural notions in Western societies is the association between religion and science (Noddings, 1993). This relationship is parallel to the association between giftedness and spirituality in gifted education. Western society is plagued with stereotypes with respect to spirituality and giftedness. The belief that gifted people are only those who excel in academic settings is one such stereotype. Gifted individuals are persistently believed to score high on IQ tests (Piirto, 1994, pp. 14 - 15). Hence, though spirituality is believed to be an important element of gifted education, it is still finding its way into the schooling systems. Here, one can identify an essential difference between the Western approach to spirituality and the one adopted in the Saudi educational context. While Saudi Arabian educators tend to underestimate the importance of formal, secular science, they work very rigorously on
the spiritual development of their students and consider spiritual growth a vital, inseparable component of a well-functioning Islamic educational system. Hence, this emphasis on a congruence of the spiritual and the secular may become a lesson for the Western culture to learn from, especially taking into account that Western educators now struggle to integrate spiritual, emotional and moral dimensions into their educational system.

**Moral Education, Values and Social Conscience.** To prepare gifted students for playing an important role as future citizens, they need to be provided with a holistic form of education. Such an education promotes the acceptance of a shared responsibility amongst global citizens for the sake of the common future of humanity. Enhancing moral values is an important element of such citizenship education (Tirri, 2007).

Empirical studies have also identified the need for teachers to conduct discussions regarding the moral, spiritual and religious questions that will have an impact on the future of the students. Spiritual and religious queries are high amongst the issues that concern adolescents. Such questions need to be answered in every culture so that youngsters can clarify questions that make them understand themselves and their responsibilities better. Adolescents require the answers to these questions so that they can enhance not just their cognitive dimensions, but also the moral and spiritual aspects of their lives. Gifted students are concerned with such questions that are also included in moral and citizenship education (Tirri, 2007).

There are four fundamental component processes that lay the foundation of morality, according to Rest, Narvaez and Bebeau (1999), which can be categorized as moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral character and moral motivation. Moral judgment is the most widely studied component of the four. The majority of studies in
this domain are based on the cognitive-developmental theory presented by Lawrence Kohlberg (1969). According to Andreani and Pagnin (1993, pp. 539 - 553), gifted students are more mature in their moral thinking as they have a higher level of intellectual development. According to a study by Terman (1925), gifted children presented high levels of maturity in moral development when selecting activities that were morally constructive and the same scenario was observed in rating behaviour disorders (Tirri, 2007).

**Neuroscience and Giftedness.** A distinguishing feature of Western education is that of its science-based approach to explaining the human brain’s functioning and the process of learning from the neuroscience perspective. This is what is definitely lacking in the Saudi educational curriculum and approach to its design, with most ideas and guidelines on arranging educational provision coming from the Qur’an. A fundamental function of all human beings is to learn, as it is the tool that is used by them to become entirely human. The main organ for learning is the extensive brain possessed by all humans. The current education system has recognized the role of brain functioning in the increasingly sophisticated requirements of learning (Fischer & Immordino-Yang, 2008). The brain has become a major focus of research, as researchers seek to understand how the brain functions. New ways of evaluating how humans learn have emerged from the science-based field referred to as Educational Neuroscience. Also called by the alternate names of Mind Brain or Neuro-education, this field explores the relationships and interactions between the biological processes of the brain and education. Neurobiology, with its focus on anatomy, physiology and pathology, has contributed to the discussion about the development and functioning of the brain. Although there is a debate among scholars regarding the significance of brain analysis in determining educational outcomes, there is support in favour of neuroscientific
approaches in academic institutions such as University College London (Petitto & Dunbar, 2004).

Educational neuroscience has shown that specific brain patterns are followed during a child’s learning processes, however they do not think or behave in discrete compartments. They formulate their learning using the specified patterns as defined by the field they are studying, whether it be mathematics or science. However, on the other hand, they also create links between these pathways. For example, reading requires integrating the different domains of visual analysis (i.e., written words), sound analysis (i.e., spoken words) and meaning. They also form connections between the interests of the child with his/her literacy skills as it is a significant way through which one can get to know more about things one is interested in (Fischer & Immordino-Yang, 2008). The latest developments in the neuroscience of emotions stress the link between the cognitive and emotional functions that holds the ability to alter our perceptions of learning with respect to schools. The relationships between decision-making, social functioning and moral interpretation hold a particularly great deal of promise to bring about a greater level of understanding regarding how emotions affect decision-making. The link between learning and emotion, how learning is affected by culture, and finally how morals and human ethics are developed, are components of the same. Educators give great importance to these topics as their aim is to develop skilled, knowledgeable and ethical students who have the potential to face the social and moral challenges of their daily lives (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

Humans are essentially emotional and social creatures, as revealed by modern biology. Competent teachers realize that the emotions and feelings of students do have an impact on their performance and learning. The state the body is presently in, for instance, or whether the student slept or ate sufficiently, and whether the student is
feeling sick or well, also influences their performances (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Recent developments in the field of the neurobiology of emotions shows that cognition functions, with respect to the goals that regulate one’s life in the actual world, are attained through emotional machinery. In addition, the beliefs and feelings of people are examined in a socio-cultural context, which enables them to survive in a social world, instead of an opportunistic one. This notion of learning occurring in a cultural context is not new, however, and it is likely that the insights from neurobiology which emphasize the relationships between emotion, cognition and decision-making, mean social functioning will be the starting point for thinking along the lines of emotion in education. The belief that it is not sufficient to master knowledge and logical reasoning skills in the traditional sense has long been prevalent amongst educators. It is imperative that they successfully use these skills and knowledge apart from in the context of the school or laboratory. This depends on emotions and emotional thought, which is why the physiology of emotion and the resulting processes of feelings have a significant impact on the manner in which one attains knowledge. When educators realize the kind of relationships that exist between emotions and cognition, they may be able to use these relationships to create effective learning environments (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

The debate regarding the relevance of neuroscience and neurobiology to education has surfaced due to an increase in the knowledge on the functioning patterns of the brain. This has occurred since the emergence of computerized technology in recent decades, through which images of the brain can be captured. Such technologies make it possible to be able to see real-time images of the functioning of the living brain, something which was not possible previously. This provides researchers with a better way of comprehending the typical and atypical functioning of the brain.
Neuroscience relates to education in the sense that it has already been related to the social and psychological sciences, based to a large extent on behavioural observations (Clement & Lovat, 2012).

The Influence of Neuroscience on Gifted Education. In recent years, neuroscience has become a catalyst in discussions regarding the identification and education of gifted children. Neuroimaging studies have been used as data supporting the theory that gifted children learn more rapidly and efficiently than others, probably due to the increased interconnectivity among the different areas of their brains (Geake, & Dodson, 2005). Although the field of neuroscience and education is still regarded to be in its infancy, some indicators of gifted individuals have received general acceptance among neuroscientific researchers:

- Gifted children are precocious in their intellectual development (Geake, 2006);
- Gifted children exhibit superior cognitive control, such as in focussed attention (Geake, 1996);
- Gifted children demonstrate rapid information processing (Geake, 2006);
- Gifted children are highly creative, making inter-subject connections with ease (Kanevsky & Geake, 2005); and,
- Gifted children seek top-down understanding and want to see the bigger picture. They appear to have larger working memory capacities. (Geake, 2006)

These attributes provided by data from many neuroimaging studies have implications for teaching and curricula (Geake, 2006). They may be described as:

- Set tasks with high working memory demands and multiple components;
- Reduce the amount of small, repetitive tasks;
- Use challenge tests to evaluate prior knowledge;
- Use above-average learning materials employing analysis and synthesis;
• Group gifted children together regardless of age;
• Employ subject specialist mentors; and,
• Provide lessons beyond the regular curriculum.

**Curriculum Work and “Usable Knowledge”**. According to Lovat and Smith (2003), curriculum work pertains to practically applying knowledge through the correct selection of content that is relevant to specific learners. It consists of selecting and organizing knowledge and resources. Hence, the question is whether neuroscience provides usable knowledge that leads to an enhanced educational policy and practice.

This leads to discussion in the following two domains (Clement & Lovat, 2012):

1. Neuroscience and Educational Foundations. Neuroscience has the ability to explain the similarities and differences that are relevant to psychology and are not possible to observe at the behavioural level. It presents the neural processes of learning that cannot be revealed through behavioural sciences. Rose and Dalton (2009) have stated that neuroimaging has considerably advanced the ability to comprehend learning and its individually tailored distinctions. This relationship between neuroscientific and behavioural observations allows for the documentation of the effect of educational interventions which provides supplementary empirical data leading to the possibility of analysing learning problems from a different perspective. Neuroscience also makes it possible to understand the biological processes that stress learning, and hence contribute to education (Clement & Lovat, 2012).

2. Can Neuroscience Provide Usable Knowledge? Neuroscience relies on behavioural observations that are drawn from cognitive psychology to
understand and explain its findings. However, it can still provide extensive data that cannot be provided only through behavioural observation (De Smedt et al., 2010). An example has been presented by Howard-Jones, Winfield and Crimmins (2008) regarding how the information gained through neurosciences about the neural processes of creativity can be used to provide another perspective. Neuroscientific data were used in order to enhance the awareness of the participants regarding the meta-cognitive processes leading to creative thinking.

Thinking about the processes that form cognition can create different perceptions of the behaviour of others and it also leads to a greater sense of empowerment. It develops the potential to recognize different mental states that are prevalent in the same classroom and may be utilized to create the right interventions, as one pre-service teacher stated “to make a more productive learning environment”. (Clement & Lovat, 2012, p. 549).

Knowledge created through such an endeavour of active research has a certain degree of scientific value and relevance for educational theory and practice (Clement & Lovat, 2012). Neuroscientific knowledge should be available to teachers in a way that can be easily processed so that it can be included in curriculum work to formulate learning experiences aiming to optimize the learning of students (Narvaez & Vaydich, 2008). Brain and cognitive sciences are being included in the field of education to bring about a greater enhancement in the learning of students. The field of educational neuroscience involves the integration of neuroscience, as well as other areas of biology and cognitive science, with education. In the long term, such a field can transform
schools and education by generating a scientific basis for educational curriculum (Fischer & Immordino-Yang, 2008).

4.2.4 Summary

In Western research and practice, there has not yet been any consensus on a single universal definition of the concept of giftedness. It is an intricate concept, which can be perceived from several different perspectives. There have also been changes in the conception of giftedness over time. It was taken as an accurate and precise construct in the early days (on the basis of IQ levels); however, contemporary models consider a wide range of attributes, for example, artistic, creative and intellectual abilities. Various models of giftedness have been presented by researchers, including the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2011), WICS Model of Giftedness (Sternberg, 2003), and the theories of Renzulli (2002, 2005, 2009). The concept of giftedness is also influenced by emotional, spiritual and moral intelligences. There are various views and theories on these constructs which have been presented in this section. The emerging field of neuroscience has illuminated the physiology of the brain and has shed light on the biological mechanisms that result in giftedness. The influence of these approaches to identify giftedness in Western societies has been studied, and the steps needed to be taken to include these approaches in educational policies have also been discussed.
4.3 Historical Hermeneutic: Analysis of the Data Collected from Western Scholarship in Gifted Education

4.3.1 Introduction

This section examines the fundamental ideas in relation to gifted education across time. Western scholars have been responsible for a tremendous influence on the advancement of gifted education. The various views of giftedness produced by Western scholars over time have influenced the present-day perspectives on giftedness, so this section reviews the historical approaches to ascertaining giftedness and their relevance to modern perceptions. After presenting the empirical analytic position outlining the basic facts about research on giftedness across time, the present historical hermeneutic section is dedicated to outlining how Western thinkers and researchers made sense of the concept of giftedness and its related sub-concepts, such as intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge. Based on the data extracted in the previous section, the discussion in this section is divided into six meaningful parts: a presentation of the evolution of Western thought on the concepts of knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, moral intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence.

According to Shavinina (2009), the concepts mentioned above are the most common in Western scholarship related to giftedness. Hence, they were reviewed in relation to the time of their emergence, and the scholars behind them. The relationship between educational concepts and the contribution they have made towards gifted education were also identified.
4.3.2 Knowledge

In a review of exceptionally gifted individuals and their peers, the concept of knowledge is believed to distinguish them. That is, gifted individuals are believed to be more knowledgeable as compared to their peers. This section defines knowledge as viewed by various Western scholars across time. It attempts to explain the reason for understanding certain phenomena in gifted individuals and the role of knowledge in the advancement of giftedness and gifted education.

The concept of knowledge originated in the times of the ancient Greeks (Stanley, 2010). The concept of “knowledgeable people” was an artefact of the great philosophers Pythagoras and Xenophanes (Stanley, 2010). Pythagoras is one of the classical philosophers who was highly inclined to promote people achieving knowledge. As a thinker and a philosopher, he referred to knowledge as a mental process (Stanley, 2010). This form of knowledge enabled individuals to become involved, observant, and to continuously accumulate knowledge (Crumley II, 2009). Pythagoras also considered that the process of knowledge accumulation was assisted by environment, which contributed to people’s acquisition of new experiences and facilitated interpretations of the world through the lens of those experiences.

According to Xenophanes, a knowledgeable individual gained and developed his or her ability to understand things through observation (Stanley, 2010). The talents and skills exhibited by knowledgeable individuals were learned through observation and by an accumulation of things observed in the mind (Stanley, 2010). Observation, therefore, was an important aspect of gaining knowledge. It could, therefore, be gained from the environment. Knowledge thus depended on the need for the growth of capabilities that could only be obtained through continuous observation and by
obtaining and linking the relationships that exist between different things (Crumley II, 2009).

According to Plato, the concept involved an investigation into the nature of an object and the ways in which objects could be ascertained. During this time, knowledge was justified as a function of true belief (Crumley II, 2009). Here, the learning concept was characterized by the observations and use of the mind to interpret different phenomena. Through mental practice, individuals developed the function that became known as knowledge. This ability was not observed in all persons, apart from the few who had undergone some form of training. The type of knowledge they acquired could be passed on from one person to another through learning.

Knowledge was the primary source of insight and perception (Stanley, 2010). However, observation needed to be practised in order to gain experience. Plato differed from other philosophers in his opinion on the concept of knowledge when he introduced the ability to use the human mind to understand the nature and course of things. Although observation acted as the primary source of insight, the mind’s ability to understand things was also an important factor (Russell, 2008). According to Plato, knowledge enabled individuals to understand the genesis of facts in the universe. This understanding was brought about by the ability to interpret the ideas that had accumulated in the mind (Stanley, 2010). To be able to understand general facts, the mind had to be able to connect and understand the relationships that exist within and between information.

Plato suggested that knowledge was important to the mind, as it enabled it to find reasons behind things. He alluded to an individual’s conception of knowledge in their environment depending on what they learned through their subjective senses (Stanley, 2010). Knowledge, therefore, was more than perception. Some explanations
for the similarities and differences between certain things could not be perceived through any sensory organ (Russell, 2008). It is the mind that saw this difference. The mind performed this feat by interpreting visible characteristics through sensory organs. In addition, Plato referred to knowledge as the ability of an individual to always maintain the struggle to avoid failure (Stanley, 2010).

The key achievement of ancient Greek philosophy, in relation to knowledge, concerns the distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge. Aristotle defined these different knowledge dimensions through his practical particularism. According to Aristotle, practical knowledge is the knowledge of action; it implies knowledge acquired through genuine particulars instead of universals or types. Theoretical knowledge refers to these particulars unachievable through inferential reasoning, but available through intuition (Anton & Preus, 1991). This separation between knowledge dimensions allowed Aristotle to connect and explain the influence of ethics and religion on human personality development. In other words, Aristotle aligned the science of human nature and the birth of life with the field of knowledge: “A view of knowledge that acknowledges that the sphere of knowledge is wider than the sphere of ‘science’ seems … to be a cultural necessity if we are to arrive at a sane and human view of ourselves or of science” (Anton & Preus, 1991, p. 159).

In contrast to the ancient period of philosophy and primacy of reason, knowledge in the Medieval epoch underwent a gradual transformation in approach. After the Dark Ages of ignorance, the Medieval period was characterized by extreme religious piety, so any aspects of knowledge were naturally viewed only through the prism of religion. Medieval philosophers borrowed from the Greek philosophers’ notion of observation to explain the genesis of things (Russell, 2008). Thomas Aquinas, who was a Medieval scholar, portrayed knowledge as an aspect that helps individuals
to follow the divine truth. It is through knowledge that individuals were able to discern right from wrong (Aquinas, 2014).

Much has changed since Medieval times, and the view of knowledge again underwent a radical change in the epoch of Enlightenment – a sharp shift from religious piety to worshipping reason and rational, empirical evidence. As a result of that change, in the modern era, philosophers used the early understanding of knowledge to explain the concepts of giftedness or talent. This can be evidenced by what Francis Galton referred to as the basis of knowledge. He believed that the environment plays a highly significant role in its development (Robinson & Jolly, 2013). The idea of knowledge, which was developed by philosophers in the Greek era, had a significant impact on the subject of gifted education across time. According to Stanley (2010), the teachings of Plato that involved engaging the mind to trigger reactions can explain the genesis of things. The idea of gifted education cannot be complete without acknowledging the mind as an essential element of the ability of an individual to more fully understand things. The Greek era’s concept of knowledge, therefore, played an important part in the development of gifted education through the engagement of the mind in learning (Stanley, 2010).

This section was dedicated to an analysis of the concept of knowledge in the Western historical perspective, with the key dominant views and their changes over time being analysed and compared. This review shows that the concept of knowledge underwent a series of transformations, from being viewed as God’s gift to the rational science-based vision of knowledge as a natural cognitive capacity of the human brain. In the next section, the properties in gifted minds that lead them to the sustenance of their skills and expertise acquired in the process of learning and experience through knowledge are discussed. These properties are referred to as intelligence. Therefore, the
The concept of intelligence is analysed from a historical perspective to elaborate on the impact that it has had on gifted education.

### 4.3.3 Intelligence

The previous section elaborated on the significance of knowledge as a concept in gifted education. Here, the impact of intelligence on giftedness and gifted education is discussed on the basis of various scholars’ opinions regarding intelligence across time, from the ancient Greek era to modern research. This analysis enables the researcher to appreciate the development of gifted education based on intelligence as a principle.

The discussion of intelligence traces its origin to the ancient Greek era of 400BC (Goldstein, Princiotta, & Naglieri, 2014). During this period, intelligence was referred to as the presence of virtues, rational thinking, reason, understanding, and the unique ability of an individual (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2008). To date, different scholars have adopted and used these terms to define intelligence; thus it remains a contested and continuously defined term.

In the Medieval period, intelligence was also viewed in terms of an objective human ability; nevertheless, Thomas Aquinas, pointed out that only intelligence that follows God’s will may be regarded as virtuous intelligence. He distinguished theoretical intelligence in the form of faith, and practical intelligence in the form of the ability and desire to act in line with God’s word (Aquinas, 2005). Furthermore, according to Aquinas, intelligence was the major driving force for individuals in their search for the truth (Aquinas, 2014). Aquinas suggested that rational thinking was a means of understanding issues, and to search for facts was the driving force of an individual. This was similar to Aristotle’s opinion. Thus, the pursuit of truth and the use
of reason and understanding are similar, and both are geared towards arriving at an answer to something (Aquinas, 2014).

In the modern era, intelligence has incorporated the use of rational thinking and the pursuit for truth and has taken a new direction. Now it differentiates individuals through their ability to understand complex ideas and how they adapt to different environments and learn from experiences. By applying intelligence, individuals attempt to clarify and understand, while organizing a set of complex phenomena. This perspective has been refined into a theory of multiple intelligences to show the different capabilities of gifted individuals (Gardner, 1988).

The multiple intelligences theory was aimed at categorizing the concept of intelligence into various specific modalities (Gardner, 2011). According to Gardner, intelligence cannot be measured by only one standard.

Intelligence in the modern era can therefore manifest itself in different ways (Gardner, 2012). However, Lewis Terman offered another understanding of intelligence: as being unique in every individual. Nevertheless, for this uniqueness to be developed, the optimum environment is essential.

Intelligence has an important role in the development of gifted education in the modern age as learners are exposed to different environments, which helps in the formulation of learning using different approaches. In the Greek period, students were taught mathematics, science, philosophy and religion (Stanley, 2010). With the passing of time, theorists like Gardner improved the theory of multiple intelligences to show that different capabilities of individuals could be formed through training (Chan, 2004). Terman (1925) identified the need for an improved environment in order to develop intelligence. This has contributed significantly to gifted education. Learners are, therefore, exposed to the right environment to suit their talents. This has further been
made possible by the ability to identify the learners’ various categories of intelligence (Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2008).

In summary, the presented evidence suggests that the concept of intelligence remains one of the issues which still attracts research in gifted education. We have discussed that, unlike in the Greek era where intelligence was viewed using very few approaches, today a whole range of methods are used due to technological and scientific advancements. Gifted individuals are no longer considered intelligent by the ability of their mind only. Gifted individuals are considered intelligent in various ways. These varied ways must be examined for the particular abilities of giftedness to be developed. This has created a new concept of multiple intelligences within gifted education. The concept aims at assessing the brilliance of a gifted individual in various areas of life. The next section presents research on the connections between wisdom and giftedness, and the impact of scholars’ understanding of wisdom on gifted education.

4.3.4 Wisdom

Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, considered wisdom to be divine and not present in all people (Sternberg, Jarvin & Grigorenko, 2011). During this period, wisdom was defined as the ability to make sound decisions and to follow them (Russell, 2008). According to Pythagoras, wisdom is what makes a human life worth living, and represents a distilled essence of everything that people learn throughout their lives. Hence, the acquisition of wisdom was seen by him as the result of lengthy, continuous, and rigorous education, that could transform societies and that would distinguish wise rulers for the attainment of a greater social well-being for the nation (Stanley, 2010).
Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, centred his teachings and ideas about wisdom on the concept of logos, a dynamic and comprehensive concept pertaining to the essence and nature of everything. Wisdom, for him, denoted a person’s ability to conduct a dialogue with logos, to comprehend oneself within logos, which may be interpreted in the modern understanding as gaining an awareness of the universe, understanding the nature of things in this world, and achieving harmony with the environment. For Heraclitus, wisdom denoted unity with logos and meant self-discovery within it; thus, one may conclude that he treated wisdom as harmony and awareness, rather than perceiving it only in relation to intelligence and academic proficiency.

Relying on Socrates’ idea of the unity of wisdom and truth (as advanced knowledge), Plato defined wisdom as the objective of education and development. However, Plato’s opinions are largely elitist, since he considered people able to attain wisdom, but selected that fate only for the few “golden children” – those distinguished with exceptional capabilities and talents. Hence, despite the fact that Plato was one of the first philosophers to speak about giftedness and wisdom in specific terms, he was also aware of the strict class divisions in the society of his time, so he considered wisdom similarly to education, as a privilege that can be developed but only in those who are prone to it.

In line with this idea, the ancient Greek philosophers associated wisdom with spirituality and contemplation, asserting that upon achieving union with God, a person is granted superior knowledge. Only ardent believers are able to acquire and understand these truths inapproachable for the rest (Cooper, 2012). Aligning spiritual living with wisdom, ancient scholars determined a set of principles for such a life. In the context of the current study’s interests, it is essential to point out several of them as they relate to
human personality development. First, man should observe and examine the world and take an effort to master one’s self; it is unreasonable to experience extreme emotions over things that are beyond human control. Third, a giftedness of human personality encompasses an individual’s value of friendship and respect and responsibility for others. Finally, a human commitment to service for the good leads to happiness and satisfaction with life (Soupios & Mourdoukoutas, 2009).

In the Medieval era, wisdom was largely explained from a religious perspective. Thomas Aquinas presented two types of wisdom: divine wisdom, and human wisdom (Williams & Atkins, 2005). Divine wisdom is found with God only; human wisdom is subject to fallibility, and has limitations (Shank & Durant, 2000). Individuals who are earnestly searching for truth and are following it are regarded as wise (Stanley, 2010).

Nevertheless, being gifted does not presuppose being wise, so gifted education was considered necessary for people to develop their full potential and obtain life wisdom (Bunce, 2009). The concept of wisdom introduced several other concepts that are associated with wise and rational people. These issues widened the approaches regarding the views of the outstanding abilities which can be present in children.

In our discussions, we have managed to define wisdom as the ability to make informed and rational decisions without a formal procedure. We have managed to associate wisdom with rationality and have found that giftedness is not associated with wisdom. The concept of wisdom in gifted children has further widened the approach of tackling giftedness in education. This concept has brought about a holistic approach based on personality, the conditions of a society, and the ethical behaviour that is beneficial to society. In the next section, the concept of moral intelligence brought about by an individual’s personality and its effect on gifted education are reviewed.
4.3.5 Moral Intelligence

Moral intelligence refers to the ability of an individual to perfect themselves, be motivated to act rightly, practise intelligence, embrace excellence, embrace moral virtues, and to act with reason (Hass, 2002). Virtues refer to the ability of individuals to carry out tasks and achieve desirable results (Jones & Vice, 2011). Thus, moral intelligence emanates from an individual's motivation to do the right thing and to become a better person (Jones & Vice, 2011). This position reflects the current multidimensional perception of the human character that embraces the social, cultural and religious contributions to intellectual development, with the latter not viewed solely in academic knowledge and performance terms anymore.

In their philosophy of human nature and knowledge, the ancient Greek scholars defined ethics, or moral values, as a companion of wisdom, one that brings a person to happiness. For example, Plato stressed the interconnection between these two notions: “true morality is as dependent on a sound intellect as moral wisdom is on a good instinct and disposition” (Dobbs, 1903, p. 143). The ancient Greeks indicated that ethics and the achievement of moral values result not only from one’s cognitive development, but also from social and personal experiences and factors like empathy, temperament, culture, society, peers, parents, guilt, etc.. Hence, they claimed that understanding and control over the emotions is critical for human personality development (Ninivaggi, 2012). Such an approach is likely to help the educational community to devise much more individualized and flexible approaches to every student’s personality, and to educate him or her fully by addressing their educational and personal needs.

The presence of virtues in individuals provided a superb link between the Greek and Medieval eras (Dow, 2013). This is because the presence of attributes in a
person was an important aspect of these times. Thomas Aquinas regarded moral intelligence as the presence of virtuous attributes in an individual, placing them into three categories: moral virtues, intellectual virtues, and theological virtues (Ethica, q.3, a.1, q’a.1, ad 1). A moral virtue is defined as being driven by personal feelings and perceptions (Williams & Atkins, 2005). An individual is regarded as having moral virtues if he or she is motivated by reason (Hass, 2002). The presence of reason in a person’s behaviour can, therefore, be determined by a certain parameter - demarcating either deficiency or abundance (Williams & Atkins, 2005). Moral intelligence can, therefore, occur in one individual and be lacking in another (Damon, 2008).

Intellectual virtues were defined by Aquinas as being guided by practical intelligence and logic to understand the genesis of things (Williams & Atkins, 2005). Intellectual virtues result in practical wisdom and capabilities, while practical virtues are the ability to perform physical activities (Dow, 2013). Theological virtues formed part of the moral behaviour that one was supposed to practise. Aquinas refers to this as having knowledge about God and His will and having faith in Him. However, theological virtues are entirely dependent on human will (Williams & Atkins, 2005). The ability to believe in God can only transpire from an individual’s will. According to Aquinas, individuals have a duty to cultivate this form of morality and seek to know the will of God. The views of Thomas Aquinas were primarily influenced by the position he held as a Christian theologian.

In modern philosophy, the influence of the concept of moral intelligence has not been profound due to the emergence of multiple concepts of intelligence (Gardner, 2011). Today, concepts including “interpersonal intelligence” and “intrapersonal intelligence” are used to refer to individuals who can take care of both their own emotional needs and the needs of others (Gardner, 1998). Morality, today, is viewed as
the ability of individuals to understand themselves and take the right action, which is increasingly seen as a socially, culturally and religiously bound phenomenon, possessing serious implications for educating students in a holistic way and addressing all the dimensions of a complex human personality.

Research on moral intelligence has helped to develop an interest in gifted children (Ambrose & Cross, 2009). According to Dabrowski, gifted children exhibit a tendency to have attributes which have been associated with being morally intelligent, honest, and sensitive to the needs of others (Silverman, 2000). They are considered more composed and mature beyond their years compared with their peers (Ambrose & Cross, 2009). They are also very sensitive when it comes to differentiating between right and wrong (Damon, 2008). Over the years, gifted children have been observed taking care of people who are not as capable as they are (Ambrose & Cross, 2009). All these attributes comprise morality or moral behaviour (Hass, 2002). They can be identified and developed through the recognition of moral intelligence, which is an important aspect in the development of gifted children (Ambrose & Cross, 2009).

