

*Educational Leadership for an Equitable, Resilient  
and Sustainable Future*

# **ISLAMIC-BASED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

**CHALLENGING EXPECTATIONS THROUGH GLOBAL  
CRITICAL INSIGHTS**

Edited by  
Khalid Arar, Rania Sawalhi, Amaarah DeCuir  
and Tasneem Amatullah



# Islamic-Based Educational Leadership, Administration and Management

Offering a vital, critical contribution to discussions on current perspectives, practices and assumptions on Islamic education, this book explores the topic through a wide range of diverse perspectives and experiences.

This volume challenges current assumptions around what is known as Islamic education and examines issues around educational leadership based on Islamic principles to confront xenophobia and Islamophobia in educational systems, policies and practices. Arguing for a new term to enter the discourse – ‘Islamic-based’ educational leadership – chapters approach the issue through critical reflexivity and diverse perspectives, addressing issues such as the higher education of immigrant students around the globe and the rising tensions in Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Exploring topics ranging from the leverage of leadership to religious education, this text brings together a wide range of case studies, experiences and examinations to shed light on the different approaches of Islamic-based educational leadership, administration and management.

This book will support researchers, doctoral students and scholars involved with multicultural education, school leadership and management studies, and education policy and politics more widely to explore new theories and practices that pave the way for future educational systems to meet faith-based demand in the school choice era.

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# Introduction

*Khalid Arar, Rania Sawalhi, Amaarah DeCuir and  
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Education from an Islamic perspective has a rich and complex history of published thought and examination, representing hundreds of years of work by scholars and theologians. Although early works were disseminated as published material, they sought to communicate primarily with Muslims seeking to deepen their faith practices rather than exploring educational leadership opportunities. So, how did Muslims and Arabs design educational systems that led to the Golden Age? While many researchers, such as Shah (2015) and Brooks (2019), have tried to examine educational leadership from an Islamic perspective, today's scholars have opportunities and capacities to produce scholarship for global audiences and seek to provide quality education to all learners (including Muslim learners in secular areas), learn from previous experiences, and redesign educational and schooling systems to prepare students for the future rather than react to current educational challenges, which are increasing rapidly during times of uncertainty.

Islamic scholarship bears the weight of the historical legacy of Islamophobia. Defined as a “fear of Islam, and a fear of Muslims”, Islamophobia is commonly attributed to discriminatory interpersonal relationships and biased public discourse. But Islamophobia, operating across academia, has had devastating marginalizing impacts on Islamic scholarship, making the intellectual contributions of Islamic thought invisible, although some scholars claim that they are trying to uncover the values and Islamic principles involved in developing the whole person and improving educational opportunities, such as uncovering the veil to recognize new prospects.

This transformation is remarkable within academic structures that privilege secular constructs and Western practices. It is likely attributed to renewed motivations to uncover what has been socially marginalized and contributes to the increasing number of scholars examining Islam-based work. Many of the researchers examining these educational paradigms and practices are outsiders to the communities they seek to study. This increases the academic risk of reproducing voyeuristic studies that confuse readers and mislead other researchers and practitioners. Therefore, this field of study can only advance with the inclusion of researchers who clarify their positions and epistemologies, especially since the Muslim diaspora continues to change as it responds to contemporary political and social realities, and the research emerging from these spaces reflects those changing dynamics. This transformation has resulted especially from the rise in Muslim emigration to



Western nations in recent years because of globalization and conflict, increasing forced migrations from the Middle East due to the collapse of different states experiencing constant wars (e.g., Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya), and migration from the Global South (e.g., Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other Asian countries) to the Global North for a better life and education (Arar et al., 2017; Shakeel, 2018). The liberation of the European colonies has also led to an upsurge in the migration of Muslims to states that were formerly colonies—sometimes by invitation and sometimes due to economic challenges—for example, from Pakistan and India to the UK, from many countries in Africa to Belgium and France, and from Indonesia to Holland (Burnett, 2017).

This global rise of Muslim migration has engendered racism and Islamophobia that has manifested in the rise of anti-migrant political parties in Europe and other countries. At the end of 2018, there were 25.8 million Muslims in Europe (4.9% of Europe's population). This reality and social dynamic increased the number of Islamic or Muslim schools, which were the subjects of public and political debate throughout the world (Arar et al., 2017). Therefore, many voices have highlighted the need to provide quality education to Muslims in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries (Arar et al., 2017; Ezzani & Brooks, 2019; Hashim & Jemali, 2017; Nthontho, 2018). In addition, many countries around the world are witnessing a rise in Islamic schools that are private and public, formal and informal (Clauss et al., 2013; Merry & Driessen, 2016; Muslih, 2019), due to these dynamics of global migration.

## **Educational opportunities for Muslims**

In his book *The Development of Educational Theories in Islam* (1985), Al-Kaylani presented how different types of teaching and learning methods and institutions evolved during the Muslim centuries and compared these to modern educational theories. Although the book is written in Arabic, Al-Kaylani had a unique way of defining the terms based on the Quran and Hadith. His approach highlights the need to avoid using ambiguous terms based on assumption, especially when translating the terms to another language, or without a sound knowledge of the Quran and Arabic. In addition, his book shows how educators neglected what had been achieved by previous Muslim and Arab scholars, especially in providing educational opportunities for learners to help them prepare for the future and the afterlife.

Although Samier and ElKaleh's (2019) book provides an overview of several topics that are relevant to constructing an approach to teaching educational administration and leadership in Muslim countries, a review of previous studies shows confusion over the terms used—e.g., Islamic education, Islamic educational leadership, Muslim schools, Islamic schools, madrasa, Islamic teachers, and Muslim teachers. This confusion might be due to several reasons, such as the translation of the terms, different understandings of scholars' interpretation of the Quran and meanings of Hadeeth, and different practices according to the context, culture, and purpose. For example, the word "madrasa" might refer to schools in general, or it might describe a specific type of education that focuses on teaching the Quran and Islamic subjects (Ayagan et al., 2014; Bano, 2014; Park & Niyozov, 2008), as will be explained in the next section.

Therefore, we found a need to delve into the current status of educational leadership related to Islam and Muslims, voice some experiences, and try to provide suggestions regarding Islamic educational leadership. It is notable that scholars define an Islamic school as “a religious school where the Quran is taught in the Arabic language and where Islamic principles and core values are instilled along with academic courses required by the state in which the school is situated” (Clauss et al., 2013, p. 3). The integration of secular academic subjects and religious education makes Islamic schools distinct from madrasas or Quranic schools that solely teach the memorization or exegesis of the scripture. In addition to other schools that have Muslims as the leaders, teachers, students, and stakeholders, they may or not include religious education, but they are Islam-based for the incorporation of Muslim values and practices by the community. Although Islamic education has deep roots in community-based education, there are examples of government-led schools with Islamic practices located in Muslim-majority and minority contexts. These schools employ both Muslim and non-Muslim educators in leadership roles. Together, all of these school types are what we call “Islam-based”, a term meant to capture the diverse range of school types that are united through context, curriculum, or learning objectives that reflect Islamic practices.

Having said this, it is important to note that although many Muslim students attend public schools with the aforementioned criteria, many Muslim countries are witnessing the rise of Islamic schools, which might be due to the parents’ choice to provide better educational opportunities based on Islamic principles. However, Almohtarby and Neal (2013) show that the terms “Muslim” and “Islam” are sometimes used inappropriately in a way that might confuse or conflate Islamic practices with tribal practices. While Islam spread and consolidated its influence around the world, tribalism remained entrenched in the politics and social organization of Arab and Muslim countries, and confusion has persisted for many non-Muslims about what is truly Islamic.