In summary, this section has helped in understanding the contribution that moral intelligence has made in the lives of gifted children (Freeman, 2013). Morality, coupled with spiritual intelligence, enables individuals to be elevated to a level above their peers, and any gifted education must address the moral dimension of individual development. In the next section, I will discuss how spiritual intelligence has achieved this across time, basing the views on the works of various scholars.

4.3.6 Spiritual Intelligence

In ancient times, spiritual intelligence was connected to wisdom, which was believed to be divine and could not be obtained through learning (Zohar & Marshall,
Therefore, all Greek philosophers promoted contemplative exercises as a means to achieving moral values. For example, Socrates encouraged his followers to practise “spiritual exercises” and Aristotle appealed to the community to pursue the “common good” (Sheldrake, 2014). However, spiritual intelligence during the ancient period was limited due to the presence of human gods. According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), people felt dissatisfied by the explanations given, based on religious premises. Therefore, they sought the truth through logical reasoning, and an example of such philosophers was Aristotle (Stanley, 2010).

Relying on the principle of “being-in-the-world”, ancient philosophies implied an achievement of intelligence from spiritual practices rather than from intellectual experiences (Sheldrake, 2014). However, Thomas Aquinas made a major contribution to the integration of the concept of spirituality with the philosophy of knowledge and human giftedness. He claimed that faith is the only power and knowledge source capable of defining evil, and thus allows a person to avoid the wrong life path (Jenkins, 1997). Such a strong focus on God in Thomas Aquinas’s position on spirituality is not surprising, given that this period was dominated by the strict teachings of the church that were rarely questioned. In addition, spirituality in this period was defined by the word “obedience”. This meant an obedience of the heart and the body (Whitney, 2004). People have come up with various definitions of spiritual intelligence ever since (Whitney, 2004). In the modern era, it is the engagement of knowledge that has been gained spiritually to solve various problems that face people in everyday life (Sinetar, 2000).

Gardner used the term “cosmic consciousness”, which is the knowledge of the existence of God, to refer to spiritual intelligence (Gardner, 2012, p. 114). According to Gardner (2012), spiritual illumination enables individuals to become insightful and be
able to solve problems by relying on their religious consciousness. Gardner outlined spiritual intelligence as a composition of virtues. Virtues referred to attributes in an individual that were universally accepted, and therefore they are essential components of spiritual intelligence. It is through virtues that individuals become able to solve the problems they face (Gardner, 2012).

Following the definition of spiritual intelligence provided by Emmons (2000), it may be seen to have the ability to: sanctify everyday experiences; facilitate heightened states of consciousness; transcend the physical and material environment; use the spiritual resources available to solve problems; and, to uphold virtues (Emmons, 1999). The term “spiritual consciousness” is used to explain the ability of individuals to use their spiritual awareness to solve problems (Paloutzian, 2000). According to Kwilecki (2000), there exists a considerable difference between religion and spirituality, and the two must not be confused. Spiritual intelligence is an ability enabling individuals, in a religious domain, to solve their problems successfully (Kwilecki, 2000). This ability is referred to as a “devotion to transcendent forces credited with ultimacy” (Kwilecki, 2000, p. 35). This form of spiritual intelligence is age-dependent, and develops as one moves from childhood to adulthood.

Although spiritual intelligence has been dismissed by several modern philosophers, most of them believe it is innate within talented children (Gibbs & Grey, 2011). Spiritual intelligence is essential in gifted education as it provides the individual with a platform to solve his/her problems regarding meaning and value (Vialle, 2007). This type of intelligence helps talented individuals to place their life and actions within a meaningful context and to lead a useful life (Robinson & Jolly, 2013).

In summary, this discussion has highlighted the relevance of spiritual intelligence for gifted individuals. It has been shown that spiritual intelligence enables
the gifted to define themselves in a spiritual world, thereby making them understand their roles and follow virtues that are considered morally upright (Wolman, 2001). Spiritual intelligence enables self-awareness amongst gifted individuals. At this height of self-awareness, the individuals have learnt the ability to understand themselves and their peers, while harnessing relationships. This leads naturally to the notion of emotional intelligence, as shall be discussed in detail in the next section.

4.3.7 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is one of the concepts which has received considerable attention from philosophers and psychologists (Carblis, 2008). Emotional intelligence involves self-management, self-awareness, relationship management, the ability to perform tasks with harmony, and the ability to respond to the needs of others (Emmerling, Shanwal & Mandal, 2008). Various scholars have explored this concept from different perspectives.

In the ancient era, the behaviour of people was thought to be dominated by reason. Individuals could, therefore, only use reason to guide their feelings (Emmerling et al., 2008). There was no relationship between the cognitive and physical aspects of an individual, and explanations for behaviour were made on the basis and ability of an individual to use reason and logic in their actions (Brown, et al., 2006).

In his philosophy, Heraclitus assumed that a person’s character and ability to control their emotions are his or her fate. An individual’s character is a reflection of the cooperation between their emotional intelligence and their moral intelligence (Ninivaggi, 2012). Plato also indicated emotional intelligence as a dimension of human personality indicating that human actions stem from knowledge, emotion and desire. Plato suggested the importance of achieving the capability of emotional regulation to
control one’s behaviour. Aristotle supported Plato’s ideas, stating that anger, enmity, fear, shame and unkindness should be replaced by their positive counterparts to facilitate human cognitive development and giftedness (Roy, 2015).

Medieval philosophers also used reason as the primary aspect that would guide people in their activities (Carblis, 2008). However, in the contemporary world, we find reason and emotion complementing each other. According to Carblis (2008), emotions, which are guided by reason, enable gifted individuals to respond to nature in the most responsible way. Emotional intelligence in the modern era is considered to be an ability to probe the needs of people and to manage them (Solan, 2008). Emotional intelligence thus enables individuals to perceive the feelings of others (also known as being empathetic) (Goleman, 2012). It is also seen as a social technique that allows individuals to move smoothly within society as gifted individuals learn the ability to perceive the emotions of others and to learn what they need (Stough, Saklofske, & Parke, 2009).

Emotional intelligence cannot be complete if it does not appreciate the relationship between the different skills individuals have (Mayer, 1998). Mayer suggested that this kind of ability develops over time from childhood to middle adulthood. Therefore, individuals of various ages exhibit various levels of capacity to reflect their performance in the area of emotional intelligence (Stough et al., 2009). Emotional intelligence can also be regarded as social intelligence, which refers to the capability to negotiate complex relationships (Goleman, 2011).

However, emotional intelligence is more complicated than social intelligence. Unlike social intelligence, which involves being at ease with people, especially verbally, emotional intelligence requires the use of reason (Porcu, et al., 2012). This reason is used to deal with the internal feelings that manifest themselves in individuals,
which Gardner refers to as intrapersonal intelligence. The ability to deal with these feelings is more than just being able to get along with other people (Porcu et al., 2012).

The idea of research on emotional intelligence helped to identify the characteristics that can be cultivated in an individual so that this type of intelligence can be developed (Stough et al., 2009). The concept contributed to identifying differences in the feelings that manifest in a person and place them in a form of hierarchy. Emotional intelligence is integrated with broader general intelligence and a person's imagination. This helps gifted individuals to develop their thoughts and imagination. The integration of thoughts and feelings results in more profound experiences and refined abilities. The idea of emotional intelligence supports the fact that gifted children are born into environments that subject them to different feelings (Stough et al., 2009). According to Stough et al. (2009), some of these feelings cannot be managed by gifted children if the right approaches to them are not cultivated.

In this section, the concepts of education, as elaborated by Western scholars across time, have been discussed. Six concepts have been elaborated on: knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, moral intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence. Western scholars, through their theories, have shown us how these six concepts have shaped giftedness and the education of the gifted. In this section, I have shown how knowledge has been instrumental in the identification of students who have greater capacities than their peers, and the need for a system of education that would enhance their minds through action. I have also discussed how intelligence has attracted further research in the field of education. With time, concept of intelligence in individuals has developed from a single attribute of the mind to a multifarious concept where the brilliance of a gifted individual can be assessed through various areas of life. I have discussed how scholars across time have perceived the concept of wisdom. One
outstanding concept is that wisdom is associated with rationality without a formal procedure, and not with giftedness. Instead, wisdom has informed education in the sense that it has brought about a holistic approach based on the personality of an individual that benefits a society.

In the discussion, there has been an appreciation of the role of reason in moral intelligence, one that leads to the development of moral appropriateness, which elevates a gifted individual to a level above their peers. Spiritual intelligence, on the other hand, has enabled gifted individuals to define themselves and understand their roles in the world while following virtues that are considered morally upright. In conclusion, the discussion of emotional intelligence has elaborated on the need for moral values and judgment in gifted children that enables them to have control of their reactions and responses. From the various scholars across time, we have appreciated the relevance of emotions in motivating the gifted towards achieving their goals. The next section is dedicated to the third level of the Habermasian “ways of knowing” analysis – to the self-reflective and critical analysis of gifted education in Western scholarship.

### 4.4 Self-Reflective and Critical Analysis: Discussion of Western Scholarship in Gifted Education

According to Habermasian theory, upon acquiring information and analysing it, one is knowledgeable enough to be in a position to be self-reflective about it. Hence, this section represents my own self-reflective conclusions on the topic, in the form of a personal evaluation of the evolution of Western scholarship in regard to gifted education. At first, I offer an overview of the current state of affairs in the area and draw links between Western philosophy and the Saudi educational system. Then, I provide a critical evaluation of how Western scholars have developed the concept of
gifted education and what dimensions they have distinguished. Finally, I indicate my view on how the elements of gifted education formulated by Western scholarship should be applied to a Saudi educational strategy.

An extensive review and analysis of ancient, medieval and modern works on gifted education produced by Western thinkers allows me to produce a critical appraisal of the overall evolution of gifted education philosophy in Western scholarship. Until recently, giftedness has been perceived as a superior knowledge resulting in an individual’s exceptional academic performance. Though modern scholars recognize giftedness as a multi-dimensional concept, they have tended to apply a simple IQ test to evaluate and estimate giftedness. As a rule, an IQ score serves as an indicator of a student’s applicability to being classed as ‘gifted’ and therefore a suitable participant in gifted education. I believe that it is critical for the global educational community to pay precise consideration to the multiple dimensions of giftedness. Otherwise, it is impossible to create a sound gifted program dedicated to developing targeted skills and abilities. Therefore, seeking to contribute to the enhancement of Saudi education in general, and the development of its gifted programs, I am eager to point out that some achievements of Western educational thought are valuable for the case.

Beginning with the ancient Greek philosophers, Western scholars have investigated the concept of knowledge and giftedness as being about one’s superior knowledge. Unfortunately, numerous works on giftedness deal little with gifted education programs. I believe that the various forms and compounds of giftedness distinguished by Western academics through history should be applied as the key elements and targets of gifted education. The overall evolution of Western scholarship has distinguished six dimensions of giftedness: knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence and moral intelligence (Shavinina, 2009).
In general, the ancient Greek scholars established the grounds for subsequent scholars and the development of the concepts of giftedness and gifted education. The ancient works of the Greek philosophers formulated and described three aspects of knowing: knowledge, intelligence and wisdom (Stanley, 2010).

Knowledge is the most well-known and accepted form of giftedness promoted by Plato and Aristotle as a way of accumulating one’s skills through applying theory to practice (Russell, 2008; Stanley, 2010). However, pure knowledge is not enough to define anyone as a gifted person. The concept of intelligence developed by Plato and Pythagoras referred to an individual’s ability to apply their knowledge and analytical skills to make decisions facilitating human life and success (Crumley II, 2009; Stanley, 2010). Relying on the ideas of Socrates, Plato developed his philosophy of education and knowledge to indicate that wisdom was a superior level of knowledge (Russell, 2008; Stanley, 2010). When a person intentionally applies knowledge and creative thinking to achieve personal and social aims, it is possible to attribute his or her performance to wisdom. This view stands in sharp contrast to the traditional Saudi views of wisdom, which are mostly associated with technical knowledge of the Holy Qur’an, proficiency in Islamic routines and rituals (e.g., correct and rigorous recital), and spiritual/religious piety. In more recent times, Saudi Arabia is seriously determined to integrate itself into the global educational context and fit its educational views into the globally accepted competitive educational benchmarks. Therefore, its educational authorities and policymakers have expanded their views of wisdom to incorporate wider categories of knowledge, including independent critical thinking and an overall inventiveness and initiative that has traditionally been rarely praised in Islamic culture.

Therefore, the ancient Greek scholars managed to determine three kinds of knowledge in an attempt to explain a person’s superior cognitive abilities. Promoting
the idea of the importance of education and the development of individual intellectual capabilities, they indicated the need for providing people with higher intellectual potential with a more comprehensive education. However, the ancient Greeks did not combine all the three notions – knowledge, intelligence and wisdom – as characteristics of a gifted person. Neither did they develop the concept of gifted education, simply arguing for the segregation of students with different intellectual capabilities. However, relying on their ideas, medieval and modern scholars managed to draw links between notions previously received as independent.

Thus, Thomas Aquinas distinguished moral intelligence as being when knowledge of moral principles, and the desire to act in a right way, was complemented by high intellectual capabilities and serving the social/universal good (Freeman, 2013). From this perspective, it is possible to attribute moral intelligence to components of giftedness, as only people with superior cognitive abilities might lead teams towards the common good. Referring to Aristotle’s logical reasoning, Paloutzian and Gardner (in Whitney, 2004) developed a concept of spiritual intelligence, where divine or cosmic consciousness inspires people with some knowledge and understanding, thus, expanding their cognition. Therefore, as a contribution to the scope of knowledge, spiritual intelligence falls within the scope of giftedness. Modern intelligence scholars defined another kind of intelligence – emotional intelligence -- that implies one’s ability to take control over emotions to build successful social relationships. From this perspective, emotional intelligence is a complex notion combining skills in self-management, relationship management, self-awareness and social awareness (Goleman, 2001).

Modern Western scholars drew links between the different kinds of giftedness, thereby asserting its complex nature. Thus, Terman (1925) confirmed the relationship
between intelligence and giftedness. On these grounds, I presume that variations of intelligence – spiritual, emotional and moral – might be associated with giftedness as well. The recent domain-specific approaches to giftedness of Tapper (2012), or Matthew and Folsom (2009), state that a gifted person demonstrates superior performances and results only in a certain area. I perceive this idea as further evidence as to the multidimensional nature of giftedness – according to the dominant component of giftedness, a person achieves outstanding results in that specific field while being average in others. The theory of giftedness as a socio-cultural phenomenon (Tapper, 2012; Phillipson, 2007; Sternberg, 2007; etc.) proves the presupposition that emotional and moral intelligence are dimensions of giftedness.

Therefore, over time, the concept of giftedness has undergone a series of changes, from it being a pure intellectual capability through intelligence to superior performance. Gardner’s (1998) theory of multiple intelligences contributed to theories of a person’s ability to apply leadership (Renzulli, 2002; Gordon & Bridglall, 2005) and creative thinking skills (Robinson, 2001; Davis & Rimm, 2004) to affect the self and others, and has formed the idea of a multidimensional concept of giftedness. However, the global approaches to standardized education are ineffective in terms of gifted education. Hence, I recommend utilizing the ideas of Western scholarship, but to withdraw from the dominance of IQ testing, in assessing an individual’s cognitive abilities.

As already indicated, the Saudi educational system uses much of the British educational model of the twentieth century, where common core subjects and standardized tests were a primary focus. I have synthesized the ideas and positions promoted by Western scholars in ancient, medieval and modern times to target Saudi policymaking in the context of gifted education. I believe that the Saudi gifted
programs should focus on the development of knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, moral intelligence, spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence. Recognizing human capital as a means of achieving economic growth, Saudi policymakers should adopt various programs and initiatives to promote education and to create increased access to higher education. However, I think that the primary concern should be for a transformation from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred education system. More independence and practical experiences are likely to foster an accumulation of knowledge. An increased independence and ability to demonstrate one’s abilities and skills might reveal an individual’s giftedness. In other words, instead of IQ testing, Saudi students should receive more freedom to express themselves, while teachers have to monitor these manifestations of cognitive capabilities to determine the students eligible for gifted education.

In their turn, gifted educational programs should address the entire scope of the dimensions of giftedness discovered by various ancient, medieval and modern scholars of the West. I believe that gifted education in Saudi Arabia should emphasize the development and application of different kinds of intelligence. As a Muslim country, Saudi Arabia has a culture of strong service to Allah, obedience, social respect, and a high valuation of the family. Hence, moral intelligence (Muslim cultural values), spiritual intelligence (Qur’an studying and recitation) and emotional intelligence (a culture of self-control and obedience) should serve as fundamentals for the accumulation of leadership, analytical, critical and creative thinking skills.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The present chapter outlined three stages of the Habermasian methodology of “ways of knowing” to analyse Western scholarship, in terms of giftedness across time,
from ancient times to modernity. The empirical-analytic stage of analysis revealed that ancient philosophers envisioned giftedness in rather simple terms, as a godlike gift that gave people specific capabilities for outstanding performance and exceptional reasoning, which could not be obtained through training, and was only developed under the careful guidance of experienced teachers. The Medieval concept of giftedness was also strongly linked to a supernatural gift of God, and its specificity was predetermined by the strong influence of the church on people’s lives and scientific thought. In this period, the work of St. Thomas Aquinas is notable, since he worked extensively on defining giftedness, but still linked it very closely with reasoning and formal intellect.

In the modern age, giftedness as a phenomenon acquired much closer and more intense attention from researchers, and the advances of science and technology moved the understanding of giftedness much further. First, they did this by offering formal assessment instruments like IQ tests, and more latterly through the advances of neuroscience that offered insights into how the brain functions. Nowadays, the vision of giftedness stretches far beyond the traditional view of it as simply intellect or wisdom, since theories of multiple intelligences and multidimensional approaches to giftedness have illuminated the equal importance of such traits as creativity, leadership, and artistic skills in the list of the attributes of giftedness. Hence, the modern era has offered a much richer variety of approaches to giftedness, and recent research has added new shades of understanding to its complexity.

The second stage of analysis – the historical-hermeneutic approach – was applied in this chapter to identify the process of evolution of key giftedness components, such as knowledge, wisdom, and the various types of intelligence. At this point, the researcher found that the vision of knowledge evolved through time, and changed from being seen by ancient and medieval thinkers as an aptitude for reasoning
and seeing the world, to the much more complex neurobiological processes of comprehension. Wisdom also evolved as a concept, mainly in its link to formal intelligence and knowledge. Intelligence came to be seen as not a homogeneous quality, but as a set of different characteristics contributing to people’s empathy, spirituality, emotionality, and the other vital human features that make them who they are.

The final stage of this chapter summarized all these findings from the self-reflective point of view, allowing the researcher to express his personal self-reflectivity in the analysis of the presented information. The reflective nature of the final section makes the constructed knowledge visible, and reveals what the researcher has personally singled out as essential in this body of knowledge. Thus, the critical self-reflective part was dedicated mostly to a discussion of the contributions of all of these ideas on giftedness in their practical application to the contemporary Saudi education system. The most vital and helpful ideas were borrowed from various historical periods and were critically analysed by the researcher, through the analytical lens of obtained and processed data, and were then applied to recommend a proper design for gifted education programs in Saudi Arabia.
CHAPTER 5: APPLYING HABERMAS’S “WAYS OF KNOWING” TO ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP ON GIFTED EDUCATION

5.1 Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I discussed the contributory role of Western scholars in influencing our perceptions of giftedness and gifted education, and the significance of the concepts of knowledge, wisdom, and the various types of intelligence underlying Western ideas of education. I have discussed the key concepts of knowledge, intelligence and wisdom in education within Western Scholarship. In this section, I shall explore the views of Islamic scholars, across time, in regard to knowledge (ilm), reason and intelligence (al-aql) and spiritual wisdom (qalb) as they impact on the idea of giftedness and related concepts relevant to gifted education. This chapter begins with an analysis of human nature, in terms of the different perceptions indicated by Muslim scholars. Through the works of respected Muslim scholars, the researcher provides an extensive examination of the concept of knowledge, its characteristics and means. After explaining the means of knowledge acquisition, the chapter considers such essential aspects of knowledge as spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and moral intelligence, modern Western concepts that are nonetheless integral to Muslim scholarship. The latter three features are essential to the development of a truly gifted individual, in the context of Islamic thought. Next, a precise analysis of Muslim scholarship allows the drawing of connections between knowledge, intellect and intelligence, spiritual intelligence, moral intelligence, and emotional intelligence, and the ways of incorporating them in childhood education and the school curriculum. The
chapter provides a thorough self-reflection on the essential elements of Islamic scholarship to be applied to the development of a sound gifted education strategy for Saudi Arabia. The final part of this chapter summarises the key themes and concepts discussed.

5.2 An Empirical/Analytic Review of Gifted Education in Islamic Scholarship across Time

As has already been clarified in Chapter 4, this way of knowing represents the initial analytical stage of gaining true knowledge, in accordance with the Habermasian methodology of “three ways of knowing”. This approach presupposes the collection and analysis of unbiased, free and objective knowledge that can be tested over and over again for the provision of sound empirical evidence. The requirement for this way of knowing is that the research questions are constructed for analysis with the assistance of empirical-analytic means, that is, largely through a combination of rationalistic analysis and quantitative research. This chapter contains a collection of viable objective information about the scope and timeline of Islamic scholarship in regard to giftedness, its likely influence on Western thought, and the course of Islamic thought’s development in regard to intellect, intelligence and giftedness.

5.2.1 Giftedness and Gifted Education in the Islamic Context

In order to study giftedness from an Islamic perspective, it is important to observe the way Muslim scholars described human nature and the various factors that influence it. Several Muslim scholars discussed aspects of human nature in different ways when trying to understand its complexity. Traditional Muslim scholars like Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058 - 1111), Jalaluddin Rumi (1207 - 1273), Ibn Khaldun (1332 -
Shah Waliullah (1703 - 1762), Jamal-ad-Din Al-Afghani (1838 - 1897) and Sayyid Qutb (1906 - 1966) stressed the influence that parents and education had on an individual’s development. They emphasized the importance of bringing up a child in the correct manner to ensure an inculcation of the right values.

In the Islamic context, education refers to a process that takes into account the entire person, including the spiritual, rational and social aspects. The purpose is to develop an integrated approach to teaching in order to develop a balanced personality. In an Islamic educational system, the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to create perfection in all aspects of human life. Humankind often needs to undergo spiritual and personal transformation in order to develop spiritually. Prior to proceeding with the discussion of the various intelligence types and educational curricula, it is essential to clarify the issue of human nature in relation to learning and knowledge acquisition.

**Human Nature.** An analysis of human nature was carried out by Professor A. R. Momin in his article “Homo Islamicus – Human Nature in Islamic Perspective” published in the IOS Minaret in 2009 (Momin, 2009). Professor Momin’s idea is that Islam offers a balanced and realistic view of human nature, as manifested by four approaches: the ennobling perspective, the duality and polarity of human nature, deterministic human nature, and the role of the social environment and education in the character formation. The first is an ennobling perspective of human nature based on quotes from various sources. Citations from the Qur’an show that humans have been created using the best of moulds and have been provided with authority over all living beings in the universe. Momin asserts that humans were created as self-conscious beings by God and his creation was for a noble purpose. At birth, all humans are innocent and free from original sin or guilt. Descending from Adam, the first human on
Earth, all people are equal before God. The scholar also points out that the human is ascribed to be God’s vice-regent in this world (Momin, 2009).

The second perspective concerns a form of duality or polarity in human nature. Momin (2009) mentions Qur’anic verses stating that humans were created from clay, a lowly material (Qur’an 23:12; 32:7). Then, God “breathed His soul into man” to produce a living matter (Qur’an 15:29). Momin (2009) asserts that there are two conflicting aspects of human nature: it is sublime and divine-like, on the one hand, and it is lowly and demonic, on the other. The scholar mentions the story of Cain and Abel in the Qur’an to demonstrate this duality in human nature. Humans have a tendency to be impatient, greedy and ungrateful, and the focus on their desires arouses their unfair behaviours (Qur’an 70:19; 45:23 in Momin, 2009).

The third perspective refers to the demonstration of human nature in a deterministic manner in Islam. It is apparent from Islamic belief that God granted human self-consciousness and the ability to reason and make moral decisions, as well as the right to choose between good and evil paths (Momin, 2009). The fourth perspective concerns the role that the social environment and education play in the development of human capabilities. Momin (2009) cites Prophet Mohammad’s saying that humans are born in a natural state and follow the teachings and religion of their parents. The Prophet also said that humans follow the path their friends have adopted and, hence, warned them against choosing the wrong friends. Islamic inductions also suggest an ethical code of conduct to develop human capabilities and to restrict the negative tendencies present in their nature (Momin, 2009).

Scholars have also given much consideration to the issue of human nature. For example, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali asserted that knowledge is initially contained in every human soul like seeds in the soil, so it should be cultivated and developed for it to
reach visible, conscious forms (Al-Ghazali, 1995). Moreover, Al-Ghazali (1995) believed in the high level of responsibility entrusted to parents in educating and developing their children, and the great potential of the family to direct the child’s personal growth and advancement.

According to Al-Ghazali (1995), the inherent nature of a child implies the capacity to take up the path of either good or evil. The way of a child’s upbringing and inner family environment determine the direction he/she takes. To prove his point, Al-Ghazali (1995) referred to the Prophet Mohammad’s words about a newborn’s primordial nature (fitra) at birth, with his parents shaping what faith he would turn out to possess. Al-Ghazali (1995) asserted that the training provided to a child by his parents and teachers was responsible for the child’s future success and happiness. If parents and teachers provide a child with a righteous life direction, the child is likely to achieve happiness in this life and in the hereafter. In the case of parental negligence and incorrect education, the child is unable to succeed in life. Al-Ghazali (1995) believed that the teachings of Allah are a primary value for the child’s early education, to provide them with knowledge of true happiness and the success required for the life prescribed by God.

Another scholar, Ibn Khaldun, wrote in his historical work, *The Muqaddimah*, that the human is inherently social, with both good and evil tendencies in his nature (Momin, 2009). From Khaldun’s perspective, humans were granted the ability to think, organize their associations with the world, and with other human beings, in accordance with the laws and regulations acquired by an individual through personal experience, particularly family and culture. Ibn Khaldun (1967) believed that humans possess no knowledge at birth and are just “raw materials” at that time. They slowly start to transform into a “form” because of the knowledge that they have gained over time
using their organs. He recognized humans as fundamentally ignorant, turning into complete humans only with knowledge accumulation (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

Shah Waliullah suggested that the human was created as self-conscious, with the ability to reason enabling him to develop a range of values, ideals and opportunities. In line with Waliullah’s thoughts, these characteristics are common for the entirety of humanity and are, hence, universal (Ahmad, 1994). The scholar argued that good and evil attributes are inherent in the human, creating a continuous source of internal tensions and unrest. Factors like reason, experience, revelation and learning produce impacts on various human actions. The intricacy of human nature was also discussed by Jalaluddin Rumi, a Sufi mystic of the thirteenth century, who claimed that the human spiritual experience gained through education could carry any individual beyond mundane concerns and could help find life’s meaning, value and direction (Helminski, 2000). He also pointed out in Fihi ma Fihi that human nature has dual aspects, juggling between the angelic world and the human world (Momin, 2009).

In his thesis for a Doctor of Philosophy degree at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Ahmed Bouzid (1998) referred to the idea of Sayyid Qutb that the human’s inherent nature is positive, encouraging him to live a balanced and sustained life of happiness with regard to his impulses. In his analysis of human nature, he said that God created this world with pure intentions and made humans the most respected of all of His creations. God gifted people with a nature that is essentially good and positive. According to Qutb (1992):

it is the very nature of the Islamic concept to encourage and urge human beings to do something positive and productive, because according to the Islamic concept man is an active agent and not a passive recipient on this earth … He is the deputy of Allah on earth, and he has been made the
deputy in order to actualize the way prescribed by Allah, which is to initiate, build, and to change and to make developments in the land in reliance on the natural forces that Allah has created to be of use to human beings in their work. (p. 158)

As is seen in this quotation, this prescribed nature directs humans towards actions that ensure their happiness in this world. Otherwise, the human becomes a victim of unhappiness and sorrow (Bouzid, 1998).

On the contrary, Jamal-ad-Din Al-Afghani saw humans as evil by nature, indicating that only through knowledge and education might an individual move away from his inhumane impulses. Al-Afghani (in Bouzid, 1998, p. 45) wrote that “man is very cruel and ignorant”, and since the beginning of time it is cruelty that leads man to “the destruction of the social order”. In the “Commentary on the Commentator”, Al-Afghani wrote that it is through education that man acquires his morals and habits: “knowledge protects humans against their inherently inhumane nature” (Bouzid, 1998, p. 45).

To sum up, Muslim scholars hold different views on the inherent characteristics of human nature when speaking about self-consciousness, but all agree on the significance of education. The above overview of their conceptions allows us to establish a common position that humans do not possess any knowledge at birth. Knowledge comes from experience across multiple social environments – parents, family, culture and school – which influences their life choices, in terms of good or bad. In addition, Ibn Khaldun (1967) focused on the role of God in an individual’s acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, the importance of knowledge and education for the development of humans cannot be ignored. In line with this, the next section deals
with Al-Ghazali’s Theory of Knowledge, clarifying the different kinds of knowledge that exist in the world, and the ways that they can be acquired.

5.2.2 Al-Ghazali’s Theory of Knowledge

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali was one of the greatest theologians, jurists and philosophers of the twelfth century. According to his theory of knowledge, the most significant attributes possessed by the human are awareness and knowledge, making him essentially self-conscious. The scholar stated that knowledge exists in two forms: existential and formal. Formal knowledge refers to being aware of the apparent principles of the form, enabling different kinds of experience and intuition to be understood (Al-Ghazali, 1988). In other words, experience is the prerequisite for human knowledge. Existential knowledge refers to an understanding of the distinction between the knowledge content and its form. This kind of knowledge allows humans to comprehend objects and events introduced or observed through experience and intuition (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

In turn, existential knowledge takes two forms, phenomenal and spiritual. The former pertains to knowledge of the physical world, while the latter implies knowledge of spiritual realities like the soul or the Supreme Lord (Al-Ghazali, 1988). Both kinds of existential knowledge possess spiritual knowledge obtained through the greatest form of awareness, traditionally through intuition. While some people simply receive this knowledge, the majority need to obtain it through a high-degree of self-cultivation (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

In an expansion of his ideas, Al-Ghazali (1996) stated that the human obtains knowledge from two sources. First, human beings possess senses and the ability to reason, enabling them to discover the world. Second, the divine characteristics of revelation and insight allow the human to learn of the invisible world. In regard to the
disparity of their source, consistency or methodology, it is not appropriate to link these
two forms of knowledge. Only true dedication and commitment to Qur’anic guidelines
equips the human with a true knowledge about the self and the world, enabling him to
better learn about God, to come closer to Him, and thus, to make him happier (Al-
Ghazali, 1996).

As a scholar and teacher, Al-Ghazali (1988) focused on the issue of knowledge
in terms of its concepts, methodologies, classes and objectives. The scholar believed
that true knowledge refers to knowledge of God, His books, His messengers, earth and
heaven, along with the religious knowledge revealed to the Prophet. Al-Ghazali (1988)
attributed this kind of knowledge to religious science, despite the fact that worldly
matters are a part of this knowledge.

In his analysis of knowledge, the scholar determined the worth of learning from
its usefulness and authenticity. Thus, religious sciences possess a greater worth than
secular sciences since they focus on the permanent values of the temporary world, and
possess greater truth, in comparison to secular sciences (Al-Ghazali, 1988). However,
this argument does not mean that secular sciences should be entirely disregarded as
they are highly significant for a society requiring practical knowledge, such as in
medicine and linguistics. Al-Ghazali (1964) distinguished various scientific categories.
The first grouping of sciences, based on their ‘nature’, consists of the theoretical
(theological and religious sciences) and the practical (home economics, ethics, and
politics). Another group of sciences, determined according to their ‘origin’, includes
the revealed sciences obtained from the prophetic revelations (unity of God, traditions
and morality) as well as the rational sciences obtained through human logic and thought
established the grounds for other scholars and their theories of knowledge, its
definition, and ways of obtainment, which will be discussed below.

5.2.3 Definition of Knowledge (Ilm)

Indebted to the ideas of Al-Ghazali, the Muslim scholars Al-Farabi and Ibn
Khaldun provided their understandings of the concept of knowledge and the
classification of its types. Prior to discussing the different scholarly views, it is essential
to clarify the meaning implied by the Arabic word *ilm* (“knowledge”). Knowledge, in
Islamic terms, goes beyond its literal definition in English and other Western
languages. All of the meanings integrated in the Arabic *ilm* are not completely covered
in the term “knowledge” (Akhtar, n.d.). *Ilm* is a comprehensive term covering aspects
of theory, education, and action. Hence, knowledge holds a supreme worth for
Muslims, affecting all dimensions of Muslim intellectual, religious and political life by
its all-encompassing nature (Akhtar, n.d.).

There are three categories of *ilm*: information (contrasted to ignorance), the
laws of nature, and knowledge by inference. It is compulsory for everybody to acquire
the first two kinds of knowledge because of their real-life applicability and usefulness
(Akhtar, n.d.). The third kind of knowledge refers to knowledge obtained through
speculation and inference, and has an element of doubt. This kind of knowledge is, at
times, necessary for knowledge as a means, but not as an end in itself (Akhtar, n.d.).

The greatest contribution to the study of knowledge in its comprehensive Arabic
meaning was made by Abu Nasr Muhammad Al-Farabi (870 - 950), the earliest Islamic
intellectual philosopher whose works influenced subsequent Islamic thinkers. In *The
Intellect and the Intelligible*, Al-Farabi (in Hammond, 1947) indicated that a human’s
first knowledge is a percept, knowledge about the self without any abstract framing. In
other words, there is no universality involved in one’s individuality. Following sensation, knowledge is the basis of every idea produced by the human mind.

However, Al-Farabi (in Hammond, 1947) pointed out that the percept comes before the concept, that is, the knowledge of the entire universe. According to this idea, this form of knowledge instantly comprehends principles of science without contemplation. Therefore, in the hierarchy of value, a human mind places an individual over the universe and its laws. Therefore, things entering the intellect are analysed accordingly after sense-perception. Al-Farabi (in Hammond, 1947) signified the incomplete nature of the percept. An individual can only be known entirely in relation to other individuals, which actually means that one needs to think about it (Hammond, 1947).

In *Kitab ihsa’ al-ulum*, Al-Farabi provided his classifications of knowledge, distinguishing the science of language, the science of logic, the mathematical sciences, physics and metaphysics, and civil science (or political science), jurisprudence and scholastic theology (Al-Farabi, 1996).

His follower, Ibn Khaldun, determined three kinds of knowledge consistent with several “degrees of thought”. The first kind refers to practical knowledge that is the result of a “discerning intelligence”, allowing the human to behave in a restricted way in this world. The second kind of knowledge pertains to things that humans must do and those they must avoid doing, classifying things that are good or evil. This knowledge is obtained through one’s practical intelligent ability to identify his or her relationship with surrounding objects and phenomena (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). The last kind of knowledge is theoretical knowledge, implying all things present in this world and obtained through one’s speculative intelligence (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).
Different definitions and dimensions of knowledge have been put forward by Al-Ghazali in his writings. In his conceptualization of knowledge, Al-Ghazali (1988) determined a dimension called gnosis (ma’rifah), whose function is to recognize an object on the basis of an individual’s experience with that object and as a feature or quality. Analysing the ideas of Al-Ghazali, Rosenthal (1970) explained his position as being that knowledge solely refers to an image (mithal) entering the soul and corresponding to the image already existing in one’s sense perception of a known object.

In his book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, Iqbal (1982) stated that knowledge is not restricted to any particular source. Instead, there are several sources through which it can be acquired. The scholar started from sense-perception, followed by intellect, and finally reached love, with this last term discussed in a wide sense of religious practice, instinct, and prophetic revelations (Iqbal, 1982). The discussed evolution of Muslim scholarly thought in relation to the issue of knowledge proceeds with a detailed overview of the merits and significance of knowledge acquisition.

### 5.2.4 Role of Intellect

The Arabic concept of *ilm* (“knowledge”) is in strong correlation with the word *al-aql*. In fact, the term *al-aql* refers to both reason and intellect, though considering the differences between the two terms as well as the relationship between reason and intellect. The word *al-aql* in Arabic comes from the root ‘*ql*, which essentially means “to bind” through keeping a human’s connection to God (Nasr, 1979). The fact that a human is granted *al-aql* means that he can obtain a part of knowledge, *al’ilm*, which is the ultimate authority of God alone. The significance of having *al-aql* is apparent in the
context that the primary role of al-aql and “intellection” (ta’aqquq or fafaqquh) lies in a person’s religious life and salvation (Nasr, 1979).

The word aql (“intellect”) was explained by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (1263 - 1328) in several of his works, including Risalah Fil-Ruhwal-Aql and Bughyatul-Murtaad (a negation of the Philosophers and Sufis). The following four areas provide a comprehensive explanation of the situations for which the word aql is used:

1) It refers to an inherent attribute of a human, because of which he/she can comprehend various issues; this is a facility that resembles the ability of being able to use ears for hearing and eyes for vision.
2) It refers to the most basic and essential knowledge that is accepted by all people possessing a reasoning ability (aql). For example, the fact that two is larger than one and the whole is bigger than its parts on its own.
3) It refers to the examining knowledge that consists of (a) observation and presumption or deduction, or (b) hands-on experience.
4) It refers to actions that are required when one possesses knowledge. (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 2001)

In addition, the scholar asserted that:

when [the issue is] like this: [citation of verses pertinent to reason (aql) in the Holy Qur’an], then the term aql does not mean knowledge (ilm) that is not acted upon by the one possessing it nor does it mean action without possessing knowledge. Instead, it means knowledge that is acted upon and acting upon knowledge. (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 1988)
Al-Farabi, in *The Intellect and the Intelligible*, developed his concept of intelligence with different connotations of the term “intellect” as normally used in speech and philosophical discussions (in Hammond, 1947). Al-Farabi stated that:

…an intelligent man refers to a man of reliable judgement, who is aware of the things that have to be done as they are right and those that have to be avoided as they are wrong. Such a man is different from a crafty man who uses his mind to come up with evil objectives. (Hammond, 1947, n.p.)

According to Al-Farabi, the term “intellect” is used by theologians to refer to the ability to challenge the legitimacy of statements, to either accept them as the truth or deny them as being false (Hammond, 1947).

In his philosophy, Al-Farabi referred to Aristotle’s book of ethics, dwelling on the intellect of moral truths to recognize it as a part of the soul undergoing a “moral experience”, where the human makes efforts to discern acts that need to be done from those which need to be avoided (in Hammond, 1947). Furthermore, Al-Farabi discussed the intellect proper as being of two kinds: first, a speculative intellect that refers to a concerning intellect that deals with what is above oneself; and, second, a practical intellect refers to a motive power dealing with the sensitive world. In addition, Al-Farabi divided the speculative intellect into four aspects of the soul: the passive and active intellects, the acquired intellect, and the actual intellect (in Hammond, 1947).

Al-Ghazali also investigated the concept of intellect, determining its four features in Chapter 7 of *Ihya*:

1) The first referred to the quality (*wasf*) that makes humans distinct from animals. References are made to Al-Muhasibi, according to
whom intellect is inborn (gharizah), which is like a light that shines unto the heart and enables the learner to comprehend.

2) The second aspect refers to essential truths that become evident during the stage of adolescence, since it is then that the intellect completely develops. This is called the awareness of the impossible; for example, the knowledge that the same person cannot be at two places at the same time.

3) The third aspect refers to the knowledge that is obtained through spiritual and worldly experiences, and the contact of humans with their surroundings.

4) The fourth and final aspect put forward was that knowledge refers to the extent in one’s life to which the human is capable of ascertaining the outcomes of his/her actions. This intellect allows the person to suppress inappropriate desires. (Al-Ghazali, 1997)

According to Al-Ghazali, the first two forms of intellect are innate characteristics (bittab’) while the other two can be acquired (bil’iktisab) (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

After looking at the views of Ibn-Taymiyyah, Al-Farabi, and Al-Ghazali, one can see that Muslim scholars use the term “intellect” to refer to the human ability to reason and make judgements. Understanding the role of the intellect suggested by Muslim scholars allows a discussion of the development of a spiritual and intellectual curriculum from the Islamic perspective.

5.2.5 Spiritual and Intellectual Curricula in the Islamic Context

In the Islamic context, education refers to the process that takes into account the entire person, including the spiritual, rational and social aspects. Syed Muhammad Al-Naqib Al-Attas pointed out that the purpose of the integrated approach to education in Islam is to create a “balanced growth of the total personality … through
training Man's spirit, intellect, rational self, feelings and bodily senses … such that faith is infused into the whole of his personality” Al-Attas, n.d., p. 158). In the Islamic educational system, the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to create perfection in all aspects of human life. According to the Islamic theorists, Prophet Mohammad is the greatest and most valuable model of perfection, and the purpose of Islamic education is to motivate people to spend their lives in a similar way to the Prophet. According to Sayyed Hossein Nasr (1979, n.p.), education provides happiness to mankind and its “ultimate objective is the abode of permanence and all education indicates the everlasting world of eternity”.

According to Al-Ghazali (1996), there are five essential elements that need to be incorporated into education: religion, soul, intellect, resources and family integrity. He supported the view that any material encouraging these elements might be beneficial for society, while any matter hampering the fulfilment of these elements might damage society. The scholar acknowledged these concepts as universal and hence served as foundation blocks for all societies. The curricula objective formulated by Al-Ghazali (in Alkanderi, 2001) concerns the creation of responsible individuals to prepare them for life after death. Hence, these essential elements should be incorporated into the educational system to assist a society in developing humanistic and educated citizens (Alkanderi, 2001).

The educational philosophy of Al-Ghazali (1988) was grounded on the assumption that it was important for humans to be taught the distinction between things important for survival in the world and things driving a person to a higher level of spiritual development, with knowledge of the essential things for human living and evolution (Dakhil Allah, 1996). In line with these ideas, Al-Ghazali implicitly suggested a curriculum incorporating the following components: a love of spirituality,
the essentials of worship, and the right social conduct. He appealed to parents to disapprove of habits like gluttony when instructing children to avoid overeating. The scholar taught that children should be brought to be grateful for everything given by only providing them with bread at times (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

Al-Ghazali (1988) divided his course content into two important groups of subjects: religious sciences (obligatory upon individuals) and intellect (practical) sciences (obligatory upon the community). Community obligations were further divided into religious and non-religious categories. Within the field of religious studies, the theoretical (*kalam*) as well as the practical (religious dedication, ethics and politics) were included. Al-Ghazali (1988) also recommended the teaching and learning of language and grammar in the correct way to make it easier to comprehend the religious sciences. He also incorporated logic into his curricula with the purpose of serving as a means of thought processing, declaring that “nothing in logic is relevant to the religious by way of denial of affirmation” (Watt, 1996, n.p.).

As a consequence of human social evolution, the advancements of science and technology have had an impact on the development of Islamic scholarship. Thus, Sayyid Qutb interpreted the Qur’anic text by asserting that, under some circumstances, scientific progress is considered to be a form of worship of God and an essential purpose of human creation. He claimed all Muslims were ordained to seek scientific knowledge; this idea was revolutionary for the time and contrasted with traditional Islamic views on education (Murr, 2004). Similar to Qutb, Al-Afghani (1838 - 1897), an Islamic reformer who promoted scientific knowledge and struggled against the “static backwardness” of Islam (Bouzid, 1998, p. 24), also emphasized the importance of modern science and technology, and applied them to his own religious contexts. The scholar believed that only scientific and technological development could remove the economic and cultural
backwardness faced by Muslims in the nineteenth century. However, he indicated that Islam consisted of strong spiritual and moral values and confirmed the importance of incorporating these values into the scientific and technological powers to foster the development and growth of Muslim communities (Tariq, 2011). These ideas have become strongly embedded in Islamic education and have a potentially strong strategic value for Saudi education as well, since they place a priority on the recognition and development of giftedness in sciences and technologies, and care for the holistic educational process that can advance a person to unprecedented heights of his or her growth. This is what was essentially laid out by Mawhiba as a new policy of individual recognition and advancement of talents, signalling the profound change in perceptions of giftedness and the approach that should be taken towards a talented student in the Islamic educational context.

The views of different Muslim scholars, particularly Al-Ghazali, show that in the Islamic context, education refers to a process that takes into account the entire person, including the spiritual, rational and social aspects. Hence, Islamic education requires an integrated approach to teaching to develop the human personality in a balanced manner. In the Islamic educational system, the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to create perfection in all aspects of human life. Humans often need to undergo a spiritual and personal transformation in order to develop themselves spiritually. For this purpose, the next section deals with the aspect of spiritual development.

5.2.6 Spiritual and Personal Transformation

The key contribution to the conceptualization of spiritual and personal transformation was made by two prominent sub-continental Muslim scholars, Maulana
Mawdudi (1903 - 1979) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877 - 1938). In his philosophy, Mawdudi (1948) relied on the position of Islamic followers that the human soul was chosen by Allah to be His *Khalifah* (vice-regent) on Earth. Allah awarded people with a certain degree of authority and obligations that can be fulfilled with the most appropriate physical frame that He granted to humankind. Thus, the sole purpose of the human body is to enable the soul to use it when exercising its authority and fulfilling its responsibilities.

According to Mawdudi (1948), the body is not the soul’s prison, but its workshop, and the soul can only develop through this workshop. This world, therefore, is a place where humans have to make efforts to perform their obligations towards Allah. Hence, human spiritual development should not involve the human in isolating himself from the workshop. Instead, the human should stay involved and make the best possible efforts to answer all questions pertaining to each and every aspect of life. Growth essentially takes place within this life, and not in spiritual isolation (Mawdudi, 1948).

Recognizing that the human is Allah’s vice-regent in this world, Mawdudi (1948) formulated human responsibility as being accountable to God for all the activities he/she pursues. He is obliged to use all powers granted to him according to the will of God. Hence, human efforts should aim at regulating worldly affairs in a manner in which Allah wants them to be managed. The more focused the human is towards serving Allah with a sense of accountability, obedience and humility, the closer he/she is to Allah. Mawdudi (1948) asserted that spiritual development in Islam renders closeness to Allah, pointing out that Islam takes disobedience to Allah as the beginning of the human’s spiritual decomposition and downfall.
Hence, from the Islamic perspective, the activities performed by a religious man and those pursued by a secular man are the same, with the religious man showing a greater vigour. The kind of association they have with Allah differentiates their actions, as well as the purpose of their actions (Mawdudi, 1948). A religious man is conscious of the fact that he is accountable to God and aims to achieve God’s pleasure through undertaking actions in compliance with religious teachings. In his turn, a secular person shows indifference towards Allah, with his actions driven by personal motives (Mawdudi, 1948). This distinction in motivation makes the entire life of a religious man a spiritual venture, and, on the other hand, a life deprived of spirituality for a secular man.

Mawdudi (1948) argued that the path of spiritual development and transformation deems the human’s faith to be the first requirement. A human’s heart and mind always needs to be conscious that their sole master is Allah, and all their efforts need to be geared towards serving God. The second phase involves obedience (it~‘at), which implies that the human needs to acknowledge complete submissiveness to Allah. The third stage refers to taqw~ (Allah-consciousness) that is an actual expression of one’s belief in Allah in everyday life. Humans should show willingness to point out the difference between the lawful and the unlawful and the good and bad things. The final phase is about ihs (godliness), illustrating the human’s success in achieving the greatest degree of excellence in words, actions and feelings, which aligns his will with the will of Allah and creates harmony between the human and the best capacity and knowledge. Mawdudi (1948) claimed that only this kind of human is likely to attain the highest peak of spirituality and become closest to Allah.

Muhammad Iqbal created his philosophy of the self (Khudi) to study human nature. The scholar sought to ascertain the advancement of human beings, or how the
“self” or “ego” moves forward to obtain great heights. Iqbal (1982) believed that *khudi* is the source of our entire existence and only human ego has the ability to become a permanent element in the universe if it embraces a particular kind of life. According to Iqbal’s viewpoint, the ego can evolve, develop and succeed, as well as deteriorate, degenerate and fail. The human self enjoys the central position in the universe and associates itself with the Ultimate Ego that is God Himself. Iqbal (1982) asserted that ego rises until it reaches the state of perfection in humans. He stated that this is the reason the Qur’an mentions that the Ultimate Ego is closer to the human than his own jugular vein.

In support of his philosophy, Iqbal (1998) distinguished the three stages passed through by an ego to attain the peak heights of perfection. His *Asrar-e-Khudi* provides a detailed discussion of these stages, indicating that they are actually different spiritual stages which the ego has to go through during its spiritual development, which are:

- *Ita’at*, or obedience to the Divine Law;
- *Dabt-e-Nafs*, or self-control, which is the greatest form of self-consciousness or egohood; and,
- *Niyabat-e-Ilahi*, or the vicegerency of God. (Iqbal, 1998)

The scholar asserted that human ego can reach the state of immortality if it follows a particular life pattern which allows it to come in touch with the ultimate source of existence, God Himself. Achieving this state of permanence means that the self needs to be perfected in line with the divine will. Hence, Iqbal (1998) insisted that one needs to get to “know” his inner self, which had been ignored for a long time, having been believed to be a material entity. In other words, Iqbal (1998) asserted that human beings are not just material beings with a non-material element: “The entity referred to as man is body when they are considered as behaving in accordance with the
external world; when considered from behaving in accordance with the ultimate objective; it is referred to as mind or soul” (Iqbal, 1998, p. 50). Therefore, human beings possess an element which represents itself and experiences reality in a way that is quite distinct from the bodily aspect of human composition; this non-corporeal aspect of humans is the soul. The body and soul exist together as a complete unit. Therefore, the Iqbalian “self” refers to a being which consists of these two crucial compounds that have to grow together and work in harmony with each other to strengthen human personality (Iqbal, 1998).

In its turn, the spiritual development of humans has a collective nature as well. To ensure that the khudi undergoes development, an individual must become aware of the tension between the individual and collective dimensions in order to handle this tense state (Iqbal, 1998). The process of self-realization involved in an awareness of the existence of such a tension is obligatory. Thus, an individual intending to attain the state of perfection essentially needs to create a balance between his individual and collective ego (Iqbal, 1998).

There is a continuous interaction between the individual’s ego and the environment, creating the ideal opportunity for individuals to indulge in self-assessment. In their interactions with the environment, the individual should consider the “selves” of others in the environment (Iqbal, 1998). It is important to note that it is the individual’s ego which is stressed initially. When the individual’s ego manages to acquire self-realization and self-comprehension to a certain extent, the human gains the capability to truly comprehend and constructively get involved in the individual egos of others. It means that when the ego has attained self-respect, self-love, and self-affirmation, it becomes able to offer love and respect to the selves of others (Iqbal, 1998). Therefore, spiritual development depends on knowing oneself.
Both Mawdudi and Iqbal stressed the importance of having a strong belief in, and commitment to, God’s presence in seeking to attain the peak of spirituality. These Islamic teachings on spirituality and personal development laid the ground for the conceptualization of education that will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.7 Islamic Teachings of Education

Since their inception, Islamic teachings have stressed the importance of obtaining education and knowledge through two main Islamic sources, namely, the Qur’an (the word of Allah) and the Hadith (the teachings of Prophet Mohammad). In relation to education, the Holy Qur’an has several verses acknowledging the different levels of intellectual capability: “It is He who hath made you the inheritors of earth: He hath raised you in ranks. Some above others, that He may try you in the intelligence He hath given you” (Qur’an, 6:165). In another verse, Allah affirms disparities in people’s abilities – mental, physical and knowledge: “Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are blessed with understanding that receive admonition” (Qur’an, 39:9). Inspired by Allah’s word, the prophet Mohammad said “to seek knowledge [is] obligatory for every Muslim” (Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74).

Relying on the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith, Arab and Islamic scholars have always put much worth on knowledge. The Islamic religion values not only education, but also the various dimensions of human intelligence. Thus, in Islam, not being highly intelligent does not mean that people are not required to fulfil their own potential. The prophet Mohammad encouraged everyone to seek knowledge from childhood until death. The prophet Mohammad stated that the “seeking of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim man and woman” (Wafi, 1967, n.p.). Also, he emphasized
that there should be equal learning opportunities for all people, male and female, rich and poor, young and old.

Both the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith stress the importance of learning. Through the Angel Gabriel, Allah revealed the very first word to the prophet Mohammad, which was *Iqra* ("read") (The Holy Qur’an, 96:1). Hence, the acquisition of literacy and religious knowledge is regarded as highly important in Islam. Allah requires all Muslims to be intelligent contributors to society, reading, learning, and acquiring knowledge. According to Islamic principles, Allah provided human beings with all the required faculties and senses to live on and develop the earth: “Say it is He Who has created you, and endowed you with hearing (ears), seeing (eyes), and hearts, little thanks it is ye give” (Qur’an, 67:23). So, every individual in Islamic society is required to fulfil his or her intellectual potential.

In his philosophy of education, Iqbal referred to the Qur’an and the Hadith to assert lifelong human learning as the basis of the Islamic concept of knowledge acquisition. A set of laws adopted in Islam demonstrate the lifelong process of knowledge seeking as well. Therefore, the Islamic ideal of acquiring knowledge and education is quite comprehensive, implying the development of skills and attitudes. It is important to be perceived as a responsible human who is aware of the significance of life. Education is the aspect that distinguishes humans in this regard. A continuous development to keep up with the world’s changes is required for a lifelong education. Such a pursuit of knowledge ensures the development of an integrated culture and a more secure and comfortable life for humanity (Basharat, Iqbal & Bibi, 2011). The achievement of a lifelong pursuit of education is associated with spiritual and intellectual development in Islam, which is discussed in detail below.
5.2.8 Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in Islam

In Islam, the term spiritual intelligence is most closely represented by the spiritual heart, the *qalb*. Scholars like Al-Ghazali and Iqbal used the term *qalb* to refer to the self (*nafs*). According to the Sunni tradition, the *qalb* means a divine delicacy which is linked to a physical organ, which is the heart, and it is within this delicacy that the true nature of the human exists. Without this spiritual gift, there would not be much difference between humans and animals. Different names are given to this spiritual substance, depending on the role it plays. Hence, the terms *aql, qalb, nafs* and *roh* presented in the Holy Qur’an mean intellect, heart, soul, and spirit, and all refer to the same spiritual substance (Al-Ghazali, 1964).

A study of Iqbal’s philosophy of the “self” provides a great insight into emotional and spiritual intelligence from the Islamic perspective. Iqbal (1998) shows how self-reflection is important for acquiring knowledge and attaining peace and salvation. The PhD dissertation “Development of Metaphysics in Persia” (1908) by Muhammad Iqbal is an extensive resource through which one can gain access to important knowledge pertinent to the Muslim heritage. The philosophy of selfhood (*Khudi*) formulated by Iqbal encourages the human to indulge in a critical evaluation of one’s self, and to adopt a cautious approach when ascertaining ego ideals for oneself. It is a primary responsibility of Muslims to look for their identities (Arif, 2010). This identity does not only refer to becoming “physically aware” of oneself in regard to his/her Muslim name, Muslim parents, and Muslim region. In an extended version, it implies gaining awareness about the beliefs and principles of the Islamic system that every Muslim is supposed to adhere to. Iqbal’s philosophy teaches Muslims how they can enhance their personal capabilities by inculcating Muslim values like *Adl, Taqwa,*
and *Ihsan* in their personalities. When Muslims indulge in activities that are consistent with these values, they develop a feeling of cohesion and unity (Arif, 2010).

In his philosophy, Iqbal analyses the school of thought of Shahab ud Din Suhrawardi and his followers, Ibn Arabi and Jalaluddin Rumi. These scholars preferred intuition and revelation over rational empirical knowledge and sought self-reflection in the pursuit of knowledge. These ideas were expanded on later with the aim of creating a balance between “feeling” and “thinking”, and those who depended largely on intuition instead of sensory judgment. Ibn Arabi and his followers relied on the views of Socrates and Plato to “understanding the ‘self’ better to create a better understanding of God” (Arif, 2010, n.p.).