Islamic jurisprudence has developed over the course of 14 centuries. Various schools of jurisprudence have emerged in this span of time, each with its own interpretation and application of the Shari’a. Muslims follow different interpretive approaches and applications. Given this enormous complexity, we have been concerned with highlighting the need to avoid assumptions in exploring schools driven by faith or value systems and to contribute to multicultural understanding given the current state of global migration and the unavoidable meeting of different cultures (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018).

In both Western and Eastern settings, Muslims face challenges that reflect their socio-political-cultural environments (Ulfat, 2020). Scholars state that educational leadership from an Islamic perspective is informed by diverse cultural and faith-based traditions such as Sunni, Shi’a, Ahmadiyya, and Sufi (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2006).

These traditions shape the values and beliefs within these communities and influence the leadership styles that thrive there. Ezzani and Brooks (2019) highlight that “[b]y virtue of this affinity, a premium is placed on the harmonization between the values and beliefs of the school leader with those of the school and its

community” (p. 784). As such, research is needed to examine how school leaders express their beliefs and values in multiple Muslim contexts and how their leadership practices shape their work across their schools.

By introducing a new term, “Islam-based educational leadership”, this book aims to challenge the current perspectives, practices, and assumptions toward what is known as Islamic educational leadership—especially since Western perspectives on the topic emphasize the ethical and moral system that is considered to be the core of the Islamic leadership framework—and in this way contribute to cross-cultural understanding of school leadership and faith-based schools. Furthermore, AlmoHarby and Neal (2013) write,

Islam is a universalist rational-legal worldview in just these ways. If one reads the argumentation in Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of leadership in the Islamic world, one is struck by the logical similarities with later Western discourses on the subject, particularly those of Weber (1978). Likewise, the deliberations of Al Farabi on subjects such as education, governance and justice are clearly rational-legal in their argumentation and analysis (Al-Talbi, 1993). Indeed, Muslim discourses, drawing lessons from the Quran and the Sunnah, are in the most part identical in logical and discursive structure to later Western jurisprudential argumentation (Weeramantry, 2001; ). In both, there is a common seeking for ruling on the particular from precedent, and universal principles; and, there is the striving to clarify universals through argumentation about prior particulars and agreed-upon universals.

(p. 153)

Despite the long history of institutionalized education in Muslim-majority nations, defining educational leadership from an Islamic perspective is still in its theoretical stages and requires more in-depth studies and investigation (Jubran, 2015; Shah, 2006). And in Western contexts, there is limited examination of educational leadership in Muslim schools centering on leadership experiences and fewer attempts to define its theoretical constructs (Ahmed, 2011; DeCuir, 2016; Khalil & DeCuir, 2018).

In this book, we differentiate between leadership and being a leader, as educators can demonstrate leadership without occupying formal positions (Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2019; Sawalhi & Sellami, 2021). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) wrote that culture must be centered on the examination of leaders and leadership, and Brooks and Mutohar (2018) indicated that Islam conceptualizes the enactment of leadership in a manner that reflects its faith tenets. As such, our representation of Islam-based leadership demonstrates a unique form of leadership that is rooted in religious knowledge and practices. In Islam, leadership is a community mandate to establish justice and equity codified in religious texts. Uniquely, it is assigned to those who lead prayers and community institutions and governments, for both men and women. Therefore, Islam-based leadership in educational institutions is understood as a spiritual act just as much as it is an administrative, managerial, or strategic act of leadership (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018). Our text examines how Islam-based leadership is conceptualized and practiced in Muslim education spaces globally, and we show how authors understand Islamic-based educational leadership,

management, and administration differently, which led to our model presented in the conclusion chapter.

## **Islam-based forms of education leadership, management, and administration**

Our attempt to define what we call Islam-based education is an effort to bridge the core concepts associated with schooling in Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts. It is inclusive of public and private institutional structures and covers the spectrum of Muslim ideologies. It is Islam-based regardless of the context and structural distinctions because it is rooted in the traditions of Islam as practiced by diverse Muslims.

The attention given to multiple geographic contexts enables us to propose a concept that transcends socio-cultural and political boundaries that often divide Muslims according to how they practice Islam. Instead, we seek to identify the essential practices of school leadership that are present in nation-states led by Islamic law, as well as in minoritized communities where leadership is often resistant to dominant secular discourse. This contributes to some leaders' roles as bureaucrats tasked with implementing policies and political initiatives through their schools. Others perceive in their work as community leaders a responsibility for developing a school institution that advances faith practices. Across these spaces, leaders are tasked with examining their local contexts and developing leadership competencies that reflect the tenets of Islam and affirm the practices of their Muslim school communities.

Islam-based educational leadership, management, and administration occur in both public and private educational spaces, often depending on the political context in which they occur. Notably, establishing Islamic schools in a Muslim country or leading schools in Muslim countries is different from leading and managing Islamic schools or educating Muslim learners in secular societies (Danish Shakeel, 2018; Merry & Driessen, 2005).

Muslims encourage formal and informal teaching and learning to instill lifelong values. In early centuries, mosques played an important role as an Islamic educational institution, and then madrasas became predominant until the 19th century, when Muslim countries began following the Western models of schooling (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2010; Bano, 2014; Park & Niyozov, 2008).

Park and Niyozov (2008) attempted to categorize education related to Muslims into four types. The first type is education of Muslims, which describes the process of teaching future generations about Islamic subjects, and which might be offered formally or semi-formally, such as through mosques and study circles. The second type is education for Muslims, where Muslim learners study Islamic subjects and secular subjects in Islamic schools. As Park and Niyozov write, "Islamic schools aspire to embed Islamic epistemology and praxis into the formal and hidden curricula and teach all subjects from an Islamic perspective" (2008, p. 324). The third type is education about Islam, which happens in public schools where the curriculum is enriched with information about Islam and Muslims and certain religious accommodation services are provided to Muslim students. The fourth type is education that is diffused through socialization processes, through which Muslims get

exposed to Islamic education without participating in any formal education. However, we believe that the distinction between the Islamization of knowledge and the classification of secular subjects is still unclear, as Muslim scholars study medical subjects and astronomy in addition to learning the Quran and Hadeeth.

Parents may choose to raise their children with Islamic values that might not be reinforced in public schools, even in Muslim countries. Unfortunately, the negative stereotyping that occurs with the labeling of educational practices with Islamic subjects affects educational provisions in many countries, not only in the West but also in many Arab countries where increasing rejection of many Islamic values and thoughts is taking place under the umbrella of Islamophobia or the renewal of Islam. Moreover, as scholars emphasize, many educators have benefited from reviewing Islamic values to develop their own educational systems and practices (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Ezzani & Brooks, 2019).

While many scholars such as Brooks and Mutohar (2018) have tried to develop what they call Islamic educational leadership frameworks, we argue that “Islam-based educational leadership” is an umbrella term that might occur in different forms and at different levels. In the West, non-Muslim leaders provide educational opportunities for Muslim students in public schools with the consideration of their culture and religion. Sometimes non-Muslim leaders head international Islamic schools in Muslim countries. There are also Muslim leaders who lead schools in both Muslim and non-Muslim contexts and integrate high morals within the educational systems they lead. Since previous studies have introduced new concepts such as Islamic feminism (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018), Islamic instructional leadership, Rabbani leadership (Hammad & Shah, 2019), Islamic character-building curriculum or values (Ahmed, 2012), and Murrabi (Kazmi, 1999), scholars need to clarify the meaning of the terms they are using. They must not assume that the suggested principles represent Islam or Muslim leaders across all centuries and countries.