In addition to the focus on the requirements of personal existence, Ibn Arabi emphasised the importance of collective life, promoting knowledge acquisition and the enhancement of “personal competence” (Ibn Arabi, 1980). The scholar taught about the names of Allah as divine attributes that people relate to Him, signifying His absolute unity and ultimate command over the entire universe. These “names” are the divine decree, which Allah taught to Adam so that his offspring could live this life in the best manner. Hence, the lives of Allah’s Prophets illustrated the way of life ascribed by God to humans. For example, Joseph (*Yusuf*) presented the moral groundwork for an agrarian society, Moses (*Musa*) explained to humanity that the weak should be secured from the cruelty and oppression of dictators, and created the groundwork for civil liberties and human rights (freedom for all humans). Jesus (*Isa*) taught how to show care and compassion, neglecting personal desires for the sake of Allah. Eventually, the prophet Mohammad combined all attributes including the attribute of *Husn* (“beauty”), which is a natural link between the rules and regulations that dictate one’s life (Arif, 2010).
The perfect standard of life can be attained by showing tolerance and respect for a complete diversity in life and offering unconditional love and care for all living creatures. The life of the “group” is of a greater significance for ardent believers, in comparison to one’s “individual” life, which is in compliance with the values and beliefs taught by Islam (Chittick, 1998). Through such attributes, humans inculcate a sense of “social awareness” within themselves and, according to Ibn Arabi, only a person following these principles can be called a Muslim (Gardner, 1998).

In support of Ibn Arabi, Rumi posed a question: “Dost thou know why the mirror (of thy soul) reflects nothing? Because the rust is not cleared from its face.” (Nicholson, 1926, n.p.). It means that it is essential to learn what the mirror is, and why it has rusted and needs to be polished. According to Arif (2010), the mirror is the heart that gets filled with selfish desires. It gets caught up in a range of worldly gains by following fruitless pursuits that end up polluting the heart and eliminating its ability to offer help or assistance to fellow human beings. It also creates a dull mind that cannot question the things taking place around it (Arif, 2010). In his philosophy, Rumi said that the human heart needs rejuvenation and requires healthy and living “relationships”. Hence, it should be first emptied, and then filled with love for life and concern for all living beings. It is essential to create feelings of empathy through personal notions of right and wrong and good and evil to allow one to learn to “feel” about others and to do them good. Therefore, Jalaluddin Rumi promoted an idea that the heart is a distinct inner perspective which allows a person to understand elements of reality apart from those apparent to sense perceptions and the intellect. He asserted that the intellect restricts the living heart of an individual and keeps them away from the obscured riches that exist within. In his turn, Iqbal (1982) realized that intuitive intellect has a greater
worth than the rational, and asserted that thoughts comprehend reality partially, while intuition understands it in its entirety.

The heart needs to be made aware of the knowledge of God in order to be illuminated. The self needs to become aware of the singularity and supreme authority of the One Lord in order to become free of all the influences that come from outside of the human self, and going back to its innate nature (*fitrah*). When the human has faith in Allah, they develop intense feelings of love for, and fear of, God that helps to develop their inner personal gifts and keep them secure from being influenced by evil drives. The heart drives the human to love all the virtues and acts ascribed by Allah, while disliking activities forbidden by Allah (Abdullah, 2012). The unity with God inspires the human mind, fostering its spiritual and emotional intelligence, which are the subject of the following section.

5.2.9 The Dimensions of Emotional and Spiritual Intelligences in Islam

In Islam, emotional and spiritual intelligences refer to human growth, self-restraint, self-purification, God-consciousness, discipline, spiritual development, and a close association with God. Fatimah Abdullah (2012) distinguished the key dimensions of such emotional and spiritual intelligences as follows:

1) **Self-control or emotion**: Spiritual intelligence refers to a character’s maturity that depends on the capacity to control the self. This ability can be developed through spiritual maturity and discipline which enable the faithful to postpone the immediate fulfilment of their needs. In order to restrain emotions, a particular kind of knowledge of restraining the opposing power of the inner-self is required. (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968)

2) **Taqwa and self-awareness**: Self-awareness is created through *Taqwa*, which is the basis of emotional and spiritual intelligence.
Through it, one can carry on an analysis of oneself and be aware of one’s feelings as they develop; observe how the thoughts, feelings and reactions are related; evaluate different alternatives; identify strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate oneself realistically and positively. (Al-Jawziyyah, 1972)

Those who possess emotional and spiritual intelligence are in a constant state of positivity, which leads to greater satisfaction and well-being for humans, as compared to those who encounter feelings of disappointment, misery and anger (Al-Balkhi, 1984).

5.2.10 Defining Islamic Spirituality

In his article, Andrew Booso (2012) stated that there are two Arabic words defining Islamic spirituality: al-qalb, the heart, and al-nafs, the self or the ego. It has been stated by Abdal Qadir Isa in Haqa’iq ‘an al-tasawwuf that:

purification of the heart (tangiya al-qalb) and modifying the self (tahdhib al-nafs) form the most significant compulsory acts and belong to the most important Divine rulings, as apparent in the Book of Allah, the Sunnah traditions and the explanations of the scholars. (Booso, 2012, n.p.)

Al-Ashbah wa’il-naza’ir also indicated that: “with respect to the science of the heart (‘ilm al-qalb) and its illnesses, like envy (hasad), ostentation (riya’), conceitedness (‘ujb) and the like, Al-Ghazali said its learning is compulsory for all individuals (fard ‘ayn)” (in Booso, 2012, n.p.).

Tasawwuf is one of the most recognized terms used for defining Islamic spirituality, which is translated as “Sufism” in English. Some scholars refer to
tasawwuf as that field of Islamic spirituality in which no qualifications are required, rather than use it as a general term, which promotes the study of theology (‘aqidah), Sacred Law (fiqh) or the other sacred sciences (‘ulum al-din) requiring no qualifications (Booso, 2012).

It has been asserted by Ahmad Zarruq, in Qawa‘id al-tasawwuf, that tasawwuf is the science in which one seeks knowledge to purify the heart (islah al-qulub) and to turn solely towards Allah, the ‘Most High’ (in Booso, 2012). In al-Mugaddimah, Ibn Khaldun considered tasawwuf to be a part of the “Sacred Sciences” (al-‘ulum al-shariyya) and included it as being amongst the “truth” and “guidance” from historical times. Tasawwuf was considered by Zafar Uthmani, in I’la al-Sunan, to “come closer to God through knowledge and actions”, which meant that it “gives life to outward as well as inward” (in Booso, 2012, n.p.). The outward is represented by “good deeds”, and can be observed, while the inner is represented by “remembrance of Allah, depending on Him alone, inculcating oneself with praiseworthy traits (akhlaq) and purifying oneself from contaminating base traits” (in Booso, 2012, n.p.). In line with these ideas on spirituality, Islamic scholars determined a set of components comprising the notion.

5.2.11 The Components of Spiritual Intelligence in Islam

The spirituality and morality of human beings have always had a strong association within the Islamic tradition of religious education. An overview of multiple scholarly works on spiritual intelligence in Islam allows an identification of the following components:

- A search for unity behind the seeming diversity;
- Obtaining and analysing the spiritual messages of phenomena and happenings;
• Questioning and obtaining moral replies about the basis of essence (Origin and Resurrection);
• Recognizing the stability of essence and interpersonal associations on qualities of human integrity;
• Recognizing the virtue of developing from error to the implementation of forgiveness in interpersonal associations;
• Determining spiritual patterns and managing behaviour on the basis of a moral model;
• Identifying the respect and value of an individual to sustain and develop dignity;
• Identifying the process of spiritual development and altering internal and external elements to optimize the growth process;
• Recognizing the meaning of life, death, and other life events, like mental heaven and hell;
• Becoming aware of God’s existence in normal life;
• Comprehending art and innate beauty and acquiring a sense of appreciation and gratitude;
• Possessing talent, passion, and mysticism, where the source of knowledge is love, not inferences and assumptions;
• Possessing a poetic aptitude that can comprehend the underlying meaning of a poem; and,
• Obtaining an in-depth understanding of the Qur’an and the teachings of the Prophets. (Bagheri, Zarea & Esmaili, 2013, p. 3546)

Hence, the spiritual aspect is important for education in Islam, teaching children to distinguish right from wrong and encouraging them to do good while forbidding evil things. Spirituality gives a firm background for the moral growth of an individual, which is clarified further in the next section.
5.2.12 Moral Education from an Islamic Perspective

As reported by Gil’adi (1992) and Umaruddin (1970), in regard to the moral curriculum, Al-Ghazali’s objective was to create a balanced individual by ensuring a child’s access to good values. Al-Ghazali asserted that moral teachings could help in shaping human nature; the idea was fundamental to his view on a child’s upbringing. The scholar indicated that the natural tendencies and impulses of the human should not be completely restrained; instead, the focus should be on their right expression (Alkanderi, 2001). Children should be motivated towards things that are beneficial and restrained from things that might lead them towards immorality. In the context of the proper teaching of moderation to children (how to properly manage forces of desire), Al-Ghazali required initial demonstrations of desire, the passion to eat in particular, to be handled with early education and training in good eating habits. In order to highlight the significance of moderation, Al-Ghazali cited a verse from the Qur’an instructing Muslims not to be extravagant when eating and drinking (6:141) (Alkanderi, 2001).

Family was also seen by Al-Ghazali (1997) as an important part of child’s formal education; punishment being not typical in Islamic families, children were to be instructed about norms of virtuous behaviour, which was associated with natural personal growth and embracing of the universal Islamic values. From this viewpoint, Al-Ghazali again reaffirmed his ideas about the possession of initial knowledge and spirituality by all people from their birth, and their desire to develop that has to be promoted and directed both at school and at home. In connection with that, family may become an equal participant in the educational process, even before formal schooling begins.

Hence, a child’s acquaintance with moral obligations and the structure of faith should start early within the family, before schooling. Al-Ghazali (1988) indicated the
main responsibility of parents in instilling these attributes into their children was to teach their children correct behaviours and the things required to follow in order to succeed in life and after death. In order to ensure proper moral education from birth, a child’s wet nurse should adhere to Islamic teachings and traditions and not consume any unlawful foods. Al-Ghazali (1988) believed that such an approach to moral education produces a positive impact on the child’s life.

Relying on the ideas of Al-Ghazali, Hassan Al-Banna (1906 - 1949) formulated a range of elements of moral education to be incorporated in the Muslim educational system. His programme of study had four essential objectives:

- To spread and instruct Islamic values;
- To teach a high degree of moral standards;
- To establish a high respect for Islamic history; and,
- To create experts in all fields so that an era of Islamic renaissance could be initiated on a solid footing. (in Rafiabadi, 2007, p. 452)

### 5.2.13 Iqbal’s Philosophy on Moral Education

In his perspective on moral education, Iqbal determined that a “good man” is one whose life should not be stagnant but full of active struggles, creative and original, rather than routine. Iqbal considered creativity as the most significant and distinct gift given by God to His creatures, through which they can alter their crude world and inculcate it with order and beauty (in Abbas, 1989). Iqbal’s “good man” needs to apply his intelligence to a greater extent to utilize the forces of nature to enhance his knowledge and strength. According to Iqbal, one receives power through the intellect; however, it is possible to use this power only for improving humanity through reliance on love. This love refers to an active force that makes individuality worthwhile when implemented for valuable purposes. Hence, education should foster certain qualities to
develop a sensitive and strong personality, able to promote humanity and ideal morals and to fulfil life’s objectives. The development of such a personality includes courage, tolerance, and Faqr – the way leading true Muslims to closeness to Allah (Abbas, 1989).

Thus, Iqbal asserted that education should promote courage to develop a strong personality. According to him, fear is one of the most demoralizing emotions. While love enhances the self, fear weakens love and gives rise to different kinds of corruption within the individual (Abbas, 1989). Tolerance is another quality considered by Iqbal as very important for a good character. Any system of thought that emphasizes individuality considers this quality to be imperative. Iqbal stated that:

…the principle of ego sustaining deeds refers to respecting the Ego within me, as well as that in others which clearly shows that as long as education does not inculcate in us, a sense of respect for individuality of others, including their views, beliefs, thoughts and attitudes, there are going to be very weak and incomplete distinctions between our personalities. (Abbas, 1989, n.p.)

The tolerance suggested by Iqbal is a product of strength, not weakness. It is the tolerance of a human of strong faith who holds strong beliefs and is aware that others need to be respected. According to Iqbal, tolerance is the foundation of true humanity (Abbas, 1989).

Faqr is the third quality emphasized in Iqbal’s writings. There is no word in English that can fully explain this term. Promoting Faqr, Iqbal supported an active way of life, relying on the idea that the human’s greatest aspirations are likely to be affected by material possessions. The growth and progress of the spirit is often hampered by riches. Hence, Iqbal pointed out that when humans become involved in
conquering the world, they should remain detached from material things in order to protect themselves from becoming slaves of those things. Faqr refers to the contentment attained by providing selfless service to someone for a greater purpose, which is characterized by deliberate poverty and self-defiance (Abbas, 1989).

To sum up, Iqbal required the creation of an appropriate environment in schools to teach morality to children and to allow them to acquire this attribute. Schools have to offer opportunities pertaining to social life and to experiences. According to Iqbal, a teacher’s responsibility is to stimulate a child’s consciousness with respect to their relationship with the environment, thus leading them to the development of new and novel solutions. Therefore, teaching morality to students requires teaching them to be active participants, since the progress of individuality requires the intense involvement of the individual (Saiyidain, 1977). Therefore, the views of Al-Ghazali, Hassan Al-Banna, and Iqbal have all contributed to the formation of a complex, multi-dimensional approach to human education in the contemporary Islamic tradition, which makes it a distinct, spiritually and morally enriched paradigm as compared to the Western focus on formal assessment and intelligence quantification. In Islam, school curricula should embrace all these layers of human nature and should nurture their development equally, without prioritising intellect over morality and spirituality, which poses the core challenge for the design of a modern Saudi educational curriculum with the consideration of Western and Islamic views.

5.2.14 Summary

Similar to Western research and practice, Islamic scholarship considers giftedness as an intricate concept influenced by emotional, spiritual and moral intelligences. As the father of Islamic education philosophy, Al-Ghazali distinguished
four features of the intellect (aql): the quality wasf, which makes humans distinct from animals (inborn intellect (gharizah)); the essential truths evident at the stage of adolescence during the completion of intellectual development; knowledge obtained through spiritual and worldly experiences and social contacts; and, knowledge enabling analysis and decision-making (Al-Ghazali, 1997). These points reflect the different attributes of an intellectual person and the impact of spiritual, emotional, and moral intelligences on humans. In line with this idea, many Islamic scholars, like Abdullah (2012), Gil’adi (1992) and Umaruddin (1970), stressed the necessity to integrate spiritual and emotional elements in curricula, which has currently found its firm place in the Saudi educational tradition, but in separate forms of secular and religious education. Such an approach was repeatedly identified as flawed because of the holistic, multi-dimensional educational needs of gifted students. Therefore, there is a need to reform Saudi gifted education with these aspects and needs in mind so as to make it efficient and workable, ensuring students’ entire advancement and unrestrained development across all intelligence domains.

5.3 Historical/Hermeneutic Analysis of the Data Collected from the Islamic Scholarship on Gifted Education

5.3.1 Introduction

Islamic scholars have produced a range of ideas related to gifted education across time. This section examines the concept of knowledge, with respect to the Islamic literature review, and discusses the views of different scholars regarding the topic to determine the similarities and disparities within Islamic perspectives. It includes a discussion of the multiple knowledge types and means, such as knowledge,
intellect and spirituality, which appear to be universal concepts shared by Western scholars as well. Various Muslim scholars agree that education concerns the whole person, taking into account spiritual, rational and social characteristics, which means that knowledge, intellect and spirituality should be combined in the holistic educational process with strong social and cultural values. The idea is to teach in such a cohesive manner that a student’s personality undergoes a balanced development (Al-Ghazali, 1988). In the context of gifted education, Islamic scholarship recognized the following concepts: knowledge, intellect and intelligence, spiritual education, emotional education and moral education.

5.3.2 Knowledge

From the Islamic perspective, *ilm*, the Arabic term for knowledge, is more than just information or knowledge, as defined within contemporary educational literature (Bouzid, 1998). As already stated, it is divided into three categories: information, the laws of nature, and knowledge by inference. According to Islam, information and the laws of nature are immeasurable and must be learnt. As for knowledge by inference, it was optional as it is bound to possible doubt. Muslims consider knowledge to be extremely important and their entire life revolves around this learning (Bouzid, 1998). According to Al-Ghazali, the rationale for knowledge acquisition is to enable humans to excel in all aspects of life.

According to Al-Farabi, a person’s first knowledge is a “percept”, a basic knowledge that has not been spoiled by outside influences (Hammond, 1947). Therefore, the percept is present prior to a concept coming into a person’s life. However, a percept alone cannot make a person; there is an essential need for a person
to gain knowledge and experience in order to apply it to life to develop their identity (Hammond, 1947).

Al-Ghazali suggested that knowledge exists potentially in the human soul, like a seed in the soil. He believed that a child is a trust placed in parental hands to shape his/her innocent life through the ability to make impressions. What determines a child’s life path is the way they are raised and the society they are exposed to (Al-Ghazali, 1988). Moral education provided both to a child during the first years of life and in school teaching in adolescence determines their character and choice of life path, either good or evil. Other people in a child’s social circle, like friends, also have an impact on their behaviour. This idea explains the words of the Prophet Mohammad who advised people to avoid bad company and keep good friends (Momin, 2009). Therefore, through social interactions, a child learns the social norms, morals and culture that form a child’s thinking and life (Momin, 2009).

The same idea was offered by Ibn Khaldun who stated that when a person is born they have no knowledge whatsoever and have both good and evil inclinations (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). The surrounding culture and society, then, determines which of those inclinations win in the formation of human personality. In support of this position, Shah Waliullah (1703 - 1762) pointed out that experience and knowledge ultimately determines what actions a person takes (Momin, 2009). In Ibn Khaldun’s words, the human is merely “raw material” that, with time and exposure, gains knowledge and becomes successful. Though humans have the ability to think and work, they need experience and knowledge to polish and use it. Thus, knowledge is what converts an ignorant person into a useful, complete human being (Ibn Khaldun, 2005).

In contrast to scholars suggesting a human’s ignorance at birth, Sayyid Qutb proposed the idea of a human’s inherent good nature, allowing them to live happily.
Qutb called humans “respectable creations of God” and thus, intrinsically good (Bouzid, 1998). Contrary to Qutb, Al-Afghani considered humans to be naturally evil, as “cruel and ignorant”, and are transformed into respectable persons only by means of knowledge (Bouzid, 1998). Basically, knowledge is the shield that allows a person to survive suitably and to purge inherent inhumaneness. Despite the disparity in their perceptions of human nature, both positions stress the importance of knowledge in human development.

As mentioned by Al-Ghazali (1988), there are two ways of acquiring knowledge. The first means is the capacity to reason, which allows a person to make sense of the surrounding environment. The second means is the divine aspect of revelation, through which a human can discover the invisible world. However, these two methods cannot be interrelated. It is important to state that the human develops himself by learning the Qur’an, which contains true knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 1988). The philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal expanded on the idea, considering the existence of numerous sources of knowledge including, but not limited to, sense-perception, intellect and love (Iqbal, 1998).

In terms of true knowledge, most scholars share a belief that this is exclusively the knowledge given by God through the divine books, the prophets, the earth and heaven, and Muhammed’s teachings revealed to him by God (Al-Ghazali, 1988). This kind of knowledge is attributed to religious science, even though it explains worldly issues as well. The main goal for humans is to acquire happiness in the hereafter through love, commitment and service to God (Al-Ghazali, 1988). The key point here is that religious science is responsible for an individual’s spiritual and moral development and goes along with the secular sciences that are responsible for intelligence. However, the complexity of human nature has been much more fully
understood in the Islamic approach, ingraining the spiritual, moral and ethical aspects of education deeply into formal educational doctrines. Therefore, these experiences and best practices, though considered excessively reliant on the spiritual/religious component at the expense of formal sciences, should still be regarded with insight and respect by Western educators, since they offer a really helpful and workable multidimensional curriculum.

To sum up the above ideas, Islamic scholarship shares a belief that humans have no knowledge at birth, but acquire it through experiences, which indicates the important role of knowledge for everybody’s life. Fundamentally, humans are ignorant and only knowledge helps them develop into more refined beings. Regardless of initial inclinations, either good or evil, knowledge directs a person towards the right life path. As an individual becomes more knowledgeable, they develop an in-depth understanding of the difference between intellect and intelligence, which is discussed in the next section.

5.3.3 Intellect and Intelligence

As revealed in the above sections, intellect, in Arabic, is known as al-aql; the term unites both intellect and reason (Nasr, 1982). In contemporary Islamic scholarship, the words “intellect” and “intelligence” are used interchangeably though there are dissimilarities between the terms. The general meaning of the word relies on the idea of a human’s ability to gain knowledge and understand things due to God’s granting (Nasr, 1982).

The concept of aql gains considerable recognition and consideration among a variety of Muslim scholars. Aql can also examine knowledge based on observing and deducing the world by means of personal experience. Finally, it pertains to an
individual’s behaviour in relation to the possession of a certain kind of knowledge (Ibn-Taymiyyah, 2001).

Al-Farabi’s contribution to the concept of intellect and intelligence was the idea that an intelligent person is able to produce reliable judgements and arguments based on their knowledge of moral principles and standards (Hammond, 1947). Hence, an intelligent person uses the power of their mind to handle desires and evil inclinations. Referring to Aristotle’s ideas of intellect as a composition of moral truths, Al-Farabi recognized them as the part of the human soul responsible for undergoing a “moral experience”. The latter concerns cases when an individual uses intellect to distinguish between good and bad, to decide which actions to take, and which to avoid (Hammond, 1947). Al-Ghazali (1997) also contributed to the formulation of the definition and description of intellect within the Islamic perspective by defining its four features: quality (*wasf*); its ability to reveal essential truths to people; its acquisition through spiritual and worldly experiences; and, giving people an ability to ascertain outcomes of their actions. The above scholarly ideas have common grounds, in that the terms “intellect” and “intelligence” are not by any means synonymous, though they are mutually dependent. One’s dependence on intelligence acquired through personal experiences or careful mental administration, or even inherited biologically, does not guarantee profitable outcomes. Being in possession of a sizeable intellect does not mean that pure knowledge is enough. Therefore, it is essential to utilize both intellect and intelligence to obtain optimal results. Developing this point, the next section discusses the importance of spirituality and education, and how spiritually gifted individuals are bestowed upon with rewards from Allah.
5.3.4 Spiritual Education

The previous discussion has revealed the need for individuals to have both intellect and intelligence in order to succeed in life. In the Islamic perspective, human character is built through intelligence in its rational, social and spiritual aspects, ensuring a balanced personality. Spiritual intelligence assists a person in making right decisions. However, it is stated that gaining spiritual intelligence alone is not enough to ensure a happy afterlife. In fact, an individual must seek closeness, not only with the Creator, but also with the surrounding world (Alkanderi, 2001). Furthermore, while cultivating oneself during life, a person improves the community, society, and the world in general, as places worthy of residing in. Otherwise, a person is likely to damage society and people who are a part of it (Alkanderi, 2001).

In the context of spiritual intelligence, Al-Ghazali offered five elements to be incorporated in education: soul, resources, religion, family integrity and intellect (Alkanderi, 2001). The development of these traits is beneficial for an individual alone, and society at large. Ignorance of these spiritual aspects in education produces a negative impact on society (Alkanderi, 2001). Hence, the role of spiritual education is to enable individuals with the sense of responsibility required for life on earth and in the next life. The incorporation of these six aspects in the educational system is likely to lead to the birth of an educated society (Alkanderi, 2001). Spiritual intelligence is crucial for a person since it provides them with knowledge guiding their intentions and actions in the way ascribed by Allah. One’s knowledge and observance of the eternal truths and values ensures one’s survival and prosperity (Dakhil Allah, 1996).

In terms of its application, Al-Ghazali recommended that parents provide moral education to their children from the early years of life. He believed that the texts of the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith should be the main source of knowledge,
inspiration, and reference for children in their decision-making. Thus, the educational curriculum should place Arabic language learning at the top in order to provide an individual with the skills to grasp the teachings of Mohammad and Allah, and to make choices in life accordingly.

While supporting the ideas of Al-Ghazali, Mawdudi indicated that an individual’s soul should mature and develop through an active involvement in life to learn from experiences without any spiritual isolation. He reminded Muslims that Allah chose a human soul to act as His Khalifah on earth (Mawdudi, 1948). In line with this, the scholar stressed the individual’s physical aspect – the body. The sole authority of the soul serves to send commands to the flesh to carry out a particular act (Mawdudi, 1948). Hence, the human body and soul cooperate like a well-oiled machine, in which the body helps the soul to further develop.

Thus, it is in this present world that humans are required to carry out their obligations to Allah to the best of their abilities, which is why spiritual development cannot take place just by removing oneself from the world (Mawdudi, 1948). Therefore, it is essential for a person to get involved as much as possible in this world and look for answers to the entire wealth of life-relevant questions. In Mawdudi’s (1948) opinion, spiritual growth requires various life experiences and activities, but not spiritual seclusion. Hence, an individual is to learn and apply the teachings of Allah and Muhammed to live a decent life as a righteous member of society.

As a complex notion, spiritual development comprises four phases: faith, obedience, Taqwa and Ihsan. Faith is defined as an individual’s consciousness of the Creator, motivating their actions towards Allah’s will. Obedience is one’s total submission of the body and soul to Allah (Mawdudi, 1948). In its turn, Taqwa is one’s constant awareness of the existence and presence of God in daily life. At this stage,
individuals are able to classify things into those accepted or prohibited in Islam. Finally, *Ihsan* refers to the state where individuals achieve the height of godliness, displaying perfectness in using the right words, behaving in the best way, feeling what is appropriate, knowing their will, and focusing on their communication with God. The completion of these four stages ensures one’s achievement of the peak of spirituality (Mawdudi, 1948).

In conclusion, one might assert that spiritual development is not something that can be accomplished over a limited period of time. Instead, individuals should be constantly open to the idea of learning and experiencing all that the world has to offer. Besides, individuals should also be aware of Allah’s will to receive His approval of their actions and decisions. It is not expected that anybody can achieve a complete closeness with Allah immediately, but with effort and a willingness to do so, it is only a matter of time until it can be attained. In the next section, emotional intelligence is discussed in terms of an individual’s ability to relate well with their peers and other members of society.

5.3.5 **Wisdom**

Within the concept of spiritual intelligence and its importance to the development of a truly gifted person, Al-Ghazali determined a concept of wisdom. Through different experiences – either pleasure or suffering – sent by God to people, humans acquire a kind of wisdom embedded in those experiences directed towards life’s goal searching. In other words, Muslim spirituality is aimed at learning about Allah and achieving closeness with him, which illuminates a person with a light from God. As a result of one’s spiritual intelligence, a person “sees in everything its wisdom, its secret, and what is beloved to Allah in it” (Spevack, 2011, p. 243).
Wisdom also occupies a very important place in the Qur’an, the founding religious text of the entire Islamic civilization. Here, wisdom is referred to as *aql* and is characterized as the hidden power of thinking and logic, enabling its owner to discover unknown realities and distinguish them from the known ones. By means of applying wisdom, people can make wise conclusions and follow logical rules for living. Thus, because wisdom has such a high value, the Qur’an has many verses that emphasize its importance. For example, in one fragment, the Qur’an states: “Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are those that are deaf and dumb and do not reason” (8:22). This shows that clear reasoning, one of the attributes of wisdom, is an essential skill valued in Islam. Even more, the Qur’an identifies punishment for those who do not strive for wisdom and do not exercise it: “And it is not for a soul to believe except by permission of Allah, and He will place defilement upon those who will not use reason” (10:100). Hence, the presence of wisdom as a core valued skill in the Qur’an is indisputable, showing that all Allah-abiding Muslims should strive towards self-development and advance their wisdom, clear reasoning, logical skills, and intellect overall.

There is a firm presence of wisdom as a core concept in the Hadith as well, this document generally being the quintessence of Prophet Mohammad’s wisdom. Though one of the Hadith verses states that knowledge comes from Allah, another verse is even more eloquent about the importance of knowledge and wisdom: “The virtue of knowledge is more beloved to me than the virtue of worship, and the best of your religion is mindfulness (*al-wara’*)” (Elias, 2015). These are the words of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas who cited the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet, saying how much mindfulness and wisdom meant to him. Thus, following this quote, one can see how much wisdom really matters in Islam, and may get an idea of the importance of focusing on the cultivation of wisdom in each Muslim, following the call of Prophet Mohammad.
Hence, in Islamic scholarship, spiritual intelligence empowers the human mind with senses of generosity, mercy and wisdom. Spiritual transformation makes a person able to serve society, searching for ways and opportunities to please Allah. Wisdom drives human actions in compliance with the will, decree and design ascribed by Allah, reducing the effect of selfish personal motives (Spevack, 2011). In reference to Islamic provisions, wisdom is a complex concept comprising not only spiritual virtues, but also human self-awareness and emotional control, which are the subjects of the following section.

5.3.6 Emotional Intelligence

In his educational philosophy, Iqbal clarified the significance of self-reflection in gaining knowledge, and ultimately being able to achieve peace. Islam contains a complete instruction manual on how to lead a balanced life, to combine religious aspects with a practical life system determined by an individual’s social interactions, hence, instilling emotional intelligence (Arif, 2010). Although emotional intelligence has great importance in a person’s life, this aspect is largely ignored in academia, while other disciplines and concepts are emphasized (Arif, 2010). As indicated earlier, Islam requires one’s control over desires and emotions in order to take the right actions and to live in peace. Furthermore, Islam restricts the manifestation of uncontrolled emotions as extremes, whether positive or negative, that lead to destruction. The Islamic code of conduct puts a great significance upon emotional intelligence (Arif, 2010).

Emotional intelligence might be either gifted as an inherent quality or developed through skills and life practices. The ability for self-regulation is critical to a successful existence, where anger management, social intelligence and empathy assist in building positive relations with others (Arif, 2010). Therefore, education should
address the development of this intellectual gift to assist a person in enhancing character, controlling and purifying the self, and becoming closer to God (Abdullah, 2012). In addition to emotional self-control, scholars distinguish another aspect of the Emotional and Spiritual Quotient (ESQ) that is Taqwa, self-awareness. Fatima Abdullah (2012) explained these concepts, identifying self-control as an indicator of an individual’s maturation and ability to restrain oneself from evil. This quality could be gifted and this giftedness can be enhanced through discipline (Ibn Miskawayh, 1968).

As for Taqwa, it forms the foundation upon which emotional intelligence rests (Abdullah, 2012). By means of Taqwa, a person can evaluate their personality and listen to their conscience regarding their feelings. Once a person is able to recognise their feelings and is certain about them, they can make better personal decisions. A person is able to analyse their intentions and actions with reference to possible outcomes and consequences in order to make sound decisions (Al-Jawziyyah, 1972). Emotionally intelligent people are highly positive and able to take advantage of various life circumstances to achieve satisfaction. Otherwise, people suffer from disappointment, misery and sorrow (Al-Balkhi, 1984).

The Qur’an confirms the view that all humans make mistakes, which may arouse extreme emotions and the risk of making poor decisions based on emotion rather than intelligence. It is important for a person to realise that they live in a temporary world and decisions should not affect their hereafter, or the permanent life. Therefore, the ideas of Islamic scholars on the double nature of emotional intelligence (self-awareness and self-management) echo those of Western scholars like Hein and Goleman. It is possible to assert that both the Islamic and Western literatures present similar discussions on the essentials pertaining to emotions.
Both Western and Eastern scholarships recognize the need for emotional intelligence (Planalp, 1999; Lester, 2003). The Islamic religion singles out the importance of developing emotional intelligence in children. A holistic approach to educational planning and curricula should consider elements of emotional intelligence on equal terms with academic studies, in order to assist children in handling stress. This giftedness is critical to children who are expected to become valuable citizens of society. Along with emotional and spiritual intelligence, children require education in morality and ways of applying morals in their lives.

5.3.7 Moral Education

While emotional intelligence allows people to control their emotions and to influence others in a positive manner, spiritual intelligence clarifies what is good and what is wrong. These types of intelligence are complemented by moral intelligence, indicating honourable values that should drive one’s life and activity. Al-Ghazali proposed that a child should be taught morality so that he or she develops into a balanced person (Alkanderi, 2001). Through ethics and good teaching, a person’s nature can be moulded, therefore it is essential to raise children in a highly moral environment (Alkanderi, 2001). In fact, Al-Ghazali did not believe that children’s natural impulses should be absolutely controlled; instead, good, inherent values should be worked on, encouraged and improved (Alkanderi, 2001).

Motivation should be readily available for children whenever they move towards doing good, and at the same time they should be restricted from following the wrong path. There is a fine line between moral education and the harsh warnings that should be observed to achieve the desired result (Al-Ghazali, 1997). Parents should encourage a child’s understanding of why some behaviours are not appreciated, and
why their consequences are pitied. Furthermore, some prohibited acts are not evil and affect society, but poor habits that should be eliminated in early childhood (Alkanderi, 2001).

In his discussion of giftedness, Al-Ghazali (1988) stated that a child has an inherent aspiration for knowledge and can start learning right away. Hence, moral education should start from birth; it is unreasonable, and even dangerous, to wait until school, wasting time that could be utilised for a person’s moral education and the development of spiritual and intellectual capabilities. Al-Ghazali emphasized moral education, indicating it as the primary responsibility of parents in order to equip a child for a successful life on earth and in the hereafter. Such an Islamic cultural focus on inclusion of spirituality and morality, as inherent dimensions of education, poses certain constraints on the integration of Western educational perspectives into Saudi education, since the latter does not approach these dimensions with adequate prioritisation and importance.

Hassan Al-Banna also emphasized the development of moral values in children. According to him, moral education should instruct in Islamic values, ethics, history and culture in order to create professionals in every discipline and to create a firm basis for a period of Islamic renaissance (Rafiabadi, 2007). According to Iqbal, moral education should develop a sensitive and strong personality in order to improve humanity, along with accomplishing an individual’s life goals. Bravery, broadmindedness and Faqr are the qualities required for such a personality (Abbas, 1989). Bravery combats the fears that can demoralize a person to a great extent, bringing them down and making them immoral. Broadmindedness allows the development of a good character and identity, strengthening a person, and provoking an understanding of the necessity to respect others. Basically, tolerance helps build true humanity. Faqr requires an active
engagement in diverse life activities and circumstances in order to lead a moral, spiritual life in this material world (Abbas, 1989).

5.3.8 Summary

This section provided a comprehensive investigation of the Islamic perspectives on the concepts of knowledge, intellect and intelligence, spiritual education, emotional intelligence and moral education. In the context of Islamic cultural values, society is grounded on a strong faith in Allah, the recitation of the Qur’an and the Hadith, respect for others, and family values. In other words, Muslims require proper spiritual, moral and emotional intelligences in order to reach the desired personal development and to lead a decent life. The Islamic tradition is characterised by a dominant belief that education plays a key role in the development of knowledge as a lifelong quest. There is a clear emphasis on social interactions and the role of formal education in support of such an educational approach. In Saudi Arabia, the conflicting interests of maintaining the authentic Islamic focus of education while, at the same time, reaching a competitiveness of education in line with Western benchmarks, has led to the division between religious and formal education, with the former being the responsibility of the mosque and the latter entrusted to schools.

5.4 Self-Reflective Discussion of Islamic Scholarship on Gifted Education

The analytical/empirical and historical/hermeneutic stages of the research on the evolution of Islamic scholarship in relation to gifted education allow me to produce a self-reflection. Therefore, this section is my critical appraisal of the advancements achieved by Islamic philosophic thought, in terms of giftedness and personal
development. First, I introduce the topic of giftedness in the context of Muslim culture and human nature. Then, I indicate the relevant concepts developed by Muslim scholars in association with giftedness and intelligence. Third, I intend to demonstrate the problematics of the separation of religion and formal schooling in Saudi Arabia and consideration is given to addressing the integration of the Islamic philosophy of giftedness in its educational program.

A precise review of the works of the most prominent Muslim scholars provided an insight into the formation and evolution of the Islamic scholarship on gifted education. In contrast to their Western counterparts, who tend to focus more on the assessment of an individual’s intellectual abilities, Islamic scholars demonstrate a tendency to go to the roots of Muslim culture in their inherent focus on human spirituality. The overall concept of knowledge is grounded on a perception of human nature determined mostly by the texts of the Qur’an and the Hadith. Hence, the core ideas or fundamentals of the Islamic perspective on education lie in the nature of the human being ascribed by the Creator, Allah.

The human, as a complex product of divine design and religion, and faith in God in particular, are able to drive a person away from inappropriate motives and intentions. If brought up in love and commitment to God, a person is protected by Him throughout their entire life. Serving God brings true happiness and satisfaction in life. This theme is the core of the multiple educational philosophies of Muslim scholars. Hence, it is possible to confirm that Islamic culture places knowledge as the principle means of guiding people towards personal development and happiness.

The Qur’an and the teaching of the Prophet Mohammad appeal to Muslims to dedicate their lives to lifelong learning and a search for new knowledge and experiences. In Islam, an individual’s choice of following good or evil paths depends
on one’s awareness of Allah’s advice and requirements that enables a person to distinguish between right and wrong and to select a proper life path. Hence, religion is of a high value and grounds Muslim culture, indicating the necessity to incorporate its basic principles and standards in all dimensions of life, and into formal education in particular.

A precise overview of the works of traditional Muslim scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi and Iqbal, displays their dependence on Islamic values in their educational philosophies. It is possible to draw one conclusion so far, that Saudi Arabia, as a Muslim country, should consider Islamic scholarship in detail since it has developed its idea of education in line with Muslim culture, religion and traditions. In their analysis of education, Muslim scholars distinguished three key concepts, knowledge, intellect and intelligence, which are similar to their Western counterparts.

The Arabic word *ilm* is used to define knowledge as a complex notion, combining general information, the laws of nature, and knowledge from inference. The prevailing idea of Islamic scholarship is that knowledge is a result of learning experienced in real-life situations and circumstances. Pure knowledge is not enough for human success in life; a person should be able to apply theory to practice in order to benefit from the acquired knowledge. Thus, most Islamic scholars like Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi indicate the need to incorporate practical exercises in education to develop an individual’s intellectual capabilities to the fullest extent. Furthermore, these scholars recognized the role of a teacher as a guide and mentor of children, responsible for giving directions, but allowing independent learning.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, it might be beneficial to review the role of teachers and the role of education at large. While providing knowledge of the basic facts and natural laws, it should leave space for an individual’s own experiences. Islam holds that
people are initially born with intelligence and knowledge, which is held in a passive form until the person starts comprehending the environment with his or her senses. The entire Muslim community plays a role in an individual’s development, with both parents and the school contributing to human growth. Through such a democratic approach, an educational system is able to deliver education in all the core subjects, such as language, logic, mathematics, physics, political science and jurisprudence. An integration of learning and understanding through practice produces knowledge that might be developed further into intelligence.

Similar to the Western world, the Islamic community is built on the foundations of God’s provisions cited in the Qur’an and the Hadith. In other words, the daily life of all Muslims is affected by Islam and its values. Thus, a Muslim should acquire proper religious education during early childhood as a foundation of their personal development. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali, as the founding father of Islamic scholarship, asserted that a person reaches intelligence when they mature and are educated sufficiently to analyse life situations, to foresee consequences, and to make sound decisions. The scholar viewed the Islamic religion as being in the centre of this capability. The values and principles promoted by Islam are eternal truths that assist a person in their life choices, protecting them from evil influences. On this basis, most Muslim scholars suggested spirituality as being a vital component of education and an individual’s personal development. The issue is relevant for Saudi Arabia which, as a Muslim culture, promotes Islamic values and morals, and thus should be integrated in the education system.

In addition to spirituality, or religious awareness, scholars distinguished emotional intelligence and moral intelligence as traits of a gifted person. Emotional intelligence connotes being responsible for one’s capability to take control over the
emotions and to make unaffected decisions. This ability for self-regulation is an indicator of leadership skills that are of a high value in the contemporary labour market. Hence, the Saudi educational system should take into account the achievements of Islamic scholarship to produce a qualified and desired labour force. In addition to employment, self-control is a valuable aspect of social relations determining an individual’s success in society.

In the context of the modern globalized society, where people have to respect each other and provide assistance whenever it is needed, tolerance and a commitment to moral virtues is an asset. Thus, moral education should be a considerable part of a holistic educational strategy aimed at developing truly gifted individuals. Al-Ghazali advocated education across five domains (religion, soul, intellect, resources, and family integrity), which all appropriate an individual to Allah and allow him or her to lead a virtuous, moral life by embodying universal Islamic values. Thus, academic learning in the Islamic context also requires moral, spiritual and emotional education as companions to ensure the completion of personal development.

As we find in the evidence, Islamic scholarly thought has traditionally encompassed a much wider spectrum of components that should be included in formal education, in comparison with Western perceptions thereof. Saudi Arabia has to apply the ideas of Islamic scholarship that promote multi-dimensional personal development, while relying on the traditional values of Muslim culture. In particular, educational programs for gifted students should provide practical and self-reflective activities, the learning of basic morals, and the eternal truths indicated in the Holy Qur’an, and training in self-regulation and tolerance. The inclusion of fundamental Islamic values and components in Saudi gifted education is an essential step towards reconciling the Western dominated educational paradigm with a focus on the formal development of
students to greater depths of moral, spiritual and emotional development. Such an approach promises an opportunity for greater selfactualisation for gifted individuals, allowing them not only to advance their levels of intellect, but also to become worthy members of society, leaders, and contributors to large-scale social, cultural and political improvements, and serving their community and changing the world for the better.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The current chapter has been dedicated to a precise investigation of the concept of gifted education in Islamic scholarship. In order to gain insight into the issue, the researcher utilized the Habermasian method to discuss the works of the most eminent Muslim scholars, to analyse their ideas, and to produce a self-reflection on their applicability to the case of Saudi Arabia. Comprising three parts, the chapter started with an examination of the concept of human nature in association with learning and knowledge acquisition. Verses from the Qur’an and the Hadith were accompanied by citations from scholarly works to illustrate that the academic perspectives on human nature echo the ones described by Islam. Then, the concept of knowledge was analysed through its Arabic term *ilm* and the various means and dimensions of knowledge accumulation formulated by multiple scholars like Iqbal, Al-Farabi, or Al-Ghazali. The next historical/hermeneutic section clarified the concepts of intellect and intelligence, and their evolution in Islamic scholarship through the centuries. Finally, scholarly ideas concerning the importance of spirituality, morality and emotion in education were discussed.

The analytical section of the chapter aligned Islamic scholarship on gifted education with the six facets distinguished by Western scholarship, namely, knowledge, intelligence and intellect, spirituality and education, morality and education, and
emotional management and education. I analysed the fundamental works of Muslim scholars in the context of effective ways of acquiring knowledge and intelligence in order to develop one’s personality. In addition, ways of applying spirituality, emotion, and morals to education were discussed in the light of scholarly works. Finally, I provided a self-reflection on the development of the concept of gifted education in Islamic scholarship and the critical elements lacking in present-day Saudi gifted education, including the spiritual, moral and emotional dimensions currently overlooked within the formal schooling approach.
CHAPTER 6: CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF GIFTED EDUCATION ACROSS WESTERN AND ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIPS

6.1 Chapter Overview

The two previous chapters were dedicated to an analysis of the Western and Islamic traditions of scholarship identifying the core concepts that must be considered when examining a culturally relevant gifted education for Saudi society. The evolution of thought about learning and the various approaches to gifted education were presented so as to address all aspects of a gifted individual’s potential. In this section, a comparative analytical perspective regarding giftedness in education across Western and Islamic scholarships is laid out. Here, the researcher uses a cross-cultural comparison to explore both approaches in an effort to compare and contrast them and to find consensus points to inform a more comprehensive and integrated educational approach. After an introductory overview of the key contents of the chapter, information about education across time is presented, and the five key educational concepts (knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, moral and spiritual intelligence types: moral, emotional, and spiritual intelligence) are discussed in the framework of both Western and Islamic views. The overall findings of this section are concisely enumerated in the chapter summary which concludes the chapter.

6.2 Introduction

History has proved that education has been considered a crucial element of intelligence development and personal growth in all societies from generation to
generation. Fundamentally, education is knowledge that has been gained and collected; this knowledge includes traditions, morals, customs and values. Dow (2013) associated education with culture-specific enculturation, which means that Western and Islamic civilizations have historically approached education in different ways, with regard to their cultural perspectives. Hassan and Jamaluddin (2009) also pointed out that Westerners have traditionally stressed active learning and encouraged rational thinking, while Islamic educational tradition has always been more reliant on passive learning and a unified religious and general education. Western education promotes independent learning, critical thinking, and the expression of one’s abilities and talents, which results in an authentic Western educational process centred on children’s critical mental development, a progression of critical-thinking and communication skills, and an overall independent growth. In contrast to such a focus, Islamic education is much more teacher-focused and reliant on authority, with students not encouraged to voice their own views and perspectives; it is also much more theoretical (Rohaty, 1999).

These cultural-specific approaches observed historically in the Islamic and Western educational traditions are less pronounced in the modern epoch because globalisation has increasingly created a homogenised educational system driven by Western educational orientations (Cook, 1999; Funk & Said, 2004). This trend is specifically relevant for Saudi Arabia because, being a former British colony, it has been subject to an inherently Western educational modernisation in accordance with Western quality benchmarks. So now, as with many other Islamic countries undergoing a process of self-identification, Saudi Arabia lacks a comprehensive educational system that addresses the modern benchmarks of quality and at the same time reflects authentic Islamic values and culture. As rightly noted by Cook (1999), Islamic countries in transition from colonialism to independence face a challenge of bringing more Islamic
authenticity to their reformed administrative, legal and social institutions, including education, which were reformed by British colonisers in line with their dominant Western paradigms, by imposing secularism and rational thinking and ousting moral and religious education from the formal educational curricula.

Globalisation pressures are huge on both Western and Islamic countries alike nowadays; they dictate universal standards of education, including gifted education. However, the post-colonial period of Islamic countries’ development also dictates the need for an authentically Islamic self-actualization and enrichment that only a combination of Western educational benchmarks and Islamic educational values can bring. Both Ambrose and Cross (2009) and Mazurek, Winzer and Majorek (2000) pointed out the new educational challenges of globalisation and called for global learning standards and approaches, which would make gifted education much more relevant for the present-day globalized realities. Understanding how this can be done is possible only where the impact of each specific culture on gifted education is comprehended and distinguished, which will be the subject of the following section. One such integrated effort in Saudi Arabia is Mawhiba – an organization fostering a Western-style gifted education focussed on initiative, independent thinking and creativity, but at the same time taking into account the Saudi culture and context of implementation.

6.3 Education across Time

This section compares the theories that scholars from both the Western and Islamic perspectives have proposed in science and philosophy. The development of their theories is studied in a chronological approach in order to identify the evolution and nature of the impacts that they have had on education across time. Moreover, the
section focuses on the foundations that these theories have created for modern approaches to, and vision for, gifted education.

The fall of the Roman Empire put the preservation of knowledge accumulated by this ancient civilization at risk, and all manuscripts prepared by Greek scholars were at a risk of being lost forever. However, medieval Islamic scholars stepped in and technically inherited knowledge from the Syrians. The Syrians were heavily influenced by Aristotle, and relied on Aristotle’s theories of logic. Muslims adopted Greek influences through the Nestorians (followers of the Christological doctrine of Nestorius (386-450) about the disunion of the human and divine natures of Jesus), although not all Nestorians were Greek by background. The Nestorians had a school at Edessa, the historical name of an ancient town in upper Mesopotamia, but Emperor Zeno, who was associated with Henotikon and the “instrument of union” promulgated by him, shut it down in 481CE. After this event, which limited the spread of knowledge in the region, many of the wise seemed to migrate to Persia to continue the dissemination of knowledge and learning (Russell, 2008).

The period of the seventh to the fifteenth centuries was considered an important one in terms of the passage of knowledge. A number of Islamic scholars, such as Kindi, Al-Khwarazmi, Al-Razi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, lived and worked during this era, producing a valuable heritage of scholarly writings. These Islamic scholars brightened the flame of knowledge they inherited from Greek scholars, and advanced it more than ever before. A variety of fields was investigated and studied, including medicine, mathematics and astronomy. Besides studying the already formulated theories, Islamic scholars adopted them in a way that was more compliant with their culture and worldviews, coming up with new ideas. For example, the Arabic numeric system was developed by scholars and was adopted by Western scholars in
place of the Greek and Roman numeric systems, which is a distinctive contribution of
the Arab world to global knowledge and science (Ead, 1999).

The development of knowledge in the Muslim world was positively influenced
and enriched through Muslim contacts with India and Persia. These nations discovered
Sanskrit writings in the eighth century and, through these writings, they came across
the world of astronomy. The Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarazmi
translated mathematical and astronomical books from Sanskrit. He published a book
*Algoritn de numero Indorwn* that was translated into Latin in the twelfth century. This
work, according to Russell (2008), was the first notable connecting point between
Western and Islamic scholarship, since through it the Western community adopted the
use of Arabic numerals. Al-Khwarazmi also published a book on algebra, which was
used in Western schools until the sixteenth century.

In spite of the Mongol invasion of Persia in the thirteenth century, Islamic
civilization managed to keep up with its intellectual and artistic progress. There was
much talent, in terms of science and the arts, in Persia, and many notable people lived
there in that period, passing on and enriching the knowledge and giftedness of their
nation. For example, poetry was one of the major Persian talents; it has been argued
that the work of the Persian poet Firdousi titled *Shalmama* could be compared to
Homer’s *Iliad* in terms of its historical and cultural significance. Arabic philosophers
were quite comprehensive in several areas of study; they researched alchemy,
astrology, astronomy and zoology almost as much as they did philosophy. A famous
Arabic scholar in philosophy, Kindi, was the first to translate Plotinus’ *Enneads*,
publishing his version as *The Theology of Aristotle*. Despite the fact that this work was
a meaningful and comprehensive scholarly endeavour at that time, it contained many
misinterpretations of Aristotelian ideas, which were only corrected centuries later (Wolff, 1994).

Some renowned Islamic scholars who influenced philosophy, such as Ibn-Sina, known as Avicenna, and Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes (1126 - 1198), were esteemed among Muslims, and even in the Christian world. Avicenna had a fine grip on several fields but he was principally known as a philosopher of medicine, and his work *The Canon of Medicine* was among the most famous, being used in Europe’s medical schools until relatively modern times. However, even though Avicenna was an Islamic scholar, the initial influences on his scientific and philosophical approach can again be traced back to Western civilization – to Aristotle’s philosophy. Later, Averroes followed in his footsteps and also conducted research within the medical field. However, unlike Avicenna, this thinker focused more on theology and jurisprudence (Hacking, 2006).

Though the works of Averroes were initially to the liking of the Caliph, some religious advocates opposed his ideas, which led to his exile and transfer to Spain, where he formulated his Muslim philosophy. One scholar of that time, Ueberweg, defended Averroes and also stated that the Qur’an is a highly layered book and has extremely deep meanings, suggesting that ignorant people took it literally, while intelligent people should seek its figurative meaning. Thus, Ueberweg supported Averroes’ theories that were highly unpopular in those times. Averroes also relied heavily on Aristotelian ideas, but he managed to raise Aristotle in significance, much more than Avicenna had done in his time.

One of Averroes’ ideas, linking Islamic and Western scholarship, was that one can prove that God exists through reasoning and without revelation; this perspective was later accepted and promoted by Thomas Aquinas. In terms of immortality,
Averroes debated Christian scholarship on the immortality of the soul, claiming that only intellect was immortal (Audi, 1993). Because of Averroes’ non-religiosity, he was not popular in the Muslim world, and his ideas found greater acceptance in the West (Watt, 2013). Hence, as one can see, though some ideas developed in parallel, and even in inter-crossing ways, between Western and Islamic scholars, there were many religious and cultural-specific differences that deepened the discrepancies and challenged the dialogue between the civilizations.

Coming from an historical overview of the events and contributions to the development of science and intelligence, it can be seen that there was cross-cultural influences between Islamic and Western thinkers. Aristotle laid a strong foundation for scientific philosophy; the Neo-platonists were more logical and tended towards metaphysics; medicine was contributed to by Galen; mathematics and astronomy were sourced from Greek and Indian materials and sources; while Persian mystical beliefs gave birth to the field of religious philosophy. Arabic writers produced their own writings about mathematics and chemistry, the latter heavily influenced by research into alchemy. While the Islamic world showed great promise during its Golden Age in the arts and technology, they were not sufficiently focused on the development of theory, which would create a foundation for further knowledge transfer. The Dark Ages raised more significant barriers between the ancient and modern European civilizations. Although the Islamic and the Byzantine Empires did not have the intellectual energy needed for a revolution, they made a great contribution to preserving civilization by keeping education alive and preserving books from the past. The Western world was inspired by both the Islamic and Byzantine Empires’ thinkers when it was undergoing the initial stages of its own formation; hence, all these influences were strong and
productive, and they have resulted in enriched approaches to thinking and perspectives which combine both cultures into a coherent system of thought (Islam, 2011).

In summary, Western and Islamic scholars both contributed theories in education development, science and philosophy. Both Western and Islamic scholars influenced the establishment of theories which were used as the foundations of knowledge from ancient to modern times. The philosophical and scientific theories that evolved from the cross-cultural evolution of ideas underpin the core educational concepts of contemporary education. As has been seen in this section, both Western and Islamic civilizations had their periods of prosperity and degradation, and each made an explicit effort to preserve the legacy of the other one, which ensured an unending continuum of accumulation and enrichment of global knowledge and intellectual heritage. These historical trends are vital for understanding the present-day interplay between the Islamic and Western intellectual traditions and for finding parallels between them for the sake of integrating them, under the pressure of globalisation, into a coherent, non-conflicting whole. This is especially relevant for the educational system under discussion in this study, hence, doing so requires an examination of the core educational concepts across both Western and Islamic scholarships, which is done in the following section.

6.4 Examining Core Educational Concepts across Western and Islamic Scholarships

The core educational concepts that Western and Islamic researchers developed throughout centuries of research on the nature of intelligence, giftedness and human development were identified in Chapters 4 and 5. They are knowledge, wisdom, intellect and intelligence, and several intelligence types: spiritual, emotional, and moral
intelligence (applied in moral education). They are discussed in this section in a cross-cultural perspective, by comparing Islamic and Western views about each of them, and identifying the implications of those views for gifted education.

6.4.1 Knowledge

The concept of knowledge, as perceived by both Western and Islamic scholarships, first appeared during the times of the ancient Greek philosophers, and was literally understood as learning and gaining information through observing the surroundings, and by understanding the events and phenomena of the surrounding world (Stanley, 2010). With the course of time, this concept was built upon and developed, and now knowledge is perceived differently, both in Islamic and Western thought. Some researchers attribute it to a natural inborn quality, while others advocate for the acquisition of knowledge through education. In recent decades, the integrative view of combining both a natural, inborn and education-enhanced view of knowledge signals the considerable development and expansion of global thought on knowledge (Ireson, 2008; Swann & Pratt, 2004).

In the ancient Greek period, knowledge was considered to be either gifted by the gods or acquired. So it was believed that those who had this gift could further build upon it and improve their understanding, while those who were not gifted could acquire it by learning and observing (Crumley II, 2009). Pythagoras and Xenophanes were among the first philosophers to be called knowledgeable and they both promoted learning as a vital human function (Stanley, 2010). Therefore, taking into account such views on the emergence of knowledge, the Western tradition of education began to place an emphasis on both developing knowledge and extending the knowledge and skills of students identified as talented (Robinson & Jolly, 2013).
Islamic perspectives on education also have a rich intellectual tradition, similar to that of the Western world. In Islamic society, knowledge holds a very important place and is emphasized in the key text of Islam, the Qur’an. Several fragments of the Qur’an contain instructions for Muslims to gain knowledge. For example: "God will exalt those of you who believe and those who have knowledge to high degrees" (58:11); "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (20:114); and "As God has taught him, so let him write" (2:282) (Bae, 2010). Through these, and numerous other verses, the Qur’an has stimulated Islamic society to focus on education, so the focus on education has always been very strong in Islamic societies.

Though it can be seen that the emphasis in Western and Islamic societies was strongly on education from time immemorial, the difference between the educational theories and practices in Western and Islamic education is considerable. They are contained mainly in the interpretations of knowledge and their implementation. Islamic knowledge was, and is, almost solely based on the Qur’an, which is an all-encompassing text, serving as the instruction manual for individuals and the entire Islamic culture, as well as the central source of required knowledge. When the Qur’an was written down in the seventh century, the era heralded a revolution by shifting the rich Arab oral traditions to the written word of the Qur’an, with the word of God as the central inspiration. This new interaction with the Qur’an developed both the reading and knowledge of the Qur’an. Bae (2010) concluded that education within Islamic society clearly began due to religious instruction, thus the Qur’an played a vital part in it (Bae, 2010).

The initial four centuries of Islam, or the period known as the early Middle Ages in Western civilisation, was considered the time when education within Islamic society revolved around the mosque. The mosque was a central location for Muslim
society, where all cultural activities took place (Glubb, 1969). These activities were not limited to religion and worship, but also concerned education and community socialisation. Muslims from all races, ages and origins would gather to learn and to gain knowledge. This knowledge was varied and could be religious – involving *Fiqh*, *Tafseer* and *Hadeeth* – or could encompass other fields such as poetry, history, medicine, and so on. In the mosque, Muslims could find any sort of advice, consultation, support and education. There were beginners, advanced students, teaching assistants, teachers, all listening to lectures. This education was slightly informal and the *ulema* would decide on what was being taught, as well as the areas covered and suitable timings (Berkey, 1992, pp. 7, 20, 40, 42).