## **This book**

Undoubtedly, notable scholars in this field have contributed significantly to the growing field of Islamic leadership, but in this book, we introduce the term “Islam-based educational leadership” by adding more clarity to the existing literature and presenting a wide range of scholarship, including novel insights and emotional, ethical, and social justice perspectives and cases in K–12 and higher education from some regions of the world. This book presents voices from different countries and even from the same country to share different insights and perspectives. The following section provides an overview of the 14 chapters, which are divided into three parts.

### ***Part I: Between past and future: New insights***

This part encourages the reader to rethink how we define Islam-based educational leadership and how to present old or new concepts from a new perspective that might encourage scholars to connect previous Muslim scholarship with contemporary trends through an analytical lens with new insights.

***Part II: Islam-based educational leadership in secular countries***

The authors in this part provide a tour of different contexts that might be affected by secular policies, including those of the USA, the UK, Türkiye, and Southeast Asian countries. We acknowledge that these countries do not include all practices, and such a scope cannot be achieved in one book. However, these chapters aim to encourage the reader to re-explore their own context.

***Part III: Models, voices, and new insights from Muslim communities***

This final part focuses on different models the authors have shared from the countries they selected and that they have called a Muslim community. We might as editors disagree or agree with many of the findings mentioned by the authors. But we prefer to provide a space for each author to present their own insight and encourage the reader to reflect upon and connect the shared insights and ideas as we try to model a conclusion that could be used by researchers and practitioners when they work on educational opportunities from an Islamic perspective.

**Chapters overview**

***Part I: Between past and future: New insights***

- 1 A call to re-explore Islam-based educational leadership through new lenses
- 2 The Islamic “Khilafah” model of educational leadership: From the Prolegomena to Desiderata
- 3 Managing emotions in schools: Insights from religion sources and a model for educational leadership
- 4 Be the light: Islam-based teacher leadership

***Part II: Islam-based educational leadership in secular countries***

- 5 Islamic antiracist school leadership
- 6 Islam-based educational leadership in marketized UK higher education: Balancing securitization, marketization and Islamic values
- 7 Educational leadership in a Muslim and secular country: The case of Türkiye
- 8 Schooling system and admiration practices of religious education: The case of the Imam-Hatip schools of Türkiye
- 9 Islamic educational leadership: Southeast Asian perspectives

***Part III: Models, voices, and new insights from Muslim communities***

- 10 UAE school reforms and leadership: What can be learned from Muslim scholars’ perspectives and contemporary insights?
- 11 Islamic educational leadership and a model Islamic high school: Insights from Türkiye
- 12 An untold narrative of a female Muslim educational leader

- 13 Islamic humanocracy and educational leadership: The story of a community school in Egypt
- 14 From community to the state to individual preachers: The vicissitudes of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia

This cutting-edge edited volume advances our collective understanding of Islamic-based educational leadership as it exists and is imagined in different education systems, cultures, and nations and contributes to fostering a multicultural landscape. The book encouraged scholars to produce new knowledge across the intersections of Islam and education leadership. The book includes three parts following the introduction, in which we clarify the main terms and trends related to Islamic-based educational leadership stemming from different national and cultural contexts.

Part one bridges the gap between the past and future of Islamic-based educational leadership by presenting novel insights in the field and includes four chapters. The first chapter offers a comprehensive mapping of Islamic-based educational leadership scholarship from the 1990s and 2000s using a systematic review approach. The chapter identifies the literature in two broad themes of leadership and policy with the majority focusing on leadership models and issues. The second chapter sheds light on new insights driven by significant leverage for leadership in the history of Islam. Al-Attari and Essa in their chapter “The Islamic ‘Khilafah’ Model to Educational Leadership: From the Prolegomena to Desiderata” advance an Islamic-informed “non-language intensive” model to educational administration entitled the *Khilafa*-Model. The term *Khilafa*, as used in the Quranic, verse no. 30, captures the quintessence of man’s existence on earth. The model integrated the Islamic core belief system, particularly the positions on man, universe, and life besides some ontological and epistemological issues; the value system, the characteristics of the Islamic worldview, and *Maqasid Al Shar’ia*, which are brought about to bear on organizations. We find that *Maqasid Al Shari’a* is a very important concept that should be included in educational leaders’ preparation and development programs to equip them with proper understanding and decision-making. The third chapter of this part introduces another model of teacher leadership and how teaching is a profession of faith. The orbit model Sawalhi developed highlights how teachers can influence others both inside and outside the schools. In the final chapter of this part, “Managing Emotions in Schools: Insights from Religion Sources and a Model for School Leadership”, Toprak and Karakus reveal how leaders are expected to convey effective emotional signals by utilizing appropriate social and emotional expressions to create a positive emotional climate at school. In Islamic leadership, it is advised to spread the salutation of peace as frequently as possible and use nice words and gestures to inform others about our positive feelings.

The second part of this book presents examples of Islamic-based educational leadership from secular countries. With Islamophobia and racial stereotyping at their peak, Chapter 5 highlights that antiracism is not a 21st-century call to action nor a modern social concept; it is a deeply rooted faith-based obligation embodied in Quranic and Prophetic foundations of justice and equity. DeCuir shows that

Islamic antiracist school leadership exists within the defined work priorities of American Muslim school leaders. This work is Islamically rooted because it is grounded in Quranic and Prophetic principles of equity and justice, and privileges faith as a motivation for leadership work. The next chapter in this part guides us to issues related to higher education, such as maintaining Islamic identity through teaching Islamic studies online and market-driven practices. Lahmar contributes to the ongoing debate around the growth and development of Islamic-based educational institutions in Western contexts. Specifically, it focuses on Islamic-based higher education institutions within the British context, with particular emphasis placed on analyzing the impact of changing policy contexts on the possible development of accredited and validated institutions. In Chapter 7, “Educational Leadership in a Muslim and Secular Country: The Case of Türkiye”, Karatas discusses different aspects of school administrators in Muslim societies in the case of Türkiye compared to other countries. Türkiye has a modern education system, and most of its population is Muslim. Social and cultural reasons and pedagogical and institutional consequences of the differentiating qualities of school administrators in the Muslim community are emphasized. In the following chapter from Türkiye as well, Er, Sahin, and Doğru offer another case of Imam-Hatip schools of Türkiye by examining the historical integrity and the purposes of the establishment of these schools while shedding light on the overall schooling system and administrative practices of religious education. Thus, they examine a school founded with the aim of training imams and preachers within a central education system where the state control is intense. Sumintono and colleagues in the closing chapter of this part, review literature on Southeast Asian Islamic leadership categorizing the research evidences based on methodological approach as conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative.

In the third and final part, we present five chapters sharing unheard voices from Muslim communities. First, Blaik, Litz, and Ali conceptualize two key features of UAE reforms within the realm of medieval Muslim scholars’ perspectives and contemporary educational trends. These include the adoption of moral education (ME) and English as a medium of instruction. Specifically, ME will be conceptualized in terms of critical pedagogy and the principle of social justice. Second, Türkoğlu and colleagues draw attention to the gap in the literature by presenting the case of a successful Islamic high school with a distinctive character of Imam-Hatip School in Türkiye that has been at the center of political discussions surrounding their purpose and outcomes since their establishment. Third, Amatullah shares a story of a female educational leader, analyzing it with an Islamic leadership framework. She advocates the all-encompassing nature of Islam in community life, emphasizing that these leadership behaviors and practices are not restricted to Muslims alone to practice; rather, all communities can embrace them. Fourth, El Odessa, in her chapter entitled “Islamic Humanocracy and Educational Leadership: The Story of a Community School in Egypt”, presents a new model called *Iqra’s* leadership model through a number of foundational pillars and practices—namely, (1) *shura* and collective decision-making, (2) empowering culture of freedom, (3) self-accountability, (4) shared and distributive leadership, (5) decentralization, and (6) relational trust. Fifth, Fauzi and Muhammed take the



reader to the context of Islamic studies in Malaysia as they explore some new neo-traditional initiatives, examining their educational contents, motivation, and leadership backgrounds and style to show the potential of the newly empowered traditional Islamic learning axes within the existing conventional Islamic studies milieu.

Finally, the book ends with closing thoughts, drawing conclusions and presenting recommendations. In this chapter, we compare the various models/concepts discussed in the book and highlight lessons to be learned from them, including their shortcomings. We propose a comprehensive Islamic-based educational leadership model based on the ecological framework for researchers and practitioners to critically reflect on their epistemologies. In addition, the book provides a profound overview of the preceding chapters, draws conclusions from the main findings, suggests recommendations for various stakeholders, and discusses implications for further research, policy, professional development, and praxis, as fully explored in the concluding chapter.

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**Part I**

# **Between past and future**

New insights



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# 1 A call to re-explore Islamic-based educational leadership through new lenses

*Khalid Arar and Rania Sawalhi*

## Introduction

Researchers have highlighted that the Western perspective dominates educational leadership and related research and knowledge production (Hallinger & Hammad, 2019; Hammad & Al-ani, 2021; Hammad & Hallinger, 2017). Educational leadership from an Islamic perspective has so far been underrepresented, despite all the general efforts to review Islamic perspectives on leadership and, more specifically, educational leadership (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018; Pedder, 2016; Shah, 2006; Shakeel, 2018). This could be for several reasons. First, the definition of leadership alters depending on the individuals who are defining it (Bush, 2008, 2017). Islam has introduced its own terms similar to leadership that are rooted in the Quran (Muslim's holy book) and Hadith. As Brook and Mutohar (2018) mention, "The term leadership is conceptualised ... as ra'in (leader), khalifa (steward), and amir (ruler)" (p. 3). Also, it is expected from a leader according to Islamic thoughts, to meet his commitments to God, as well as to serve with the best for his followers (Khan, 2007). Ali (2005: 146) explained leadership in Islam:

The Traditional view of leadership in Islam is that leadership is a shared influence process. Leaders are not expected to lead or maintain their roles without the agreement of those who are led, and at the same time, decisions made by these leaders were expected to be influenced by input from their followers. The process is dynamic and open-ended and the ultimate aim is to sustain cohesiveness and effectiveness.

In contrast, Beekun and Badawi (1999) argued that there are two main roles in Islamic leadership: servant-leader and guardian-leader. Through the idea that serving for humans is a part of Islam, Islamic leaders serve for their followers, support their well-being, and guide them to show the truth. As a guardian-leader, Islamic leaders protect their community against oppression and foster justice.

Second, education has two different meanings in Arabic: *tarbiyah* (training and development) and *ta'lim* (education). Muslim translators might mistranslate these definitions, which would affect their perspectives and practices (Sellami et al., 2019). Education in Islam aims to connect learners and individuals with their

creator (Allah) and develop them spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally (Al-Kilani, 1985).

Third, the terms “Muslim” and “Islam” might be used inappropriately in academia—and life, in general. For example, Muslims are categorized into Sunni, Shi’a, Ibadhi, etc., and each group has a different classification of Hadith, which, in turn, affects the group’s understanding of Islam (Almoharby & Neal, 2013).

Fourth, educational opportunities could be provided for Muslims in different forms (formal and informal), such as Madrasa,<sup>1</sup> which means schools that teach the Quran and Islamic studies in some Muslim countries, or international Islamic schools that provide educational programs while teaching the Quran as extra lessons and character-building programs (Aijazi & Angeles, 2014; Ayagan et al., 2014). In addition, as new and immense waves of migration have assimilated Muslims into largely Anglophone countries, public schools in these countries that enroll and provide educational opportunities for Muslim students have become more multicultural (Revel, 2012; Shah, 2016; Waghid, 2014).

Having said this, we claim that the studies that explored educational leadership from an Islamic perspective might be discounted, as they reflect Islamic principles and perspectives in a world that suffers from Islamophobia and racism. The stigmatization of Islamic culture encourages ignorance, inequality, racism, and xenophobia (Nasir, 1985; Revel, 2012; Shah, 2016; Waghid, 2014). This stigmatization is far from the ethics of fairness, equality, and compassion that have developed over the last few centuries in Islam (Waghid, 2014)

Notably, Muslims are still trying to understand how Islam forms individuals to be Rabbani learners who understand their human role and their place in the universe (Hammad & Shah, 2019). Islam emphasizes that individuals have their role to protect, and they must sustain what Allah has given them on Earth, both of which are maintainable goals. Our cogitation is based on a systematic review over the last three decades of Islamic leadership, management, and policy. The findings and our own experiences (one of the researchers used to supervise student-teachers of Islamic studies during their practicum experiences, and she used to work as an Islamic international school principal) necessitate the need to once again explore how researchers investigate Islamic-based educational leadership. This chapter is indifferent to linking educational leadership in the West and Islam. However, we call on researchers to reconsider their previously held epistemologies, perspectives, and definitions. The main topic to be addressed is through the lens of how Muslim scholars have paved the way for educational leadership that, in turn, has transformed their communities.

Interestingly, and as many leadership approaches have emerged, including charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, systematic leadership, authentic leadership, among many other styles/approaches (Bush and Glover, 2014; Shah, 2016), scholars have tried to explore these approaches from Islamic perspectives (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Ezzani & Brooks, 2021; Hammad & Shah, 2018). While previous studies mention that Islamic spiritual leadership focuses on doing good deeds and considering work as worship, there is a dearth of studies that link Islamic education to preparing individuals for the afterlife.

## **Educational leadership in Muslim scholars' lens**

Arar and Haj-Yehia (2018) explored four traditional-theological Muslim scholars from the Golden Age (GA) of Islam (932–1167 AD): Ibn Miskawaih, Al-Qābsī, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Māwardī, and Al-Sama'ānī. They highlight that there are fewer mentions of Muslim scholars' involvement in the enhancement of educational thinking in our time than scholars from other, non-Muslim nations. This omission of Muslim scholars in the discussion is odd, as Muslim scholars during the GA developed humanistic and rationalist philosophy and knowledge that enlightened Europe and introduced Islamic culture to other nations. The GA (8th–13th century) was well-known for its freedom of speech and diligence (*ijtihad*), where “groups of Muslim scholars known as ‘scientists and sages’ provided religious, scientific and academic interdisciplinary enrichment, founded on Islamic ‘sharia’ law” (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018).