Muslims had a great fascination with the sciences and considered them God’s gifts, so they developed them, researching and experimenting with the available knowledge from both East and West. They contributed in a major way to medical knowledge, much more than they are credited with today. This credit is said by some to have been lost due to Christian prejudice against other religions (Laythe, Finkel, Bringle & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Regarding these events, Sir John Babot Glubb (1969, p. 289) had the following to say:

> The indebtedness of Western Christendom to Arab civilization was systematically played down, if not completely denied. A tradition was built up, by censorship and propaganda, that the Muslim imperialists had been mere barbarians and that the rebirth of learning in the West was derived directly from Roman and Greek sources alone, without any Arab intervention. (Glubb, 1969, p. 289)

However, even though the Muslim legacy is mostly excluded from the world’s history of knowledge development, Plato and Aristotle’s views have been supported through
Islamic literature and have found a rich reflection in its different periods. From an Islamic perspective, knowledge (*ilm*) is a lot more than just information; it is theory, education, action, and a way of life. The Islamic perspective shows that knowledge is mandatory for proper survival, since it allows an individual to improve his or her life in every way, which is in line with the Aristotelian views presented above (Dusuki, 2008).

Gaining awareness about anything helps a person understand the issue better, and enables them to make appropriate decisions about it. Xenophanes’ theory correlated with this concept as well, since it considered a person to have a yearning to learn and gain knowledge from the environment and individual experiences. Therefore, a person’s ability to become knowledgeable depends on how much they are willing to learn and how observant they are about what happens around them (Russell, 2008).

Thomas Aquinas, who studied Aristotle’s teachings, postulated his own theory in relation to knowledge. Aquinas believed that people had a certain amount of knowledge which he called wisdom, but he considered this wisdom to be vanity because it ended with a human’s death. The other kind of knowledge that Aquinas referred to was intelligence, and truth formed the basis of this knowledge. He believed that through knowledge, a person is able to differentiate between right and wrong, and carry out his life accordingly (Sertillanges, 2011). In connection with this, Aquinas differentiated between the various parts of knowledge very responsibly, avoiding knowledge that is distracting, and judging the world’s affairs of his own choice, with a distinct wisdom considered divine by his contemporaries.

A similar view was proposed by the Islamic scholars Ibn Khaldun and Shah Waliullah; these Islamic scholars also stated that the degree of knowledge and understanding that a person has to determine their actions eventually determines their quality of life. Initially a person has nothing but the gradual acquisition of knowledge
which enables him or her to develop into a fully-fledged intelligent personality, able to apply that knowledge to making decisions, taking action, and further the learning or teaching of others. Therefore, it can be argued that knowledge allows a person to undergo a transformation from being ignorant to becoming a useful, independent and critically thinking member of a society (Ibn Khaldun, 1967).

At present, Islamic and Western civilisations experience a certain degree of tension and disagreement about the concept of knowledge, which should be taken into account when making conclusions about the integration of these worldviews. Qadir (1988, p. 1) clarified this conflict as follows:

The Islamic theory of knowledge … is fundamentally different from the Western theory. One major reason for the difference is that the former is based upon the spiritual conception of [human beings] and the universe [they inhabit], while the latter is secular and devoid of the sense of the Sacred.

From this perspective, the Islamic conception of knowledge is hierarchical, with the lowest form thereof being the empirical and rational modes of knowing, while the highest form of knowledge is that of the unitive knowledge of God, which also serves as the divine centre of human intelligence (that characterized by Plato as gnosis) (Olthuis, 2000). Based on these observations, one should point out that such a conflict in perceptions of knowledge leaves traces on the attitudes to education, and has serious implications for the formation of an integrative gifted education curriculum. Muslims have an in-depth sense of sacredness as the ultimate ground for knowledge, which is pervasively present at all levels of Islamic education, while the Western reliance on empiricism and rational thinking flags the potential for there to be a barrier in any attempt to integrate these two approaches.
Summing up the presented evidence, one should note that the Western philosophical tradition may indeed be credited with the initial creation and evolution of the definition of knowledge. Scholars like Aristotle and Plato conceded that knowledge was acquired through observation and education, rather than merely through a natural gift of intelligence. Islamic thinkers have also developed their distinct system of beliefs and ideas about the concept of knowledge, but it is much more firmly immersed in their spiritual and religious traditions. Hence, the core juxtaposition between Islamic and Western thought on the subject of knowledge, so far, is the dilemma of giftedness by God or a biological predisposition to possessing advanced intellectual possibilities. It appears that the reliance on science in the West and the in-depth spirituality and religious beliefs in Islam shape this tension, though both cultures agree that education must play a crucial role in the advancement of human intelligence. Thus, this unifying point may be used to the advantage of forming an integrated gifted education system based on the approach to intelligence discussed in the following section.

6.4.2 Intellect and Intelligence

Intellect and intelligence as core concepts, and their development in the individual, is the basis for gifted education. Both Islamic and Western scholarly thought have played a role in the development of education in both the Western and Islamic educational traditions. A comparison of Western and Islamic worldviews reveals that they have each had a different depth of influence on the area of gifted education and its requirements. It has been considered that both the Western and Islamic definitions of intelligence differ, and yet they have seemingly overlapped over the decades. One point inherent in the debate within Western thought, and between
Western and Islamic thinkers, is about the nature of intelligence as an inborn capability or as an acquired feature, which will also be evaluated here.

First, it is essential to keep in mind that research on ‘giftedness’ has revolved around the concept of intelligence for a long period, and giftedness, as such, was assessed against traditional intelligence tests – IQ testing. Notwithstanding the fact that IQ testing is now not regarded as the only valid instrument for giftedness detection, it is still an essential component of giftedness research, and much effort is made by researchers to adapt and enrich such tests to include features like creativity, commitment to task, and motivation. Most importantly, researchers and test developers want to see if traditional IQ tests can be applied in the present-day multicultural educational environment (Gottfredson, 2001; Lohman, 2005). To overcome the inherent restrictions of these tests, scholars have discouraged a total reliance on them and have advocated a broader definition of intelligence and giftedness that allowed more flexible interpretations of people’s performances (Renzulli, 2002), ones that would accommodate cultural differences.

Witty (1958) was also one of the twentieth century scholars who criticized the limited approach of IQ testing for the analysis and measurement of giftedness. He mirrored other liberal views on how any measurement of giftedness which did not include other factors was an unfair and incomplete measure. According to Brown et al. (2006, p. 70), gifted children possess “skills for particular academic domain, general intellectual aptitude, creative or productive thought processes, visual and performing arts, psychomotor ability, leadership skills”. Therefore, though this view was also challenged, as well as many other perspectives on how gifted children should be approached, the idea of multiple domains was extremely helpful in the development of gifted education curricula. The concept of creativity has recently acquired increasing
attention in the field of intelligence research. Bernstein et al. (2003) pointed out one more significant flaw of IQ tests in the measurement of intelligence – their low correlation with creativity scores. Creativity is understood as an ability to generate a set of varying plausible responses to a specific problem, which is definitely representative of divergent thinking, which cannot be measured by IQ tests predominantly directed at measuring convergent thinking.

A thorough review of the literature shows that the term ‘giftedness’ was first used in the twentieth century, with no universally agreed definition thereof. During this period, the idea of giftedness revolved around superb intelligence (IQ) levels and outstanding academic performance (Gottfredson, 1997; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008). This perspective encouraged the age-old belief that giftedness was inherited (Brown, et al., 2006; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Gordon & Bridglall, 2005; Renzulli, 1978). However, this standpoint faced much criticism, alongside advancements in research and an understanding of the much more multidimensional nature of giftedness, which now incorporates the features of creativity, leadership skills, and other aptitudes going far beyond the scope of conventional academic performance.

The work of Witty (1958) and Marland (1972) contributed much to the understanding of giftedness and the ways of addressing the unique educational and life needs of gifted individuals. Their ideas were further expanded on, and developed, by other researchers, such as Renzulli (1978; 1988), who carried out analysis on the meaning of the term ‘giftedness’, from the conservative to liberal models existing at that time, and produced a much more inclusive, flexible, and comprehensive vision of giftedness as a concept (Netton, 2008). Comparing these views with Islamic perspectives in this context, one should note that Ibn-Taymiyyah, Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi, and other notable Islamic thinkers referred to intellect when discussing the
capability of making reasonable judgments. Ibn Sina (Goichon transl., 1951) worked out a comprehensive theory of intellect and intelligence on the basis of ideas of Al-Kindī and Al-Fārābī and presented it in his works The Book of Healing, The Book of Salvation and The Book of Directives and Remarks. His interpretations of intelligence represented a skilled and thoughtful combination of Aristotle’s ideas with Qur’anic doctrine.

Ibn Sina regarded all people as being born with the initial form of intelligence – potential or material intelligence (bi’l-quwwah) forming on the basis of habitual intelligence given to all people at birth. Once the habitual intelligence forms develop in the human mind, a person develops their actual intellect, and as soon as the development process is complete, the individual possesses acquired intelligence. However, the highest form of intelligence is the Active Intellect (al-‘aql), which is divine and illuminates the mind through acts of knowledge. These ideas, as summarized by Nasr (1979), relate to the concept of al-‘aql, now used to denote both reason and intellect in the Islamic tradition, and literally meaning a force binding people to God, to their Origin. This concept has traditionally been used in Islamic thought to denote intelligence, foresight and common sense. Islamic thought held it that people have to exercise intelligence to understand God’s revelation, which may be achieved only in the case where a person’s intelligence is illuminated by faith.

Viewing the concept of intelligence, and approaches to it, through the course of time, one may see that this concept has existed since ancient times, and was actively researched in medieval times as well. The Greek philosophers viewed intelligence mainly through the prism of a possession of certain virtues and the ability to think rationally, which suggests that intelligence predetermined the good in human nature. Plato, in his turn, associated intelligence with such skills as reasoning and
understanding. Hence, as one can see, intelligence was viewed in the limited conventional terms of rational thinking and reasoning, without the inclusion of the much wider terms in which intelligence is considered nowadays – emotion, spirituality and morality.

Obviously, this viewpoint has undergone serious challenges in the modern era, with the majority of scholars viewing intelligence now in terms of rationalizing, understanding, reasoning, and the pursuit of truth, which suggests that giftedness is unique and individual, and can be identified in a variety of dimensions beyond intelligence (Gardner, 1998). The diverse and multi-dimensional structure of intelligence was supported by the multiple intelligences theory of Gardner (2011), and the ancient Greek postulations on an inborn giftedness bestowed only to the select few have evolved into a modern conception of giftedness which includes the intrapersonal, interpersonal, spatial, musical, body-kinaesthetic, mathematical, naturalistic and linguistic domains. Bernstein et al. (2003) also supported the variety of ways in which the concept of intelligence can be measured, researched, and understood. In addition to the classical psychometric and information-processing approaches, the researchers regarded the triarchic theory of intelligence propounded by Sternberg (analytic, creative and practical intelligences) as a valid assessment instrument, and appreciated the multiple intelligences theory of Gardner. Such a complex view is undoubtedly considered a much more suitable and convenient one for present-day educational realities and for research knowledge in the fields of intelligence and giftedness studies.

As the presented evidence shows, intelligence continues to remain one of the intensely researched fields. Scholars, so far, have come to an agreement that there are various kinds of intelligence which need to be analysed, and further developed. In various periods of time, research on intelligence ranged in its assessments from the
godlike gifts of the few to the strictly quantifiable in the form of an IQ measurement. At present, the tensions between Islamic and Western interpretations of intelligence still remain, especially given the extensive research on the variability of Western intelligence measurements (e.g., Bernstein et al., 2003; Gardner, 2011), and the inherently spiritual features of intelligence in Islamic traditions. The traditional psychometric approach to the evaluation of intelligence as a problem-solving and information-processing skill favoured in the West stands in sharp contrast to the Islamic view of the divine nature of the highest forms of intelligence, which has to be taken into account when integrating both traditions with regard to the key postulates of each of them. To inform the discussion further, a comparison of the Islamic and Western views on wisdom is presented in the following section.

6.4.3 Wisdom

Along with concepts of intelligence, and the associated ideas of wisdom or being wise, both Western and Muslim scholars determined the concept of wisdom with a regard to extraordinary knowledge and mental capacity. In Western philosophy, scholars like Plato, Pythagoras and Socrates defined wisdom as a superior stage of human knowledge. Information applied to real-life experiences produces knowledge, which in turn becomes the underpinning of intelligence. An ongoing knowledge acquisition expands an individual’s knowledge base and accumulates their analytical skills, which in sum results in knowledge. The highest level of human knowledge – wisdom – enables a person to achieve both personal and social goals and, thus, to contribute to society through the application of knowledge and creative thinking skills (Russell, 2008; Crumley II, 2009; Stanley, 2010).
It is notable that the Western scholarly tradition finds wisdom very hard to define, mainly because of its controversial and complex nature that has been evolving over time. Alongside the ancient Greek philosophers’ classical views (e.g., Plato and Aristotle), later European and American scholars (including Sternberg (1990), Kramer (1990), Birren and Fisher (1990), and others) have also contributed to the development of this concept’s definition and features. Moreover, Western ideas about wisdom were complemented with idealist and practical, religious and secular elements, and additional features that make the comprehension of wisdom even more challenging nowadays (Walsh, 2014). In terms of this concept’s epistemology, it is clear that it has a strong link with knowledge, especially extraordinary knowledge, and mainly presupposes the acquisition of that knowledge through special mental capacities. Wisdom is developed once an equally appealing alternative appears to a certain fact or item of knowledge, requiring the individual to assess both alternatives and choose the most attractive one, which leads to deeper levels of knowledge. A good illustration of that evolution of wisdom is encapsulated in Plato’s works. In his later writings, Plato critiqued his own earlier works, which suggests an evolution of his understanding and the attainment of deeper knowledge and wisdom through the course of his life and philosophical work (Brouwer, 2014).

It is also essential to keep in mind that wisdom is not only concerned with intelligence, and being smart does not necessarily presuppose being wise. Medieval and later modern thought added the concept of an ethical dimension to wisdom, since many scientists were regarded as intelligent, but since they did not have the virtue of ethics, they could not be regarded as wise. Thus, in these terms, wisdom has come to be viewed as the “scope and depth of knowledge and truth, and of equal importance, on
the side of virtue, practical relevance, as well as social and historical significance” (Welsh, 2014, p. 188).

In Islamic philosophy, the concept of wisdom evolved from spiritual intelligence. One of the original founders of Islamic scholarship, Al-Ghazali, asserted that a strong faith in, and love of, Allah encourages an individual’s commitment to serving Him, which implies the ignorance of personal selfish motives in favour of social goals. Hence, spiritual intelligence equips a person with the wisdom that directs their actions in reference to His will and pleasure (Spevack, 2011). The Qur’an and the Hadith, two of the most basic and important religious and spiritual writings of Islam, also regard wisdom as a highly important trait of a human being, and both encourage the development of wisdom through continuous learning, ethical deeds and moral growth. Notably, Islamic thought views wisdom not as a natural outcome of conventional intellectual development, but rather as a spiritual feature developing as a result of spiritual growth, awareness, and moral enhancement. Thus, taking into account the spiritual and ethical dimensions traditionally associated with Islamic ideas on wisdom, one may conclude that the integration of these dimensions into the modern educational curriculum may contribute to the effective combination of Islamic and Western thought in a single educational approach. More detail on spiritual intelligence as a vital educational component is given in the following section.

6.4.4 Spiritual Intelligence

This section outlines the opinions of researchers from both Western and the Islamic scholarships regarding spirituality, identifying the similarity of opinions regarding the common characteristics related to spiritual intelligence found in gifted
individuals. The research also elaborates on the time required for gifted people to fully attain spiritual intelligence.

Spiritual intelligence helps talented individuals define themselves in a spiritual world. According to Wolman (2001), spiritual intelligence enables individuals to understand their role in the world by following the virtues that are regarded as morally upright. Individuals who disregard these virtues are unable to give meaning to their spiritual world. A review of Western scholarship thus relates spiritual intelligence with wisdom, which is divine and not obtainable through training (Clayton, 1982).

According to Vialle (2007), spiritual intelligence has endowed gifted education with a new direction. Although it has been dismissed by several modern philosophers, others believe it is innate within talented children (Robinson & Jolly, 2013). Spiritual intelligence is essential in gifted education, as it provides the individual with a platform to solve their problems regarding meaning and value (Vialle, 2007). This type of intelligence helps talented individuals to place their life and actions within a meaningful context and to lead a useful life (Vialle, 2007). Spiritual intelligence is an important attribute to consider when defining giftedness, in the case where the right implementation of cognitive intelligence is concerned. According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), spiritual intelligence may contribute positively if those possessing this type of intelligence use their giftedness in ways which are beneficial for their society. Therefore, as one can see, spiritual intelligence is a broadly applicable term that concerns various aspects of the quality of human life.

Western research suggests that spiritual intelligence is vital for people to discover their deepest resources and motivations for caring for others, and to find the ability to have a higher degree of tolerance. Consequently, one should note that spiritual intelligence is, in its essence, about acceptance, understanding, and the quest
to change the world for the better, which, some would argue, gifted individuals are
more capable of doing than other people on average (Chin et al., 2011).

In comparison with Western perspectives, Muslim scholars also made their
contribution to the formulation and evolution of the concept of spiritual intelligence.
Al-Ghazali listed five spiritual elements that were considered essential in education and
stated that cultivating such traits would be beneficial, not only for humankind, but also
for society. He further suggested that aiming at getting better in such areas makes
individuals feel responsible for the current world, and enables them to be ready for the
afterlife. Thus, incorporating these elements into the educational system would lead to
the birth of an educated society. Education also presupposed educating people to
perceive the difference between acts which were right and wrong, which was necessary
to survive in the world and to advance to the next one. Having this knowledge would
help people live a relatively smooth life on earth (Dakhil Allah, 1996).

Spiritual intelligence has been present in both Western and Islamic traditions
of thought since their earliest times. It was associated with divine wisdom in the ancient
Greek era. In the Medieval period of Western culture, spirituality was almost
exclusively associated with religion and religious obedience. In traditional Islamic
cultures, spirituality is associated with Islamic teachings and the life of Prophet
Mohammad, and is firmly immersed in the daily lives and practices of Muslims.
Spirituality is derived from interpretations of the Holy Qur’an and refers to the essence
of the human’s being, the real nature of existence, and the inner dynamics of humanity
and the cosmos (Yust, et. al., 2006). Islam postulates that only spirituality gives life its
essence and meaning, and it should be exercised through daily prayer, religious
obligations, ritual, and spiritual exercise. Individual spirituality thus grows through the
development of universal values, including sincerity, purity of intention, struggle with
one’s self, self-control, self-criticism, etc. Muslims emphasize spiritual education from an early age, since they believe that the older a person gets, the harder it is for him or her to acquire the necessary level of spiritual strength and self-awareness (Yust et al., 2006).

Spiritual intelligence has remained an essential part of the research into human development in contemporary societies and it has enhanced thinking about gifted education. Modern researchers consider spiritual intelligence as an integral part of giftedness, and associate it with children’s abilities to make mature moral judgments, to exhibit higher levels of self-awareness and inquisitiveness, and to comprehend their moral responsibility towards their society (Vialle, 2007).

However, it must be noted that having these characteristics alone does not bring any benefit to talented persons unless they develop them properly. Time is required to properly develop these characteristics in any person, since learning continues throughout their lifetime (Sisk, 2002). Self-awareness brought about by spiritual intelligence enables individuals to harness relationships with their peers. Alongside spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence is another vital component of the educational process, and it is an essential point in gifted education programs as well. This aspect of gifted education is discussed in the next section, through a comparative presentation and analysis of Western and Islamic scholars’ views.

### 6.4.5 Emotional Intelligence

This section contains a discussion on the concept of emotional intelligence and its influence on the formation of the gifted education concept across Western and Islamic scholarships. The importance that the two schools of thought place on emotions
and relationships, across time, are also highlighted. The different views are compared and contrasted to identify their relevance to gifted education.

References to emotional intelligence were present even in ancient times. Classical Greek philosophy considered reason and logic as being more important than emotion, but anger was always to be under the rule of reason. Plato and Aristotle postulated the theory that emotion was only suitable when it could be applied reasonably to the situation. Aristotle did not regard emotion as bad or good, offering judgement in accordance with the ways in which that emotion was appropriately directed. Nevertheless, this philosopher still considered anger to be the emotion that reduces human ability to think logically and makes people behave irrationally. Experiencing such emotion also leads people to destructive behaviour, such as punishment, vengeance or revenge (Lester, 2003). The Stoics were also concerned about anger. Seneca, an important Stoic philosopher, argued that anger is “the most hideous and frenzied of all the emotions … the greatest of all ills” (cited in Lester, 2003, p. 118). Thus, as one can see, Seneca was against Aristotle and Plato’s views regarding the propriety of using reason for controlling anger.

In the Medieval era, emotions were considered an expression of feeling that complemented the human mind. According to Thomas Aquinas, one is no greater than the other, and when emotions have guidance by reasoning and are logically considered, such existence is considered intelligent and appropriate. Aquinas thought that humans cannot avoid emotions, so they should be controlled to avoid their negative consequences (Russell, 2008).

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, studies on the relationships between emotions and the mind have been carried out by researchers in various parts of the world. Throughout human history, emotion was often considered to be something a
little inappropriate, and even shameful. For many centuries, the word “emotion” was popularly perceived as “irrational, private, weak, feminine, and even downright embarrassing” (Planalp, 1999, p. 216). The positivity of emotion was recognized only by cognitive theorists who stated that personal understanding and evaluation of the situation were the factors that determine emotions (Gayathri & Meenakshi, 2013).

During this period, psychologists linked emotions with physiology and thought for the first time. The idea of emotional intelligence thus formally emerged and developed into a well-delineated branch of research in the 1990s. Emotional intelligence is now understood as a combination of five properties – self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills – enabling people to understand themselves and others better, and to make wise decisions (Cenere et al., 2015). These five aspects were formulated by Goleman (2001) as the emotional competence inventory capable of measuring the extent to which an individual is emotionally intelligent.

The most notable research on emotional intelligence (EI) was conducted by Goleman, Salovey and Mayer, and Bar-On who defined the concept, identified its key features, and proposed various ways of measuring and developing it. Hence, at present, the concept of EI is associated with emotional awareness, the facilitation of emotions, understanding of one’s own and others’ emotions, and the management of emotions.

Emotional intelligence is also present in the Islamic tradition, as pointed out by Tahir (2009), emotions are given an essential place in Islamic teachings as a fundamental element of the human soul. Islam teaches emotional self-control, which enables Muslims to achieve peace and internal equilibrium. In Islam, extreme happiness is frowned upon because of the risk of leading to indulgence in excesses, while extreme sadness is also a negative manifestation potentially leading to self-harm.
Emotional intelligence is also an integral part of the Islamic code of conduct, referred to as “emotional wisdom”. The Holy Qur’an has fragments about the importance of self-awareness, e.g., “And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors” (The Holy Qur’an, 59:19). Iqbal (1934) also spoke about the need to control and know one’s emotions, and the potential danger of negative emotions that may make people lose control and go wild (Tahir, 2009).

The concept behind emotional intelligence theory is its positive impact on the quality of human life (Muyia, 2008). This theory suggests that when people understand, analyse and manage emotions within themselves and in others, they are most likely to lead an improved life. Although this claim has been made throughout history by Greek philosophers, Islamic scholars (Mohammad Iqbal, Ibn al Arabi) and in the Western world, there are no actual measuring instruments for evaluating this kind of intelligence yet. Even its definition is a challenge for many researchers, so this theory is still at the germinal stage of development. However, the presented evidence clearly suggests that the relevance of emotions should be geared towards motivating gifted individuals towards morality. Thus, this component should definitely be included in the gifted education program nowadays. In the next section, moral intelligence and its impact on gifted education across time are discussed.

6.4.6 Moral Intelligence and Its Application in Moral Education

In this section, the views of Western and Islamic scholarships in regard to morality and education are discussed. I will elaborate on the importance of morality across time according to the two schools of thought, and on the importance of humanity in society.
The term ‘moral’ is related to the word *ethos*, a term for ethics used in ancient Greek history, and it refers to character. Greek scholars gave a great deal of attention to ethics and morals, and their manuscripts and ideas were preserved and carried on by Islamic scholars which were later studied by Medieval and modern Western scholars. Aristotle wrote much about how a person can have good and bad qualities in his *Nichomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, wherein he evaluated the good life and talked about good and evil in human beings. Hence, as it may be judged according to ancient writings, ethics originally referred to qualities of character in human beings (Kenny, 1978).

Moral sensitivity and motivation are requirements in the real-life moral situations that people face (Narvaez, 1993). Prior to making moral decisions and judgements, a person is required to consider such situations with regard to different contexts. Abstract reasoning is not the only ability needed to comprehend the broad subject of morality as moral conduct is also affected by affective and social elements. Moral education has been a part of training since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006). Socrates particularly emphasized virtue, indirectly focusing on the mind, especially philosophical thinking and reasoning. Through the use of Socratic methods, students were taught to use successive questions that guided them from ignorance to understanding (Cain, 2007). In this way, morality can be considered a wisely included integral element of education that guaranteed a multidimensional and constructive education, even in ancient times.

Aristotle also supported moral education. However, he promoted practising good actions in addition to having good thoughts. According to him, moral education was important for learning to live a virtuous life. Aristotle believed that if a person adopts good habits, he or she could lead a virtuous life; these ideas became the
foundations of present-day moral education (Kohlberg, 1975). Islamic pedagogy across time has also focused on a similar pattern of training and encouraged moral education (Narvaez, 1993). As noted by Halstead (2007), there is an intricate link between morality and religion in Islam, and Islamic education is strongly reliant on religion, which makes the Islamic moral values an inherent educational component. There are three kinds of values taught to Muslims through moral education: *akhlāq* (general duties and responsibilities imposed by Islam and the rule of shari’ah); *adab* (manners showing the person’s good breeding); and the qualities of a good Muslim character, exemplified through following the life example of Prophet Mohammad. The core difference between the Western and Islamic approaches to morality identified by Halstead (2007) is the latter’s emphasis on timeless religious principles and the role of Islamic law in enforcing morality. In the West, moral education is directed towards an achievement of moral autonomy and being rewarded for moral behaviour, while in Islam, moral education is about an inner change for the sake of an efficient internalisation of universal Islamic values.

One way of developing a child’s moral side has been described by Lickona, who claimed that “good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good – habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action” (Lickona, 1991, p. 51). This is similar to the method prescribed in Islam, that is, when a person knows about a particular quality or virtue, he or she tries to work on it and perform the deed virtuously. When a person wants to achieve moral reformation, they are better able to do so and start acting independently. This also enables people to feel better about themselves, their future attitudes, and affect society in positive ways.

The contribution of Islamic thinkers to Western and global research on moral education may be attributed to Al-Ghazali, the most quoted Islamic theologian in
Western literature because of his Ahl Al-Kalaam (Islamic scholastic theology) background and his revolutionary ideas that served as a turning point in the history of Islamic thought. The thinker worked on the revival of Islamic dedication and countered the weakening of faith among Muslims of his time. His central idea was that of lifetime commitment to serving Allah, which he found in the works of Ahl Al-Sunnah; moreover, Al-Ghazali suggested an outline for teachers to follow in their teachings similar to that proposed by Ahl Al-Sunnah (Young, Latham, & Serjeant, 2006). His suggestion encompassed the role of teachers in caring for their students while supporting them in learning. He implored teachers to continue the schooling of the students, and precluding them from dropping out because of improper behaviour. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali emphasized the need for teachers to become role models for their students, exemplifying all the moral and ethical attributes that they teach (Gunther, 2006, pp. 384 - 385).

According to Islam, once a person has a theological foundation, he or she is likely to live a virtuous life with proper morals. A person characterized by good morality ensures that he uses the knowledge and abilities that he has for the betterment of society. Prophet Mohammad greatly emphasized morality in education, and the Qur’an stated that Muhammad was sent by Allah to change the bad morality in people; thus, Islam has a very strong tradition of moral education based on Islamic religious teaching (Al-Shareef, 2010).

In the Islamic world, students would reach out to mentors, even if they had to travel very far to do it. They spent their time travelling just to be able to mingle with the ulema, as they considered them to be the best source of education in all respects. Spending time with their mentors allowed them to learn about life and apply their knowledge (Berkey, 1992). It was thought that true Islamic knowledge is not of much
use unless the person actually applies it in real-life contexts. Similarly, the Western curriculum has placed an analogous emphasis on moral character and the application of knowledge for the improvement of the environment and society (Berkey, 1992). Education was not limited to books and texts, but rather it was a communal activity through which one learnt (Neill, 2006).

This section showed the importance of moral education in both the Western and Islamic traditions of education and thinking. Evidence from the literature showed that both Western and Islamic thinkers placed an exceptionally strong emphasis on moral education as a source of human growth and the development of worthy members of society. Thus, the integration of the principles of moral education, as a lifelong commitment to self-enhancement and service to one’s society, may become a strategically vital component of contemporary gifted education.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the fundamental ideas that influenced gifted education in both the Western and Islamic traditions across time. The chapter discussed different concepts of education, basing its views on Western and traditional Islamic scholarships. It also presented an analysis of the views of Western and Islamic scholarship on knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence and moral intelligence. As the presented evidence shows, concepts such as these have had a presence in educational research since ancient times, both in the Western and Islamic worlds, but that this research has become more prominent in recent times and, in turn, this research has broadened and enriched our understanding of gifted education.

This chapter provided a detailed comparative discussion of Islamic and Western thought on each of the mentioned concepts, delineating the inherent tensions and
conflict between these two traditions that may potentially hinder their integration in a comprehensive gifted education program. For example, as analysis revealed, knowledge is still viewed in Islam as an intimate interaction of science and religion, while the major issue of concern in Western thought is that of the in-born versus acquired nature of knowledge. Intellect and intelligence are also viewed differently in these two traditions, with Islam still leaning towards a divine interpretation of the supreme level of intelligence, while Western thinkers focus on embracing all aspects, shades and manifestations of intelligence, stretching far beyond classical IQ testing and now encompassing creativity, leadership, superb communication skills, and other positive human characteristics. The discussion of wisdom revealed its understanding as connoting a superb mental capacity in present-day Western thought, which is counter to the Islamic view of committed service to Allah and seeing the higher order of things at the expense of selfish service to self-interest.

Spiritual, moral and emotional intelligences are generally understood similarly in both the Western and Islamic scholarly traditions, but again, it is vital to keep in mind that Islamic thought is much more firmly welded into the religious tradition and derives most of its guidelines for spiritual, moral and emotional education from its religious writings, rather than from the body of current scholarly research. Hence, all these conclusions have a direct impact on, and implications for, the design of gifted education programs for Saudi Arabia, especially given the need to make it both competitive against present-day global educational benchmarks (Western-imposed) and perfectly attuned to the authentic Islamic culture of Saudi students. The achievement of such a proper fit requires a better understanding of the foundational concepts of gifted education in the Saudi Arabian educational system, which is discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 7: COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION OF THE FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN SAUDI EDUCATION

7.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter is structured around the research questions and provides a discussion of the research findings reported in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Previous chapters outlined various educational concepts from the Western and traditional Islamic perspectives over time. The central concepts that have been analysed within the context of Western scholarship include: knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence and moral intelligence. In Islamic scholarship, such notions as knowledge, intellect and intelligence, spiritual intelligence and education, emotional intelligence and education, and moral intelligence and education have been considered. I also examined and compared these concepts across the two scholarships, providing an analysis of their development and interconnectedness over time and cultures. All the concepts have been discussed in relation to gifted education.

Through a comparative analysis, the influence of traditional Islamic and Western scholarship on each other will be discussed, identifying the clear points of commonality in relation to gifted education. The researcher aims to find the points of parity between the two scholarships in order to present a culturally significant curriculum of gifted education for Saudi Arabia. This chapter addresses the key findings in relation to the four research questions, namely: the primary concepts to be found in common between Western and traditional Islamic scholarships; the contribution of Islamic scholarship on Western thought; the contribution of traditional Islamic thinking on gifted education; and the balances of influence between the two
scholarships in education. This chapter is followed by a discussion that will help to explore and improve the curriculum system in terms of gifted education.

7.2 Discussion of Key Findings in Relation to the Research Questions. Research Question 1: What are the Primary Educational Concepts adopted by Western and Traditional Islamic Scholarships?

As mentioned in previous chapters, Western and Islamic scholars had a tremendous influence on the advancement of education. The presented research covered the six concepts, across time, which are believed to have affected the perception of gifted education and giftedness in general. Previous sections covered the views of the ancient Greek philosophers, traditional Islamic scholars, Medieval Christian scholars, as well as contemporary experts. In order to study the contribution of these views on giftedness and gifted education, the main conclusions concerning each of the six concepts are discussed below.

7.2.1 Linking Knowledge, Creativity and Gifted Education

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the researcher examined the perspectives of various ancient scholars on knowledge and its value in life. For example, the author analysed Plato’s essentialism which postulated that the mind is used to interpret different phenomena around individuals (Cooper, & Hutchinson, 1997). Furthermore, according to Aristotle, the mind is “the part of the soul by which it knows and understands” (Aristotle, 2014, n.p.). This philosopher suggested that people engaging their minds in practice become involved, observant, and “accumulate a lot of things in their minds” (Aristotle, 2014, n.p.). Therefore, coupled with experience and the environment, the
individual’s mind interprets and provides answers to life’s questions and the problems faced on a daily basis. In this way, a person receives an opportunity to decipher and understand a problem and provide several possible ways of solving it. In brief, Aristotle maintained that through continuous observation of the environment, as well as through obtaining the linking relationships between different phenomena, individuals achieve knowledge. In his way, Pythagoras related knowledge to a manifestation of creativity. This philosopher considered creativity as something divine, or unworldly. He suggested that individuals who had this manifestation of creativity were better than their peers and, hence, they became god-like. These individuals were considered “knowledgeable people” and, therefore, were gifted (Cooper, & Hutchinson, 1997). Knowledge, creativity and giftedness were now linked.

Research also emphasized the importance of individuals seeking knowledge in order to improve their lives. According to Al-Ghazali, the rationale behind gaining knowledge was to enable an individual to succeed in all walks of life (Al-Ghazali, 2010). Similarly, Al-Farabi suggested that an application of a percept (knowledge that is not yet corrupted or influenced) and a concept (knowledge attained through the world) would enable an individual to gain an identity in life (Al-Ghazali, 2010). According to Al-Ghazali, education in a conducive environment stimulates an individual's mind to fully understand and interpret different phenomena. Therefore, there is a need to expose individuals to conducive environments, as this would trigger the use of their minds to develop and understand basic life concepts and phenomena (Sweet, 2007).

Islamic scholars were unanimous that knowledge allows individuals to make appropriate decisions and life choices, thereby improving their daily experiences and maximizing their potential (Sweet, 2007). They also underlined that the search for
knowledge should be an ongoing process enabling individuals to improve their quality of life (Al-Ghazali, 2010). Education provides a platform for individuals to learn diverse knowledge and skills, including, but not limited to, religion, history, poetry, science, medicine, and many other fields. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously harness and develop knowledge through education, as it enables a person to maximize their inner potentials and skills and to gain a better control over their life. Knowledge, creativity and success in life were now clearly linked to education.

These findings underpin our contemporary idea that a system of education that places an emphasis on the need to continuously develop and harness knowledge for living a good life is essential. In order for gifted individuals to maximize their potential, they should be exposed to environments where they can learn new information and enhance their unique skills by linking creativity to learning.

7.2.2 The Concepts of Intellect and Intelligence in Gifted Education

Aristotle defined the human mind as “the part of the soul by which it knows and understands” (Aristotle, 2014, n.p.). This idea was further used to construct the concept of knowledge, which underlined that an individual should use their mind to clarify and understand phenomena while strategizing on a course of action. This theory was clarified by Aristotle in De Anima, the work in which he distinguished active and passive intellect (Aristotle, 2014). The latter meant an inborn capacity for certain intellectual awareness of basic concepts and the surrounding reality, while the former meant the active knowledge-construction capacity that could be exercised only consciously and intentionally by individuals through education and self-advancement.

Intelligence has previously been presented as a concept that differentiates individuals through their ability to understand complex ideas with the help of rational
thought and reason (Aristotle, 2014). Rational thought requires training. Ancient Greek and Islamic scholars both maintained that gifted individuals required extensive training to develop their rational thinking and improve their ability to understand (Cooper & Hutchinson, 1997). However, the concept of intelligence has always been discussed within the context of its relation to intellect, so the researcher explores these two notions as interconnected ones.

The research of Islamic thinkers related to intellect and intelligence has focused on Aql, the Islamic word for ‘intellect’, which is referred to as the capability of employing reasoning and passing good judgment (Al-Ghazali, 2010). According to Al-Ghazali, Al-aql is a gift from God, who presented humans with an opportunity to use their intellect, cultivate their desire for learning and, ultimately, gain ilm, knowledge. For gifted people to attain ilm, there is a need for them to develop both their intelligence and intellect, and to apply them to their advantage (Fakhry, 2002).

However, it is also essential to keep in mind that understanding of the Islamic attitude to intellect and intelligence would be incomplete without comprehending its intimate connection with Allah. As both Nasr (1979) and Ibn-Taymiyyah (1988) pointed out, Islamic thinkers have always associated intelligence with a connection to God, and Ibn Sina worked extensively on showing all the stages of intellectual development that people go through, and the Divine stage of Active Intellect that they can achieve through continuous self-advancement. Hence, the primary and ultimate purpose of intelligence development in the Islamic tradition is seen as binding one to God and one’s Origin, while intelligence in its essence is a way of perceiving God’s revelation.

Though in ancient times, both Western and Islamic scholars attributed much of their perception of intellect to the divine gift, with the passage of time (especially after the Enlightenment that established the rule of rational science and thinking in the
scholarly tradition), Western thought has come to regard intellect and intelligence in almost purely scientific terms. The development of IQ testing at the beginning of the twentieth century enabled scholars to quantify intelligence, and the theory of biological inheritance of advanced intellectual capabilities has possessed enormous influence in academic thought in the West for a considerable period (Galton, 1869; Terman, 1925; Mackintosh & Mackintosh, 2011). These tests were introduced primarily to measure the ability to solve logical problems, which was believed to reflect intellect and intelligence more than anything else did. However, scholars soon realized that IQ tests measured only a limited scope of people’s abilities, omitting such aspects of intelligence as the intrapersonal, interpersonal, spatial, music, kinaesthetic, mathematical, naturalistic and linguistic (Gardner, 2011; Mackintosh & Mackintosh, 2011). Therefore, Western research on the nature and criteria of intelligence expanded largely due to the introduction of the Structure of Intellect model by Guilford (1967), research on the triarchic multi-dimensional structure of giftedness presented by Sternberg (1985; 1986), and developments of Gardner (1995), in terms of multi-dimensional manifestations of intelligence through human performance.

These developments are obviously a positive step forward in the reconceptualization of intelligence as a multi-dimensional concept reflected not only in terms of the convergent thinking that IQ tests measure, but also in forms of divergent thinking such as creative problem-solving, emotional intelligence, spirituality, leadership qualities, etc. Hence, as one can see, there is a much more heterogeneous spectrum of opinions on the nature and manifestations of intelligence in Western thought now as compared to ancient, Medieval, and even modern twentieth century science. Interestingly enough, one may observe the convergence of Islamic and Western views on intelligence right now in terms of the increasing recognition of the
spiritual and emotional components by Western scholars, which was absent in the formal IQ testing approach of several decades ago. Islamic research on intelligence has traditionally incorporated the spiritual dimension of intelligence directed towards connection to God and fuelled by illumination through faith. Therefore, as one can see, there is sound reasoning for integrating Islamic and Western research on intelligence in search of a combined approach to gifted education.

7.2.3 The Concept of Wisdom in Gifted Education

Wisdom occupies a very important place in the history and present day understanding of giftedness research and the overall understanding of the dimensions through which intelligence and intellect manifests itself. As Taylor (2010) and Walsh (2014) clarified, among many other researchers, the concept of wisdom has grown to be viewed as increasingly complex in Western scholarly and philosophical thought across time, changing and adding some new dimensions alongside Western science’s developments. Initially seen as an exceptional skill for comprehending the surrounding reality at much deeper levels than ordinary people do, wisdom used to be perceived as a rare gift of the gods by ancient philosophers. However, the situation changed with modern advancements in scientific research, notably with Gardner’s (1988) conclusions about the diversity of in-born talents and capabilities that each individual can discover, and in which they can be trained and develop. Essentially, wisdom is also regarded as incorporating a moral dimension, that is, as knowing what is right, even though it does not necessarily presuppose doing what is right.

The Islamic scholarly tradition is much more focused on the spiritual, ethical and moral dimension of wisdom. Based almost solely on the tenets of the Qur’anic and Hadithic truths, Islamic wisdom is firmly immersed in religious rigour, strong moral
character, and not only knowing what is right, but necessarily doing what is right. As Turfe (1996) argued, Islam opened the gate to reason by claiming that all knowledge and truth comes from Allah, and making Islam a sure path towards wisdom. In the times of the Enlightenment, when Western thought was deprived of a spiritual and religious dimension, thus impoverishing its wisdom path, Islam did not face such a challenge, following its stable spiritual insights of religious rigour and dedication, leading to truth, understanding and wisdom. Thus, Islam promises wisdom to people who approach religion through liberation from ignorance and confusion. In this way, the self-dignity, self-identity and wisdom of Muslims come as natural complements to the Islamic faith, making it an integral component of spiritual, moral, ethical and religious education. Such analysis suggests that both the Islamic and Western thought increasingly recognized wisdom as an inherent human quality that can be developed through targeted work on self-improvement and through moral and ethical deeds and thoughts. Therefore, there is a viable opportunity to integrate the dimension of nurturing wisdom in the gifted education curriculum, based on the Islamic values of ethical and moral growth and the Western values of the search for truth.

7.2.4 The Concept of Spirituality and Gifted Education

Spiritual intelligence in general education has been highlighted by both Western and Islamic scholars. Emmons (2000) specifically pointed it out as an ability drawn from spiritual resources and enhancing human functioning and adaptation in terms of the search for ultimate meaning, the understanding of higher-consciousness and transcendence. A spiritually intelligent individual is the one capable of sanctifying everyday experiences while facilitating heightened states of consciousness and upholding virtue (Al-Ghazali, 2010). This study has suggested that the “conscious
effort” of an individual to be constantly aware of the “belief in God” and to be in “total submission”, while aiming at godliness, surmises spiritual intelligence (Fakhry, 2002, n.p.). It should also be noted that contemporary Western culture sees spiritual intelligence as something detached from religion and God, but still divine enough to give virtue and goodness to every action (Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

According to the research findings of Vialle (2007), Vialle et al. (2005), Noddings (1993), Ubani (2007) and Zohar and Marshall (2000), among others, spirituality is essential in education since it provides students with a platform to solve their problems, simultaneously adding meaning and value to their lives. Zohar and Marshall (2000) also emphasized that spirituality in education is an important attribute when defining giftedness in individuals. According to their study, the right implementation of cognitive intelligence is essential, but without spirituality and spiritual intelligence, this ability is diminished.

Spiritual intelligence adds meaning to the lives of gifted people. It is the way in which “we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another”, enabling individuals to become valuable contributors to the overall social good (Zohar & Marshall, 2000, pp. 3 - 4). Such an approach formed much of the Western perception of spiritual intelligence as a vital aspect of human cognitive, social and emotional development, as well as an integral educational dimension, because it fosters a harmonious integration of heart, mind and soul for the creation of meaning and purpose (Vialle, 2007; Vialle et al., 2005).

Spiritual intelligence has a very long research history in both Western and Islamic thought, the ancient Greek philosophers associated it with contemplative exercises directed at the comprehension of the divine dimension of human existence,
while Thomas Aquinas later associated spiritual intelligence with the integration of spirituality and knowledge. In Islam, the entire educational system has always relied on the spiritual dimension of human development because of a strong focus of education on religion. Thus, as Nasr (1979), Al-Ghazali (1988; 1995; 1996) and Alkanderi (2001) highlighted, Islamic educational curricula have historically focused on the development of good, spiritually rich, responsible individuals within the humanistic realm of embracing universal Islamic values. Therefore, the tradition of fostering spiritual intelligence through education is a very strong and long-standing one in Islamic thought, and its lessons may be learned by Western educators in order to enrich the conventional educational curriculum with a focus on students’ spirituality. Moreover, spiritual intelligence is an especially important facet of any education, including gifted education, in a Muslim country like Saudi Arabia.

7.2.5 The Concept of Emotions and Gifted Education

Despite the commonly held opinion about reason being the core and only guiding force of education, the legacy of human emotions has started gaining ground closer to the end of the twentieth century, taking its firm place in the discussion of intelligence (Goleman, 1995; 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Bar-On, 1997; Stys & Brown, 2004). Throughout history, emotions were often perceived as a sign of weakness, and even femininity (Planalp, 1999), and ancient Greek philosophers were against excessive emotions as a barrier to logical reasoning and rational thinking (Roy, 2015). Carblis (2008) also noted that the focus on reason guided medieval thought on emotions as well, with Thomas Aquinas pointing out the irrelevance of emotions in learning and the primacy of reason in the development of intelligence. The same tradition has guided Islamic thought. While Al-Jawziyyah (1972) emphasised the need
for practising *taqwa*, which is self-awareness, Tahir (2009) pointed out that Islam promotes emotional self-control as a key way of obtaining a virtuous life.

Hence, as is seen from this account, neither Islamic nor Western thinkers ever regarded emotion positively, requiring people to restrain their emotions as a sign of strength. Goleman’s ideas about multiple intelligences opened a new pathway for considering emotions as a leverage for human development, not a barrier to it. Hence, nowadays, emotional intelligence is much more connected with self-awareness, the advanced ability to recognise and address one’s own and other people’s emotions, as well as an aptitude towards enhanced relationship management (Goleman, 1995).

Emotional intelligence is generally characterized as the ability to perceive, integrate, understand, and regulate emotions for personal growth. Goleman (2012) considered it as the ability to probe the individual’s needs and manage them. Emotional intelligence also refers to the way an individual understands the self and others, makes an adjustment to settle into the environment, and copes with problems in a proper way (Carblis, 2008). When individuals understand, analyse, and manage emotions within themselves and others, they are more likely to lead improved, more wholesome lives.

Emotional intelligence is still an elusive concept and is hard to measure and analyse, but it still needs to be incorporated in the gifted education curriculum. The reason for this is that equipping gifted children with the ability to manage and control their emotions, as well as to understand the emotions of other people, would definitely contribute to their personal growth and maturity. Individuals should be taught the ways in which they can control their emotions and use them to affect their lives positively, which may potentially make the expression of human emotions more appropriate to certain circumstances and more beneficial for them.
7.2.6 The Concepts of Morality and Gifted Education

The last concept discussed in the chapter was the role of morality and moral intelligence in education, and their possible applications in the education of gifted children. An analysis of the research of Tirri (2007), Rest, Narvaez and Bebeau (1999), Hass (2002), Kohlberg (1969), and other scholars, revealed that moral intelligence connotes the human ability to improve actions with regard to excellence and moral virtues, as well as being a vital educational component preparing people for better citizenship. Narvaez (2008, 2010) postulated that moral intelligence is firmly grounded in emotion and reason, and provided neuroscientific evidence for the differences in moral functioning among humans, showing that maturity in moral functioning is the clue towards the proper integration of emotion, intuition and reasoning, fostering multidimensional human development. In connection with this evidence, inculcating moral sensitivity and motivation in gifted education is important because it enhances an individual's ability to decide and make judgments in various situations and contexts of life.

Incorporating a moral aspect in gifted education enables talented individuals to derive the best out of their lives. Through education, gifted children’s skills are sharpened, and their abilities enhanced way above their peers. According to Al-Ghazali (2010), the knowledge and abilities that such individuals derive from being taught morals can be used for the betterment of society. The intention of teaching morality to children, therefore, is to develop their personality and mould them into refined beings. The studies of Gil’adi (1992), Umaruddin (1970), Alkanderi (2001) and Al-Ghazali (1988, 1997) revealed that a balanced Islamic education aims at nurturing a good, responsible individual with good values and a focus on the right expression of his tendencies and impulses, which may be attained only through proper arrangement of
moral education within the formal educational system. Iqbal (cited in Abbas, 1989) also made a strong emphasis of the need for Islamic education to educate good men with lives full of active struggle, creative and original in character, and directing the power of their intellect towards the improvement of the world, which is also an outcome of efficient moral education. Hence, as one can see, the theme of having a sound moral basis for contemporary education is present in both Islamic and Western educational thought and research, which makes it imperative to include the moral dimension in the contemporary educational systems.

The literature indicates that teaching good moral values should be an ongoing process that individuals undertake in every sphere of their lives. Therefore, a curriculum that puts an emphasis on moral character is especially important in gifted education (Hass, 2002). Through a specifically designed education system, society could help parents and teachers instil good moral values in gifted individuals at all ages. Making this work is a specific challenge of modernity, especially taking into account the extreme focus on academic performance that guides gifted and general education agendas nowadays. However, as numerous centuries of Western and Islamic thought have proven, a clever and educated human cannot become wise and spiritually enriched if he or she lacks a moral dimension in their education. Morality is what helps people to determine what is right and wrong, and ensures that people use their skills and knowledge for the betterment of society, and not in their evil and selfish self-interests. Hence, taking into account the strategic value of gifted students’ knowledge and capabilities, it is necessary to equip them with a sound moral foundation for their education so that they learn how to use their skills for virtuous, responsible deeds that can transform their society for the better.
7.3 Research Question 2: What is the Contribution of Islamic Educational Philosophy to the Western Education System?

Islamic scholars have made a tremendous contribution to the study of giftedness and gifted education, affecting and developing the perceptions of education across time. Some of these contributions directly influenced views held by some Western scholars. Therefore, it is important to outline the roles played by Islamic authors in shaping Western perceptions of giftedness and gifted education. In the previous chapters, research has found that Medieval Islamic scholarship had a considerable influence on education across time. Islamic scholars translated, researched, developed, and preserved the classical works of the ancient Greeks (Russell, 2008). Their initiative stimulated Western scholarship to do further research, therefore nurturing and improving education and knowledge in general.

According to Bobrick (2012), a period from the eighth to the ninth century can be called the golden age of knowledge. During this time, Islamic scholars contributed immensely to the education and scholarships inherited from Greece and Rome (Russell, 2008). Evidence shows that Muslim scholars translated, preserved, examined and documented information in various areas of research such as medicine, mathematics and astronomy (Al-Ghazali, 1988; Akhtar, n.d.; Khaldun, 1967). As Duiker and Spielvogel (2015) state:

…after the fall of the Roman Empire, the philosophical works of ancient Greece were virtually forgotten in Europe or were banned as heretical by the Byzantine Empire. It was thanks to Muslim scholars, who stored copies and translations in libraries in Baghdad, Alexandria, and elsewhere in the Arab world that many Classical Greek writings survived. (p. 245)
They studied and interpreted the teachings of the ancient Greeks together with the
discoveries of other cultures, such as the Hindu and the Chinese (Duiker & Spielvogel,
2015; Perry, et al., 2009).

Undoubtedly, Islamic scholars can be attributed with an invaluable contribution
to the world of education and science. The Islamic scholars Al-Razi, Avicenna and
Averroes investigated theories attributed to ancient Greek philosophers such as
Aristotle (Bobrick, 2012). Their interpretation and enhancement of the ancient theories
was then studied in the advanced centres of education created in the capitals of the
Islamic empire (Sonneborn, 2006). Avicenna, also known as Ibn Sina, excelled as a
philosopher of medicine and he studied and improved many principles of Greek
medicine (e.g., the interpretation of Greek medicine principles in the Islamic
framework, the unification of theoretical and practical aspects of medicine, the
documentation of medications’ effect on the human body and the development of
numerous medications and treatment modes for illnesses unknown to Greeks) (Selin,
2013, p. 435). His book, The Canon of Medicine, was extensively used in European
medical schools until the modern period. Almost a century later, Averroes researched
extensively in the field of medicine and published books that influenced modern
medicine; he wrote over 20 books upon becoming the court physician in Marrakesh
(Sonneborn, 2006, p. 72).

Furthermore, through interactions with the Persians, Islamic scholars refined the
numerical system that was practised by the ancient Hindus (Rezende, 2006). Interestingly, the discovery of an Arabic manuscript written by Al-Shatir in the
fourteenth century promoted Copernicus' theory about the nature of the universe.
Islamic scholars’ prediction of the movement of the sun and other planets contributed
to the creation of the lunar calendar and navigation. It is also useful to mention that
Islamic scholarship was nurtured by other cultures apart from the Greeks. While in Persia, the Muslims acquired knowledge of astronomy from Sanskrit writings (Sharma, 2012). Muslim, Indian, Chinese and Greek theories were tested and incorporated by the Islamic scholars. Rhazes, for example, who was a philosophy student, perfected Greek, Persian and Indian medicine. He made a significant contribution in the field of paediatrics and psychology (Glick, Livesey, & Wallis, 2014).

Islamic capitals such as Baghdad and Cordoba experienced an age of edification because of their newly created academic schools (Sonneborn, 2006). This edification attracted many scholars and students from all over the world who were interested in the acquisition of Islamic knowledge (Sonneborn, 2006). Some of the European students who came to study in Islamic schools later carried the received knowledge back to the West. An example is Constantine the African, who is credited with bringing to Italy the ancient Greek medical knowledge greatly advanced by Islamic scholars (Glick et al., 2014). The Medieval Western scholar, Adelard of Bath, also travelled to Islamic countries in search of knowledge. This man is famous for writing works on geometry, mathematics and astronomy that were used by Western scholars (Sonneborn, 2006). Leonardo Fibonacci, a merchant who travelled extensively through the Arabic-speaking lands, learned the new number system and brought this knowledge to Europe. Fibonacci wrote a book that was used by the Europeans to introduce the Hindu-Arabic numerals to the West (Rezende, 2006). As seen herein, knowledge was actively transmitted, interpreted and developed through the interaction of various cultures and scholarships, and this interaction significantly changed the way both Western and Islamic scholars perceived education.

Evidence clearly shows that the traditional Islamic scholars played an important role in the advancement of knowledge (Bobrick, 2012). These scholars translated and
further researched the theories of the ancient Greek scholars, as well as absorbed the knowledge of the Persians, Chinese and Indians (Sonneborn, 2006). Through Islamic schools, this knowledge was shared with the rest of the world, including Europe. Western scholars perfected several views of Islamic authors, therefore assisting in the advancement of knowledge (Glick et al., 2014). Briefly, traditional Islamic scholarship had an immense influence on the Western perceptions of education. Nurtured by the ancient Greek philosophers, and influenced by the most developed cultures, the Islamic world managed to preserve and transmit the invaluable scope of skills and information that was further adopted by the West, at the same time as enriching the scope and body of knowledge and beliefs that the ancient Greek philosophers held about education. Due to the fact that Islamic thinkers preserved, translated and adapted ancient Greek teachings to their authentic Islamic framework, the Western reason-based approach became enriched and diversified with the alternative dimensions of human intelligence, such as a profound moral basis and spiritual emphasis. In this way, Islamic scholars engrained the idea of the multidimensionality of a human being that has to be fostered through education, especially gifted education that is needed to develop good citizens acting and thinking responsibly regarding their society. This is an important perspective for a thesis designed to formulate an appropriate gifted education approach for a profoundly Muslim country like Saudi Arabia.

7.4 Research Question 3: How has the Traditional Islamic Educational Perspective Affected Global Thinking in Relation to Gifted Education?

As the researcher has previously mentioned, Islamic scholarship has made a significant contribution to the perception of education across time. Traditional Islamic beliefs significantly influenced generally accepted views on how individuals achieve
the knowledge that is beneficial to them and society in general. This section outlines how traditional Islamic perspectives have influenced giftedness and gifted education.

It is essential to note that the roots of gifted education in the Islamic tradition may be found in the influence of Plato and Al-Ghazali – both held a firm belief in the strategic importance of a society’s intellectual elite (Batterjee, 2013). Islam puts a great emphasis on the necessity to seek knowledge through education. The traditional Islamic perspective expects children to constantly mature and develop their Islamic personality (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013, p. 308). According to Islam, the child’s personality should be developed in such a way that a person becomes conscious of their responsibility to God. Therefore, traditional Islamic education is based on the Qur’an, the Hadith and the Sunnah, and is aimed at imparting to children an awareness of God while developing their identity. Therefore, gifted education in an Islamic environment should necessarily encompass spiritual and moral aspects that would enable gifted individuals to form their personality and identity.