Researchers highlight that in Islamic culture,<sup>2</sup> Muslims in general and educators and scholars in particular must adhere to the Quran and Shari'a. Arar and Haj-Yehia (2018) contend that there are two types of leadership in Islamic culture: religious and social. Furthermore, they argue that

scholars are also considered beneficial for the Islamic nation; they are responsible for improving life's quality. Scholars bear the responsibility for education and are therefore seen as educational leaders “(in fact scholars are considered to be the successors of the prophets according to the ‘hadith’” (p. 71)). We support this assertion in this chapter, as scholars undoubtedly help transform their communities and assist individuals' developments, for both their lives and afterlives. Indeed, “the world consists of elements that do not alter under the influence of time, context and place and they are governed by religious principles and knowledge of Shari'a; (b) all these elements are part of a whole (holistic) life system”.

(Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018, p. 71)

Muslims believe that Allah sees them at all times. Therefore, Islamic culture provides many examples of how Muslim leaders (including educational leaders) should strive to provide the best services for all users, relying on Allah as he/she acts as a role model (*qudwa hasana*) for students and teachers (Alatari, 2008). In addition, Arar and Haj-Yehia provide more than ten characteristics of educational leaders, including being honest, acting responsibly, and encouraging collective responsibility. Furthermore, they emphasized that the leader must be humble in dealing with teachers and staff, and his attitude toward them must strive for equality and justice without any discrimination. This should be manifested in his actions, as in Islam, “there is no benefit to information and science that is not judged by morality that protects it” (Shah, 2016). As aforementioned, “God oversees your actions” (Quran, al-Ahzab, 52). Muslims must abide by the moral code outlined in the Quran. In summary, to a certain extent, the values of Islamic-based educational leaders do not seem to be significantly different from the values expressed in contemporary educational literature, and the required practices are the same as those conceptualized in contemporary literature (Marzano et al., 2005).



In the same vein, defining educational leadership from the Islamic perspective remains in the theoretical stage and needs further in-depth studies and investigation (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). Many scholars state that educational leadership from the Islamic perspective is informed by diverse cultural and faith traditions, such as Sunni, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and Sufi (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2016). Saada and Magadlah (2020) clarify that

Islamisation has become part of the religious education discourse in postcolonial countries during 1940s–90s and the debate about this ideology is still going on. ... Note that Islamisation should not be viewed as a unified or agreed concept because different and competing Islamic traditions (Shi'a, Sunni or Sufi) may have their own definitions of Islamisation ... and the implications of Islamisation in the field of education.

(Saada and Magadlah, 2020, p. 2)

Based on the characteristics such as integrity, ethical values, and justice, spiritual leaders make a bridge between individuals' social relationships and their moral reflection. Fry et al. (2017) identified the missions of spiritual leadership:

Spiritual leadership involves motivating and inspiring workers through a transcendent vision and a corporate culture based on altruistic love. It is viewed as necessary for satisfying the fundamental needs of both leader and followers for spiritual well-being through calling and membership; to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels; and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of employee well-being, organizational commitment and productivity, social responsibility, and performance excellence.

(p. 24)

Notably, launching Islamic schools in a Muslim country differs from leading and managing Islamic schools or educating Muslim learners in secular societies (Merry & Driessen, 2005; Shakeel, 2018). Parents choose to raise their children on Islamic values that might not be provided in public schools, even in Muslim countries. Ezzani and Brooks (2019) highlight that “[b]y virtue of this affinity, a premium is placed on the harmonization between the values and beliefs of the school leader with those of the school and its community” (p. 784). Many educators have benefited from reviewing Islamic values to develop new frameworks and encourage best practices (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Ezzani & Brooks, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to analyze what had been studied between 1990 and 2021 related to Islamic-based K–12 leadership and policies.

A review of the work of previous Muslim scholars shows that their educational guidelines are derived primarily from Islamic law. The educational objectives are derived from the principles of faith, charity, justice, and goodness that are expressed in Islamic law. Scholars also emphasized the need for freedom of thought and innovation in the education and training of children. They noted that because teachers are leaders in education, their work must be based on ethical principles in

accordance with Shari'a law. It is necessary to be sensitive to the diversity of students, the cultivation of student motivation, the gradual transfer of knowledge, freedom of thought, critical teaching, and the avoidance of blind imitation. Muslim education leaders enrich their students' lives and are justly rewarded for their actions in life on Judgment Day (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018). This is a critical aspect that must be emphasized because the role of Islamic education is to prepare students for life after death.

### **Leading educational opportunities for Muslims**

As aforementioned, Muslims learn in formal and informal educational organizations, such as mosques, Quran centers, Madrasa schools, and Islamic private schools (.; Park & Niyozov, 2008). These organizations could be located in both Muslim countries that do not speak Arabic and Muslim countries that do speak Arabic. In addition, due to the large number of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries in the last decade, many Muslims are now living in non-Muslim countries (Clauss et al., 2013; Merry & Driessen, 2016; Shakeel., 2018).

The aforementioned types of educational organizations provide educational opportunities for Muslims. The leaders of these organizations need a new and different perspective, as secular societies may not understand the needs of Muslim communities or how to prepare Muslims for their lives and afterlives. Islam makes no distinction among the spiritual, moral, or other leadership domains. In other words, the Islamic perspective is crucial for several reasons. First, it presents the rules of human behavior and argues that many leaders can articulate their vision and redefine all areas of human life (the whole person). Aspiring leaders are unwilling to bear such a complete burden of Islam, which then leads politics to become the exact opposite of the type of politics represented by *tawhid* (unity and sovereignty of Allah).

Therefore, it is important that researchers explore how leaders view leading schools with Muslim students and those of other faiths in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. It is essential to investigate what has been done so far regarding the research on Islamic educational leadership and policy in different contexts around the world. In this study, we seek to systematically review the literature between 1990 and 2020 on K–12 Islamic leadership and policy to demonstrate the overall trends of the related studies in terms of contexts (years, country, school level, and journal), types of studies, methodology, and topical focus. Therefore, the following research questions guided our analysis:

- 1 What is the volume of literature published in Islamic education leadership?
- 2 What is the geographical distribution of Islamic educational leadership literature?
- 3 What are the general trends of publications in Islamic educational leadership and policy research?
- 4 What is the topical focus of the publications regarding educational leadership and policy?

In this study, we conducted a systematic review of the literature on Islamic educational policy and leadership by following the steps identified by PRISMA (*Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses*) guidelines (Moher et al., 2010). Accordingly, we analyzed information regarding data sources, search, data collection, eligibility criteria, data selection, and data analysis. Researchers began by detecting the sources for quantitative analysis. To identify eligible studies, we performed an electronic search in the databases ISI Web of Science and Scopus. For our research, we used the search parameters “Islamic education”, “Muslim schooling”, “Islamic educational leader”, and “Islamic educational leadership” and restricted the search to peer-reviewed journals published in English. The period of 1900 to December 2020 yielded 900 results.

Because Islam is the second most-followed religion globally, different perspectives on what Islamic educational leadership represents are plentiful in these sources. The two major sects in Islam, Sunni and Shi’a, have fundamentally different views on what Islamic educational leadership should be. Both sects apply Islam in unique ways; therefore, there is a naturally diverse range of perspectives on the topic. It is crucial to note that all varieties of Muslim perspectives throughout history should be considered valid, as cultural practices differ throughout the Islamic world.

We searched for articles that cited literature reviews on Islamic educational leadership and policy. The authors read the titles and the abstracts of all the articles to identify articles related to Islamic educational leadership and policy. When an article fit the search criteria, the authors downloaded a soft file copy. This method resulted in 34 articles over an eight-month period.

### **Criteria for inclusion/exclusion in the literature review**

Before we started to review articles for possible inclusion in our systematic literature review, we identified the following criteria:

- Centrality of topic: We excluded articles that explored Islamic curriculum, higher education, Islamic education theory, and students. Focusing on K–12 level education and using leadership or policy as one of the main concepts helped to focus and limit the parameters of the study.
- Study design: We included both empirical and theoretical studies. All research designs (case studies, experiments, etc.) were included in the study.
- Year of publication: We included all studies that were published in the period from 1990 to December 2020.
- Language: We only included studies that were written in English.
- Publication status: We only included articles that were published in peer-reviewed journals housed by both Scopus and ISI Web of Science.

### **Selection process for including articles**

Nine hundred and sixty studies were systematically reviewed, which were determined using the aforementioned steps. According to the inclusion/exclusion

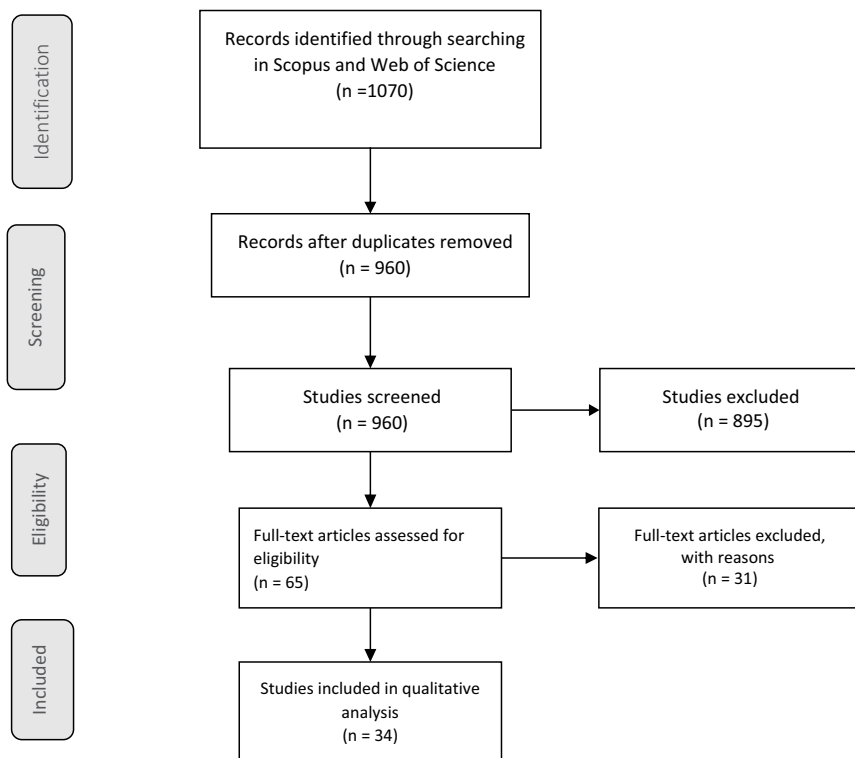


Figure 1.1 PRISMA flow diagram (Moher et al., 2010).

criteria, we ultimately included 34 studies in our research. First, we used an Excel workbook to delete all duplicates. We then checked for compliance with all eligibility criteria and deleted the studies that did not meet these criteria. Next, we reviewed the studies by reading the full text. In this step, we omitted additional papers whose topics did not match the criteria listed earlier (Figure 1.1).

### **Main insights**

This section presents the description of the main themes and sub-categories of the reviewed studies' topics. The results will be presented in two facets; first, a macro picture will be shown, and second, the main themes and sub-categories related to the topical foci of the reviewed studies will be utilized and organized in order to answer the main research questions.

Macro-outlook results.

### **Volume and geographic distribution**

Results show that no studies on Islamic education leadership were published between 1990 and 2003. The first study reviewed was published in 2003.

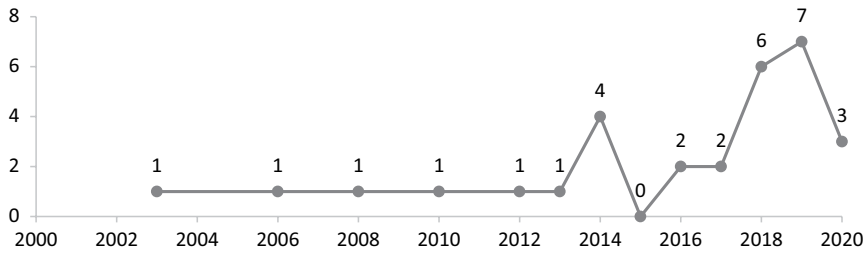


Figure 1.2 Number of studies per year (created by author).

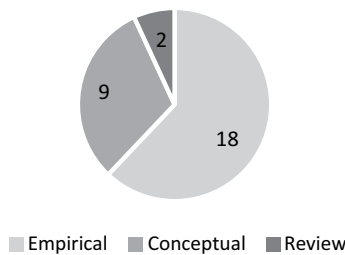


Figure 1.3 Number of studies and research type (created by author).

Remarkably, the number of studies dramatically increased between 2018 and 2019, which might be due to the increase in Muslim immigrants (see Figure 1.2). Most of the studies were conducted in Indonesia, South Asia, and the Netherlands. Figure 1.3 shows the countries that published the most work on Islamic education leadership. Interestingly, no Arab countries were found in this study. In recent years, however, it seems that scholars from countries such as Israel and Türkiye have begun to publish more works on the topic. Previous reviews have also identified all of these countries as among the most productive non-Anglo-American countries in the field of educational leadership and management (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019; Mertkan et al., 2017). It is also evident that cross-cultural studies on Islamic-based educational leadership are still very rare, with little international collaboration.

### Journals as publication outlets

Results showed that the selected studies were published in 30 journals. The most popular journal was *Religions*, followed by the *British Journal of Religious Education*, and *Race Ethnicity and Education* (Table 1.1). Then, we conducted co-citation source analysis. This gave us an overview of the most cited sources.

*Table 1.1* Number of publications in the most popular journals

Journal name	Number of publications
<i>Religions</i>	3
<i>British Journal of Religious Education</i>	2
<i>Race Ethnicity and Education</i>	2

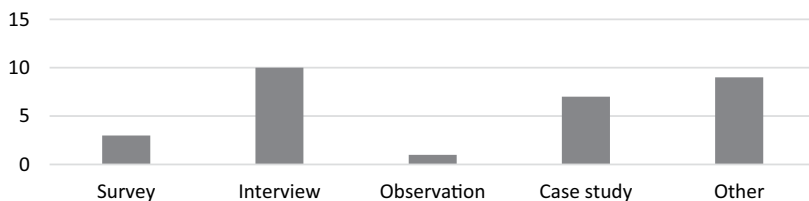
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### **Type of studies and methodology**

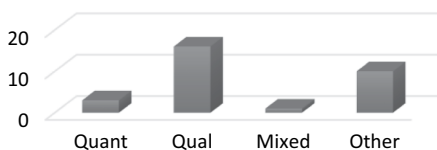
Researchers investigated the type of paper and the methods used. As shown in Figure 1.4, the majority of the studies are empirical studies. Results show that most of the empirical studies are based on qualitative research. These studies preliminarily rely on interviews or case studies, while some also use document analysis (Figure 1.5).

### **Leadership and policy**

A thematic analysis was conducted to categorize the reviewed documents under two main themes: leadership and policy. Twenty-five of the studies explored leadership, while five focused on policy. For the policy-oriented studies, we selected those that introduced the main opportunities and challenges related to Islamic educational leadership through the context of the researchers’ countries, such as Indonesia, Türkiye, and Russia. The systematic review identified three main sub-themes: school leadership models, principalship, and gender and culture.