Numerous researchers (Al-Ghazali, 1988; 1996; Al-Farabi in Hammond, 1947; Nasr, 1979; and others) pointed out that the core focus of Islamic education has always been directed towards holistic human development, both in terms of formal knowledge and in terms of religion and spirituality. Islamic education aims at ensuring a balanced growth through an intensive training of the spirit, intellect, emotions, and the rational self. Findings have shown that education aimed at combining the personality of the individuals with the Islamic system of values in order to attain higher levels was postulated by Allah (Nasr, 1979; Gil’adi, 1992). Therefore, training in gifted education should take a holistic approach that aims at developing an individual's spirituality, intelligence, self-awareness, and relational skills. It is true that gifted education in Islamic countries is quite a new notion, which was mostly borrowed by the Islamic
world from recent Western traditions, but one cannot help suggesting that the initial impetus for looking at the individual, not only in terms of measurable intellect but also in terms of strong morality, spirituality and virtuousness was provided by the Islamic tradition of holistic education and character-building advocated by Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Qutb and Ibn Sina.

7.5 Research Question 4: What Elements of the Western and Islamic Educational Systems does Saudi Arabia Need to Develop in Order to Implement a Balanced and Comprehensive Policy for Gifted Education?

According to the findings presented in the previous chapters, Western and traditional Islamic scholarships have placed a great emphasis on the need to continuously seek knowledge. Al-Ghazali may even be credited with the development of a distinct theory of knowledge within the Islamic tradition. As he claimed,

…true knowledge is connected with the science of *ma’rifa* and the real meaning of *ma’rifa* is knowledge of man’s relation to God at the time of being drawn near to Him through knowledge or being veiled from Him by ignorance. (Al-Ghazali, 1996, p. 25, tr. 44, adapted)

This study has shown that both the traditional Islamic perspectives and Western scholarship postulate the need to engage the mind actively to acquire knowledge (Cooper, & Hutchinson, 1997). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that a country like Saudi Arabia needs a system of education that advocates for a continuous approach, engaging the minds of the students to the full extent. As rightly pointed out by Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013), the modern Saudi educational system is still strongly focused on Islamic studies and societal values, and places the greatest
emphasis on students’ acquisition of Muslim ideals and their growth into virtuous, law-abiding citizens contributing to the state’s prosperity. Intelligence is still viewed as a gift of God, so gifted students in Saudi Arabia are considered a valuable asset of the country and the entire world, so the major concern of Saudi authorities now lies in developing the proper systems for detecting gifted individuals, giving them sufficient development and educational resources, and catering for their needs for advanced growth and the attainment of exceptional intellectual abilities (Sanchez-Escobedo, 2013). In other words, the Saudi educational system has a strong spiritual dimension but it lacks significant advancement in terms of research and development, science and technology, and the integration of contemporary pedagogical and scientific approaches for fostering the multi-faceted and, which is even more important, independent development of gifted individuals.

The study has also shown how Islamic and Western scholarships advocate a holistic approach, one enabling children and students to grow in the various aspects of life, including but not limited to spiritual, mental, emotional and social growth, which promise full and harmonious development of each gifted individual (Tapper, 2012; Greenfield, 2011; Nasr, 1979). In Saudi Arabia, the focus on Islamic studies is very strong, while this post-colonial country still experiences the profound impact of Western educational systems and values (Cook, 1999). Saudi Arabia, as an Islamic country, needs a system that is structured in such a way that the various aspects of individual lives are taken into consideration during the process of education, so that the veneration of human reason over divine revelation typical of the West would not come into conflict with the Islamic principle of Tawhid, which means oneness – the harmony of the spiritual and the temporal. Such an improvement is possible in Saudi Arabia only if it manages to develop initiatives like Mawhiba and the Gifted Care Centre, and Saudi
authorities overcome the problem of a scarcity of school resources, insufficient numbers of qualified teachers able to cater for the advanced needs of gifted students, and the type of rote memorization learning that is typical in Saudi Arabia, but hinders gifted education because of its passive, non-inquisitive nature (Alnahdi, 2014; Alqefari, 2010; Al-Ghamdi, 2007). Another challenge for the Saudi Arabian educational system to overcome is the current debate over the differentiation of instruction. As Al Fahaid (2002) and Batterjee (2013) both emphasised, there are differing opinions regarding either providing separate instruction to students with average and outstanding abilities, or providing gifted education within the ordinary classroom environment. Hence, there is much that Saudi Arabian gifted education may derive from both Islamic and Western ideas, mostly regarding the perceptions and arrangement of the gifted education process.

It is also essential to keep in mind the repeated emphasis of researchers on the role of a proper environment for fostering and developing gifted students’ potential across a variety of dimensions, and to the fullest degree. Following the advice of Al-Ghazali (Revival, Book I, p. 26), true knowledge should be embodied in action, which creates the perfect unity of knowing and doing. Such advice may be successfully accomplished by means of changing the educational system in Saudi Arabia in such a way that learners stop being passive consumers of education, and would assume an active role in their education (Black, 2011). An education system should be structured in such a way that the learning environment allows gifted individuals to discover their potential and maximize it as much as possible, which is the primary purpose of Mawhiba (Mawhiba Introduction, 2015).

With the era of globalization in progress, it seems logical to suggest that a reasonable balance of both the Western and traditional Islamic perspectives could
ensure the comprehensive education of gifted children and empower them to build their careers in a fast changing world.

7.6 Contribution of the Research to Existing Knowledge

Based on the findings presented above, the research has managed to make a number of contributions to the existing knowledge on gifted education. First, the researcher analysed how Western and Islamic scholarships have placed an emphasis on the various concepts believed to improve the lives of individuals and society. The researcher has noted how ancient Greek, Islamic and modern scholars interpreted the concepts of intellect, intelligence, morals, emotions and spirituality in relation to giftedness. An analysis of the evidence has shown the necessity of engaging gifted individuals in continuous training in order to sharpen their skills and knowledge in different spheres. Therefore, the research has managed to shun the myth that gifted children do not need additional education and training (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006).

The findings of this research have also highlighted the Islamic scholars’ contribution to the advancement of science and technology (Glick et al., 2014). From the research, it becomes obvious that Islamic scholars played a crucial role in ensuring that ancient knowledge was preserved, improved and shared with the rest of the world (Russell, 2008). Intensive research done by these scholars laid the foundations of the scientific and technological advancements in the present world (Glick et al., 2014). Research has also shown the contribution of various scholars to the development of a curriculum for gifted education (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). In general, the researcher contributed to a theoretical framework that is essential for the implementation of a gifted curriculum. The findings of previous chapters proffer that a
comprehensive approach must be employed in order to ensure the retention and
development of giftedness among talented individuals, and that this is important for
those individuals as well as their societies. This is a vital point for this thesis, whose
goal is to propose an innovative approach to gifted education for Saudi Arabia.

7.7 Chapter Summary

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this study have examined the various educational
concepts postulated by Western and Islamic scholarships in relation to gifted education.
Although the two perspectives are quite different in part, they place a similar emphasis
on the importance of enhancing knowledge, intellect and intelligence, spirituality,
emotions and morality. From the presented arguments, the researcher can formulate a
framework aimed at improving a curriculum for gifted education (VanTassel-Baska &
Stambaugh, 2006). This framework suggests various ways that gifted individuals could
be handled in order to maximize their potential and increase their ability to find a place
in the contemporary environment. The researcher is convinced that a holistic approach
which includes various aspects of human development, such as spirituality, emotional
stability and morality, is needed to support gifted children in Saudi Arabia.
CHAPTER 8: APPLICATION TO SAUDI GIFTED EDUCATION POLICY

8.1 Chapter Overview

The present chapter is dedicated to providing recommendations for the development of a sound gifted education strategy for the Saudi educational system. The initial section of the chapter is a synthesis of the key concepts related to giftedness and gifted education as revealed by a comprehensive review of the Western and Islamic literatures. The preceding chapter discussed the key elements of gifted education formulated by both Western and Islamic scholarships. In the case of a Muslim country like Saudi Arabia, it seems more beneficial to integrate the advancements of Islamic scholars as carriers of the Muslim culture affected by the scientific thought of the West.

8.2 Research Summary

The above chapters provided in-depth insights into the formation and evolution of the concept of gifted education in both Western and Islamic scholarships. The preceding comparison of two different perspectives on the structure and content of a holistic approach to education revealed similarities in the ideas. Both perspectives recognized knowledge as the foundation of personal development, stating that only practice is conducive to acquiring knowledge. Otherwise, it is a simple delivery of information and facts and figures that does not facilitate the development of an individual’s analytical skills and intellectual abilities. While this position of Western scholarship relied on the ideas of prominent Greek philosophers, such as Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras, Islamic scholars referred to lines in the Qur’an, asserting a lifelong search for knowledge as a primary goal of all humans. Both of the investigated
perspectives indicated that an on-going accumulation of knowledge is a means of developing intelligence that allows for the making of sound decisions and forming reliable judgements.

For Western scholars, the peak of an individual’s intellectual capabilities is the wisdom that equips a person with the creative and critical thinking skills enabling them to act with respect to others and society at large, while achieving personal goals. Islamic scholars viewed wisdom as the outcome of an individual’s spiritual intelligence. While seeking a union with God, a person learns and comprehends the importance of the eternal truths and laws stated in the Qur’an. Though not linking wisdom with spirituality directly, Western scholars also recognized the value of spirituality in the development of an individual’s personality and giftedness. In addition, both scholarship consider morality and emotional management as assets for personal development and success in life. Hence, the present research determined six aspects of gifted education that should be incorporated in a comprehensive educational strategy to promote and foster an individual’s personal development, namely, knowledge, intelligence, wisdom, spirituality, emotional management and morality.

8.3 Recommendations for Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia

This research has shown that giftedness is an issue of special interest in the research and practice of many developed and developing countries nowadays, and the secret of gifted education initiatives’ success lies primarily within the fields of a well-thought-out design of the programs; clear and concise definitions of gifted students eligible for gifted education; the design of flexible and individually tailored educational interventions fitted to the needs and special interests of gifted individuals; proper implementation considerations; and concise evaluation metrics (Al-Otaibi, 1993;
Aljughaiman & Ayoub, 2012; Alqefari, 2010). The Saudi Arabian educational authorities are indeed concerned with the promotion and development of gifted education in Saudi Arabia, which may be seen from the numerous gifted development initiatives and the establishment of Mawhiba 15 years ago, which has already brought about considerable improvements. However, in line with these positive changes, researchers repeatedly point out the weaknesses of the gifted education programs stemming from a lack of financing, ambiguities in defining gifted students, a lack of professionally trained teachers, and an absence of sound assessment measures (Alamer, 2014; Al Qarni, 2010). In the context of gifted education, it is critical to expand the borders, encouraging students’ individual experiences, allowing analysis and judgment, and maintaining the links with the core values and cultural norms of their society in order to foster the development of citizens able to contribute to society’s growth and prosperity. Therefore, the present section presents recommendations for improving the Saudi Arabian system of gifted education based on the number of identified critical points in which it lacks consistency and strength: the structure and focus of Saudi education; a lack of curricular innovations; the need to transform the teachers’ role in education; and the need to integrate the Islamic and Western legacies into the creation of a multi-dimensional, integrated gifted education system. Each of these points is discussed below.

8.3.1 The Drawbacks of the Current Saudi Educational Policy

Saudi educational authorities are definitely concerned about the adequate provision of gifted education to Saudi students, which may be witnessed through the creation of the Talent Search project in 1995 and Mawhiba’s establishment in 1999 (Aljughaiman & Ayoub, 2012). As a result of these targeted efforts, the exceptional
The needs of gifted students and the limitations of the traditional Saudi Arabian educational system that hinder their development have been recognized, but the development of adequate ways of addressing the advanced educational aptitudes and interests of gifted students is still under way. As pointed out by Alamer (2014), gifted and general education are still inseparable in the Saudi education system, so gifted students are urged to study in classrooms with untrained and unqualified teachers, existing within the conventional educational structure that does not allow them to reach their fullest potential. Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012), on the contrary, pointed out that numerous gifted education programs have been established within the past two decades in Saudi Arabia, but their major flaw is in the pull-out approach, allowing gifted students to achieve greater heights of intelligence development but only within the framework of summer enrichment programs or special education programs that take them out of their normal surroundings.

Hence, as one can see, the approach to organizing gifted education is quite inconsistent in Saudi Arabia, with the needs of gifted individuals and the ways of addressing them being not fully understood so far. The core reason for such discrepancies may be found in the adoption of the outdated IQ testing methods of gifted students’ identification, which means that giftedness in Saudi Arabia is still detected only by the parameter of academic performance, long ago identified as insufficient for a full-scale evaluation of giftedness in the West (Al Qarni, 2010; Alqefari, 2010). Moreover, one should note the lack of a comprehensive and unanimously accepted definition of giftedness in Saudi Arabia, which makes it harder to identify, categorize and manage gifted individuals. More than that, gifted education in Saudi Arabia often turns out to be tied to privilege rather than objective intelligence and giftedness. As observed by Alqefari (2010), the children of wealthy, powerful and respectable Saudi
Arabian families are disproportionately over-represented in gifted education classes, which betrays the very ideal of gifted education tailored to aptitude, not origin and financial status. Alamer (2014) also offered a strong emphasis in his analysis of the low efficiency of gifted education in Saudi Arabia on an over-reliance on Islamic and Arabic studies and religious education, at the expense of science, mathematics, ICT, language skills, sports, and other disciplines vital for the multi-aspect, comprehensive development of gifted students.

Judging from these observations, one should note that the problem identified by Cook (1999) is still persistent in the Saudi educational system. This Islamic state faces a challenge of arranging its educational curriculum in such a way that it would pay adequate attention to religious instruction for the sake of the preservation of authentic cultural values, and at the same time provide the Western-style formal education and skills necessary for gifted individuals to succeed in their quickly developing and modernising country, as well as to contribute to its development and growth. This challenge is coupled with an uneven distribution of gifted education facilities across Saudi Arabia, so that rural territories and areas with smaller towns traditionally remain outside the process of the talent search and gifted education provision (Alamer, 2014; Aljughaiman & Ayoub, 2012; Alqefari, 2010). An absence of clear plans and strategies for gifted education’s integration into the Saudi education structure aggravates the situation further, so gifted education remains a matter for the enthusiasm and initiative of a handful of teachers and policymakers in the Department of Education, never reaching large-scale integration into Saudi educational practices. Solving these problems is a lengthy and complex task, which is nevertheless accomplishable if change starts with the appropriate curricular innovations discussed in the next section.
8.3.2 Curricular Innovations Required for Effective Gifted Education in Saudi Arabia

As the Mawhiba Schools Partnership (2015) visualisation supposes, gifted education in Saudi Arabia is designed to educate students as future leaders, learners of distinction, and innovative entrepreneurs, which may be achieved only by equipping gifted students with such qualities as responsibility, confidence, a drive to improve things around them, creativity, innovation, and academic/intelligence excellence. However, there is a problem concerning the instruments with which Saudi educational authorities want to achieve those outcomes. As noted by numerous researchers, including Alamer (2014), Al-Garni (2012), Finley (2008) and Gagné (2005), among others, learning styles need to be changed to foster more independent learning and thinking in the Saudi Arabian education system for the sake of catering for gifted individuals’ educational interests and needs more adequately. So far, the learning styles in Saudi Arabia include almost exclusively lecturing, rote memorisation and passive knowledge consumption (Alkhale, 2014; Al-Ghamdi, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). Teachers possess much authority in Saudi classrooms, which hinders students’ self-reliance in education and does not allow them to excel in their intelligence development and think creatively (Alkhale, 2014; Alnahdi, 2014).

In addition to the problems of old-fashioned, non-creative and strictly limiting learning styles, the content of the Saudi curriculum leaves much to be desired, being non-conducive to integration of gifted education essentials. Alamer (2014) emphasised the fact that 60% of all classes in Saudi Arabia are still occupied by Arabic and Islamic studies, while only 40% are allocated to language, sciences, technology, and other vital academic disciplines. More than that, even the heavy reliance on Islamic studies does not guarantee a proficiency in spiritual and religious development because the
Arabic/Islamic education is too fragmented and disjointed, with all separate disciplines within this complex taught in an isolated manner from each other, thus limiting the applicability and unification of the body of knowledge in Saudi students. Alnahdi (2014) supported those claims of Alamer by criticising the arrangement of Saudi education, as a result of which students memorize material but do not understand it, which leaves them with huge blocks of information that they cannot successfully apply to real-life problem-solving, the betterment of their society, and effective, creative innovation.

In connection with these disadvantages of the Saudi curriculum currently presenting the largest challenges for gifted education integration, the recommendations of Shavinina (2013) about innovation education may be highly applicable in the Saudi Arabian educational context. As the researcher pointed out, gifted education alone cannot ensure that gifted individuals will become innovators, since innovation represents the implementation of ideas to form new products, processes and services, and it requires entrepreneurial giftedness – the type of giftedness not always included in the conventional perception of giftedness. Educating gifted individuals to equip them with entrepreneurial giftedness (which may be seen as an integral component of the Mawhiba Schools Partnership (2015) plan) requires the provision of high-quality science and technology education, the identification of entrepreneurial giftedness at the early stages of its manifestation, the recognition of students’ unique vision, teaching them practical intuition and creativity, and instilling the qualities of wisdom and moral responsibility into their character (Shavinina, 2013). As pointed out, “wisdom is behind the success of every human endeavour” (Shavinina, 2013, p. 38), which is vital for the Saudi education system as well. For gifted individuals to become truly positive innovators contributing to the social well-being and betterment of their country, they
have to possess a strong morality and should perceive their responsibility for the future of their country, and the entire world. Hence, Saudi schools (in line with the recommendations of Al-Ghamdi (2007) and Alqefari (2010)) should take responsibility for raising gifted individuals as wise and morally responsible persons knowing how to improve their societies, taking care of humanity, and knowing the consequences of their decisions and actions.

The final point which is vital in the discussion of the curricular changes required for the successful integration of gifted education into the Saudi educational system is that of the differentiation of instruction. As noted by Al Fahaid (2002) and Batterjee (2013), as well as observed by the researcher, the differentiation question is the cornerstone of present-day educational reform in Saudi Arabia. While some researchers believe that gifted students have specific, unique, advanced educational needs and interests, so they need differentiated instruction that will provide the resources for meeting all of them, while others emphasize the need for gifted students to function freely within the conventional educational system. In this way, the pull-out approach of differentiated, separated instruction comes into conflict with the integrated approach in which gifted students should remain within the general education system but would be guided through advanced education by skilled teachers. At this point, the role of teachers in the provision of a comprehensive gifted education gains prominence, since they become the primary contributors of gifted education success in the case of an integrated approach. This role, and the way in which teachers may perform it, is discussed in the following section.
8.3.3 The Role of Teachers in the Integrated Gifted Education Curriculum

As research findings of Alamer (2014), McGrail (2005), Rogers (2002), Al-Makhalid (2012), Alqefari (2010), and other scholars suggest, the transformation of the teacher’s role is a driver for changes in the roles of students and school administrators. Encouraged and supported by teachers, students are likely to reveal their intellectual potential by engaging in various activities. Alqefari (2010) also pointed out that teachers are responsible for using new materials and methods in the integrated classroom, which makes them agents of social change working in daily school routines, and improving the students’ leadership skills, and their social and scientific research skills for their better advancement in various academic disciplines. More than that, it is the task of teachers to educate the parents of gifted students about the importance of gifted education, so that to ensure the continuum of education in all domains of gifted students’ functioning and interactions. Under the effective supervision and guidance of teachers, students are motivated to a continuous self-investigation and development and a search for new learning opportunities and sources. Therefore, the process of improving the existing education system and curriculum starts in the classroom where teachers and students collaborate on determining and selecting the ways of facilitating an accumulation of knowledge and skills (Alamer, 2014; Reynolds & Miller, 2003).

The teacher’s role has traditionally been that of a mentor in Saudi education, which contributed to the creation of numerous limitations and restrictions for gifted students’ self-paced development. Therefore, now the teacher’s role has to shift to that of a facilitator, a person directing students’ ideas and learning experiences and clarifying the ambiguities to improve the overall educational advancement. This may be done through the enhancement and modification of lessons, assignments, and
scheduling (McGrail, 2005). Rogers (2002) researched the qualities that teachers should possess in order to cater for gifted students’ educational needs effectively, and concluded that such teachers have to possess a high degree of intelligence and intellectual honesty, expertise in specific academic areas, should recognize the importance of, and prioritise, intellectual development, and should possess a strong belief in individual differences and the individualization of education. Furthermore, they should have advanced teaching skills and a vision of how education should be provided, and should be self-directed in learning with a love for advanced knowledge. These abilities, coupled with emotional stability, are regarded as the ideal profile of a successful teacher effectively addressing the diverse and advanced educational needs of gifted students (Rogers, 2002). Hence, Saudi teachers have to pay special attention to these characteristics, should develop them, and should strive to achieve excellence in their profession to become more effective and experienced in the provision of sufficient educational resources and facilities for high-ability students.

At this point of the discussion, the concept of teacher training and preparation should be taken into account, since it is regarded as the root cause of problems with the provision of differentiated instruction for gifted students within the mainstream classroom (Alamer, 2014; McGrail, 2005; Rogers, 2002; Al-Garni, 2012; Al Qarni, 2010). Teachers being at the forefront of policy reforms’ implementation, they have to possess the necessary knowledge, experience, and positive attitudes to educate gifted individuals, which is very scarce in the Saudi Arabian educational system. So far, even in the USA there is no specific licensing or training required for teachers to deal with gifted students – a modern, developed Western country implementing all the cutting-edge scientific advancements into its educational practices. This is highly problematic, since as Lassig (2009) noted, classroom teachers produce a strong impact on gifted
students’ development, and their attitudes are a significant factor contributing to or hindering it. Thus, it is essential to provide teachers with detailed knowledge and training on catering for gifted students’ needs, as increased knowledge, training and experience have been repeatedly found to have a strong positive correlation with improved attitudes to gifted education in mainstream classrooms (Al-Garni, 2012; Al Qarni, 2010; Alqefari, 2010; Al-Makhalid, 2012). The improvement of teachers’ attitudes may become a vital step towards making the change towards effective gifted education work.

8.3.4 The Integration of Western and Islamic Ideas about Giftedness for the Enhancement of Saudi Gifted Education

Relying on the two analysed perspectives, it is possible to indicate the elements developed by Western and Islamic scholars which need to be integrated in a gifted education strategy for Saudi Arabia. According to its purpose, and the policies of the Saudi gifted education strategy, Mawhiba, the implications concern an extensive knowledge acquisition in order to reveal and utilize an individual’s intellectual potential for creativity in order to develop innovative thinkers for Saudi society. Western scholars, echoed by their Islamic counterparts, share a belief that knowledge is obtained through practice when an individual applies theory to real-life circumstances. Otherwise, a person is unable to apply the gained theoretical concepts to succeed in life.

As already indicated above, the Saudi educational system is still grounded on the principles and procedures prescribed by the twentieth century British educational framework. Developed in times of high respect for, and obedience to, teachers, the educational system practised in Saudi Arabia today is grounded on the concept of collectivism and carefully following a teacher’s instructions. It has a learning
environment that seeks to measure all students by the same set of narrow criteria, such as standardized exercises, which is the most widespread form of information-giving practice. Such teaching practices neglect the individual students’ needs, interests and learning preferences. Thus, it is essential for the Saudi educational system to create an educational environment which encourages and promotes practical activities, which may become the first feasible step towards transforming the religion-based, theory-reliant educational system into a practically applicable one providing gifted students with real-life problem-solving skills, creative entrepreneurial skills, and an overall practical basis for applying their advanced intellectual abilities and innovative ideas for the betterment and progress of Saudi society.

As indicated by Muslim scholars, pure information and the laws of nature transform into a solid knowledge base through various inferences. In the case of the old-fashioned Saudi educational system, the change should address the role of teachers as well. Instead of the simple delivery of material, they are to serve as mentors, counsellors and advisors to their students, allowing their comprehension of information through practical experiences, both in the classroom and outside. Therefore, educational programs aimed at knowledge acquisition should recognize the individual differences in terms of information perception and comprehension. Classroom activities should encompass discussions, cooperation, and competition, while homework assignments should address an individual’s ability to align theoretical knowledge to individual observations and experiences of natural phenomena.

The accumulation of knowledge leads to the development of an individual’s analytical skills, creating the ability to make thoughtful and sound decisions, as indicated by Western scholars. In Islamic scholarship, intelligence is a complex concept encompassing intellect and reasoning. An intelligent person in the Islamic tradition of
scholarship is one possessing a solid knowledge base and an understanding of the links between various life phenomena and facts. Therefore, the lifelong search for learning and knowledge ascribed by Allah in the Qur’an and the Hadith constitutes the basis of individual intelligence. Knowledge complemented by analytical skills and creative thinking enables a person to achieve their personal and social objectives. I believe the most critical point of gifted education is to equip an individual with the skills and abilities allowing them to serve society in order to foster its development and growth.

The final aspect of the gifted program determined by scholars and recommended for integration into the Saudi educational system is moral education. In addition to the values and behavioural examples described in the Qur’an and the Hadith, a person learns about moral standards and principles from the society they live in. As claimed by Islamic scholars, it is obligatory for parents to start moral education from the first days of a child’s life. School education, as the key social mentor, should stress the moral values and standards of conduct appreciated in society in order to raise sensitive and responsible citizens. Hence, moral intelligence refers to knowledge of the moral values and principles to be observed by humanity as the Creator intended it. Tolerance, respect for others, and other basic morals are qualities that distinguish human beings from animals.

8.4 Chapter Summary

The present chapter was dedicated to an analysis of the ways in which the Saudi educational system may be improved to embrace gifted education principles and ideas, and which aspects of the currently existing Saudi educational practices should be changed and reformed in compliance with the research findings on an optimal and balanced integration of gifted education into the national educational system. The basic
premise on which the recommendations of this chapter rest is that of the old-fashioned, too religion-reliant and theoretical nature of the Saudi educational system fostering passive learning, rote memorization, and lecturing as the only viable learning strategies of students. Such an organization of education definitely hinders students’ abilities to develop and grow in accordance with their advanced intelligence skills, and limits creativity and entrepreneurial giftedness in gifted students, which is the most promising path for creative innovation and social progress nowadays. To address these weaknesses in the Saudi educational structure, the researcher recommended making appropriate changes in the content and structure of educational provision, reforming the curriculum to diversify and optimise it, by preserving the Islamic and Arabic studies for the sake of cultural preservation, but at the same time enriching it with fair respect and attention to prominent academic disciplines such as ICT, language development, science and maths, and strong technology education. According to the Mawhiba plan, Saudi gifted students should become the future leaders and innovators of Saudi society, so achieving this may be possible only through a structural reform that places more significance on the independent learning of students, self-paced knowledge discovery, changing the role of teachers from mentors to facilitators, and integrating key ideas from the Western and Islamic scholarships on the concept of giftedness into a new integrated gifted education program in Saudi Arabia.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

As we have seen, from ancient to medieval times, and through to today, scholars across both Western and Islamic cultures have pondered the essential concepts related to giftedness, concepts such as knowledge and intelligence and precisely what these mean in regard to a person described as a gifted individual. We have seen that there are
many commonalities across these two cultures but we have also seen that some inherent differences emerged. While Western culture has become increasingly inclined towards a rational and empirical basis as modern science and secularism have developed, Islamic culture has remained firmly embedded in a prioritizing of the spiritual dimension. It is essential to note that, notwithstanding these differences, the major fundamentals of gifted education gradually came to be shared in these two traditions and this is vital for Saudi Arabia as it becomes more and more dependent on Western advances in education while nonetheless retaining its roots in Islam.

The study’s findings have provided a sufficient basis for developing an integrated curriculum in the post-colonial state of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, a conclusion reached logically by this researcher is that religious science, as a traditional educational component of Saudi education, must be allowed to retain its role in being responsible for the spiritual and moral development of students, but it should go hand in hand with the secular sciences that play their role in fostering and maintaining an integrated approach to the development and advancement of students’ intelligence. Initiatives like Mawhiba show that there is an increased awareness among Saudi educational authorities for the need to foster knowledge, intelligence, and spirituality in an integrated way while, at the same time, complementing them with strong social and cultural values. This will be possible only if the wisdom and best practices of both Western and Islamic scholarships are integrated in a balanced and thoughtful way for the provision of a curriculum that is Western, in terms of being scientifically enriched, but at the same time authentically Islamic in its spirituality and saturated in those universal Islamic values that sit at the heart of the Saudi nation.
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