*Figure 1.4* Number of studies per data collection (created by authors).



*Figure 1.5* Number of studies per methodology (created by author).

## **School leadership models**

Notably, educational leadership models are subject to trends, like other leadership models (Bush & Glover, 2014). These trends include the charismatic model, instructional leadership, value leadership, and, most recently, digital leadership. Researchers in selected studies followed the same trends when they investigated Islamic educational leadership (Pedder, 2016) without introducing new topics related to the context or linking their studies to those of previous Muslim scholars.

In the analysis of leadership-related papers, our review demonstrated that most related papers focused mainly on educational leadership models practiced in Muslim schools fostering social cohesion, community engagement, and integration of Muslim students into the wider social context. Although educational leadership has received increasing attention since the early 1990s, and scholars proposed varied constructions of human endeavor in the educational literature (Blind for review, 2017), similar research trends appeared in the analyzed papers. Thus, various models of leadership identified (e.g., charismatic, culturally responsive, transformational, and instructional) have been conceptualized to describe educational leaders' practices in Muslim schools. The current systematic review confirmed the aforementioned, as all the studies referred to common school leadership models, especially the charismatic model (Arifin et al., 2018; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Syafiq Humaisi et al., 2019). Others referenced the same model while describing the Kiai leadership model (Sukowati et al., 2019). The Kiai leadership model, for its part, refers to a charismatic figure who is believed to have religious knowledge (Sukowati et al., 2019). Another model mentioned is leadership in a challenging context similar to (Raihani, 2017). Many non-Muslim countries might witness violence against Muslim communities. Likewise, collaborative, responsive, and democratic approaches to educational leadership in Islamic-based schools and practices of equity and social justice were identified in linking the faith, the social, and the organizational structures of these educational systems in the Western world. Moreover, as leadership is highly contextualized, the studies are closely related to the school structure, curriculum, and social and religious values in the case of these studies ruling in the school's communities (Bush and Glover, 2014). Regarding this theme's analysis, three sub-themes developed as buildings of educational leadership styles in Muslim schools, including (a) faith-based leadership, which includes both charismatic, and spiritual leadership; (b) community-engaged leadership, which combined both cultural relevant/responsive educational leadership, democratic leadership; (c) and strategic leadership (Table 1.2).

The current systemic review confirmed that all studies referred to common school leadership models, especially faith-based leadership, charismatic leadership, and spiritual leadership (Arifin et al., 2018; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Syafiq Humaisi et al., 2019). Others referred to the same model while describing the Kiai leadership model (Sukowati et al., 2019), which refers to religious figures who are well-known for their religious knowledge.

The first group of studies clustered under the theme of faith-based educational leadership to include two sub-themes: (a) charismatic leadership and (b) spiritual

Table 1.2 Models of leadership identified

Sub-theme	No. of papers	Percentage
Faith-based leadership	4	40
Charismatic leadership (2)		
Spiritual leadership (2)		
Community engaged	4	40
Cultural relevant leadership (3)		
Democratic leadership (1)		
Strategic leadership	2	20
Sum	10	100

(created by author)

leadership. Humaisti et al. (2019) analyzed through qualitative case study the effect of charismatic ethical monotheism leadership style and pedagogic supervision program in developing teachers' competencies and facilitation in improving quality of Islamic education processes and students' outcomes in the Indonesian faith-based schools based on Quran and Hadeeth, while the principals of ethical monotheism identified in this style as a leader outlined by God in His word in *Surah* Ali Imran (3) verse 118. Similarly, Sholikhah et al. (2019) explored through quantitative research the role of spiritual leadership in fostering discretionary behaviors and the mediating effect of organizational self-esteem and workplace spirituality in Indonesian private schools. The authors argue that spiritual leadership involves efforts to connect individuals' religious values to organizational citizenship behavior, while significant spiritual practice at work encourages and enhances teachers' performance. Thus, spirituality contributes to the school process and staff and students' growth (Striepe et al., 2014)). The authors define spiritual leadership and propose that it shapes employees' behavior and tries to set the theoretical foundations of spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership has a strong relationship with organizational-based self-esteem and citizenship behavior. Spiritual leadership supports individuals' subjective well-being by creating a perspective that leads people to achieve their aim and service to society. Additionally, spiritual leadership encourages people to act and behave as good citizens and supports organization-based self-esteem in the workplace. Since employees with spiritual values are driven to focus on the sacred meaning of their jobs, they show strong contributions to their partners and work hard for their organizational aims.

Similarly, Kathryn Clauss et al. (2013), in an attempt to understand the nature and the growth of Islamic schools from the perspective of Muslim administrators, teachers, parents, and graduates in Islamic schools in the United States, examined both the spiritual nature of Islamic schools and their practices in equipping their graduates' transition into both Islamic and a non-Islamic environment. We linked leadership values to this theme, as some considered spiritual needs as spiritual values (Ayagan et al., 2014). It was interesting that the only study that mentioned spiritual leadership focused on the workplace and did not link spiritual practices to worshipping and the afterlife.



Studies conducted mainly in Indonesia explored leadership in boarding Islamic schools (Park & Niyozov, 2008; Raihani, 2017; Sukowati et al., 2019; Syafiq Humaisi et al., 2019), which is a type of school that might not be familiar to other contexts according to who is leading and managing them.

One study explored spiritual leadership (Sholikhah et al., 2019), although leading faith schools aims to increase spiritual practices. Another study mentioned the spiritual needs of the students (Clauss et al., 2013). We linked this theme to leadership values, as some consider spiritual needs as spiritual values (Ayagan et al., 2014). In the same vein, one study explored instructional leadership (Malla et al., 2020). Another sub-theme mentioned in these studies was democratic leadership (Clauss et al., 2013; Driessen & Merry, 2006; Park & Niyozov, 2008).

The next theme identified in leadership studies was community-engaged leadership, which includes (a) cultural relevant leadership and (b) democratic leadership. Brooks and Ezzani (2017) explored school administrators who believed in the need to re-envision the American Muslim community—moderate in outlook, resonant with American values, participative with community, and supportive and welcoming of diversity. In doing so, the school delivered an anti-extremist education that promoted social integration, democratic values, and acceptance of diversity. This moderate outlook is counter to prevailing stereotypes, and thus it is imperative that research continues to explore the role formal schooling plays in educating for or against extremism. Later, Ezzani and Brooks (2019) explored, through rigorous, prolonged qualitative research and data collection using interviews with school community leaders and students focus groups, classroom and school observation, and documentary analysis, how leaders in Islamic schools in the United States engaged in culturally relevant leadership and teachers' professional development to develop student's critical social consciousness adopting inter and interfaith dialogue, cultural syncretism in developing Muslim identity.

In the British context, conducting qualitative research design through semi-structured interviews, Hammad and Shah (2019) investigated the perception of teachers regarding the leadership experiences and challenges in Muslim schools in the United Kingdom. Their research findings stress the powerful effect that societal culture and belief systems apply on school leadership practices. Although leadership in faith schools is generally shaped by the specific nature and orientation of these schools, they discussed that those schools need “a unique leadership system which is typically developed based on the religious values and beliefs”. Thus, from an Islamic perspective, leadership practices should be formed in line with the teachings of the Quran (Islam's sacred book) and Ahadith (actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad) (Brooks and Mutohar, 2018; Hammad and Shah, 2019; Salamun and Shah, 2012). Nevertheless, in the Finnish and Swedish contexts, Inkeri Rissanen (2019) examined how school principals' diversity ideologies foster the inclusion of Muslim students in these societies. They argued that culturally responsive education supports inclusive recognition of diversity and abandons color blindness as an ineffective strategy. They concluded that reflexivity regarding the complex dynamics of recognizing individual vs. group identities in education as well as the understanding of the implications of religion-blindness is called for. Lastly, Malla, Sapsuha, and Lobud (2020) examined through qualitative case study

research analysis the influence of school leadership on Islamic curriculum including the implementation of democratic processes through vision, organizational practices, and staff commitment to promote Islamic curriculum to include worship and faith. Based on their research findings, they argued that integration of democratic leadership together with Islamic values fosters school performance through perceived religious duties in supporting students learning and functions, respectively, to support the achievement of the vision and mission of the Islamic school that has been established (p. 320). This raises many questions about defining Islamic educational/school leadership. For instance, do we consider a non-Muslim school principal leading a school that teaches Muslim students an Islamic educational leader? What about a Muslim principal leading a non-Muslim school? Indeed, who should be considered an Islamic educational leader?

The final theme identified was gender and social justice.

### **Gender and social justice**

Regarding the analysis of gender, feminism, and social justice-related papers, our review displayed that most of the papers addressed Muslim women's leadership practices, Islamic feminism, and feminist school leadership in Muslim schools. Only four of the selected studies addressed gender, social justice issues, and Islamic feminism (Arar, 2015; Arar & Oplatka, 2014; Arar & Shapira, 2016; Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). Only three studies addressed gender issues (Arar & Oplatka, 2014; Arar & Shapira, 2016; Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). One of the studies introduced Islamic feminism as the third wave. However, Muslims tend to have negative perspectives toward feminism, and combining both terms might cause more resistance instead of encouraging scholars and practitioners to consider it a new paradigm. For instance, Arar (2015) examined Muslim women's adoption of the Hijab in several stages of their principalship career. He argued for a third wave of Islamic feminism. In the US context, Khalil and DeCuir's recent study (2018) examined Islamic feminism and social justice; they described how Muslim female school leaders prioritize equity, community, and resistance when leading American Islamic schools. Similar to prior critical feminist studies conducted in a different Western context, this research canters female leaders' agency as an emancipatory praxis of resistance to injustice and oppression, aligned with our core assumptions of Islamic feminism. Furthermore, they argued that Islamic feminist school leadership: (a) leads by modeling an equitable and just ethic, (b) leads by nurturing a communal culture, and (c) leads for transformational resistance. Thus, their study contributes to our understanding of how to adopt anti-imperialist, anti-racist school leadership practices (p. 107). Similarly, Hammad and Shah (2019) highlighted the need for cultural understating to deal with challenges such as gender and social injustice, especially when leading Islamic or Muslim schools in a secular society (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019). This study contributes to the understanding that Islamic feminism is identified with social justice perception, modeling, and practices (Arar, 2018). However, principal's femininity is a fluid social construct, and is contextually affected, especially when dealing with Muslim women leadership in wider secular contexts, which affects leaders' perception and advocacy (Ezzani &

Brooks, 2019). Although, Khalil and DeCuir's recent study (2018) argues that women's transformative principles of seeking knowledge, raising consciousness, and resisting injustice can be considered an extension of third wave feminism, which re/defined feminist epistemologies of non-dominant women negotiating their role in a hegemonic society (Arar, 2015).

Many studies highlighted the need to understand the Islamic culture to deal with challenges (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019; Hammad & Shah, 2019), especially in regard to leading Islamic or Muslim schools in secular societies. Shakeel (2018) provided a systematic review of the issues concerning school choice in the West.

Regarding social justice issues and Islamic feminism, recent studies investigated the role of Muslim female leaders emphasizing equity in resisting injustice and hegemony in different Western settings. Focusing on anti-imperialist, anti-racist school leadership practices, cultural responsive practices of women leaders were mentioned to cope with problems like gender and social injustice. Finally, studies examined the change in leadership perceptions of Muslim women in secular contexts and their transformative principles based on knowledge, awareness, and justice in a hegemonic society.

## **Final thoughts**

This chapter aimed to systematically review literature between 1990 and 2020 on Islamic educational leadership and policy aiming at answering the following four questions: (1) What is the volume of literature published on Islamic education leadership? (2) What is the geographical distribution of Islamic educational leadership literature? (3) What are the general trends of publications in Islamic educational leadership and policy research? (4) What is the topical focus of the publications regarding educational leadership and policy?

No doubt, the volume of literature published that is related to Islamic educational leadership is below our previously held expectations and does not represent the need or even the achievements of Muslim scholars since the rise of Islam. Truly, there is a long history of schooling, teaching, and learning in Islam (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018; Douglass & Shaikh, 2004; Ter Avest & Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2017) that could be utilized to inform our understanding of Islamic educational leadership.

The majority of the studies were conducted in Asia, which represents different cultures than Islamic cultures in Arab countries or Western countries (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017; Bano, 2014; Brooks, 2015; Maxcy et al., 2010a,b; Muslih, 2019; Nuryana et al., 2020; Tahir et al., 2018; Tolchah, 2014; Walford, 2003). Remarkably, this study showed that there is a severe lack of studies about Islamic educational leadership from Arab and Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, which might be due to the overall lack of research related to educational leadership published in these countries (Gümüş et al., 2020; Hallinger & Hammad, 2019; Hallinger & Nguyen, 2020). Other reasons might be due to ambiguity when exploring educational leadership in general (see Oplatka and Arar), as there is no consensus on which terms to use for studies about Islamic

educational leadership. In addition, the selected studies referred to the main terms in different spellings, which limits the possibility of finding all the corresponding studies in search engines and databases.

Regarding the general trends of publications in Islamic educational leadership and policy research, most studies used interviews and focused on principalship. Despite their importance, we found a need to incorporate more conceptual papers that connect theory and practice. By theory, we mean utilizing what Muslim scholars have provided to us and introducing these ideas to other nations so Muslim educators can help students develop life skills and prepare for the afterlife (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018). Although few studies in this systematic review mentioned spiritual leadership, it was not clear how Islamic educational leaders could provide teaching and learning environments based on spiritual values to enable leaders, students, and parents to learn based on their given faith. However, this might mean we need to add new perspectives and paradigms in future research.

Next, the papers on the topic mostly rely on empirical methods, while reviews and conceptual papers dealing with the foci are few in number (e.g. Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shakeel, 2018). This clearly shows the lack of rigor in the conceptualization of Islamic-based educational leadership and policy models, especially grounded models dealing with educational leadership and spirituality, except for the rigor in the conceptualization efforts made by Brooks and Mutohar (2018), which draw on extent literature and Islamic values and beliefs and examined how these values shape and are shaped by Muslim leader beliefs, given the heightened anti-Muslims sentiment present in the Western context (Saleem et al., 2017). Therefore, Brooks and Mutohar (2018) argued for a detailed conceptual framework, as follows:

The outer ring of the framework are the Islamic values essential to school leadership, namely: good counsel (*nasiha*) and sincere conduct (*ikhlas*), consultation (*shura*), dissent (*ikhtilaf*), public interest (*maslaha*), encouraging right and discouraging wrong (*amr bi'l ma'ruf wa al nahi an al munkar*), accountability (*hisba*), and reflection (*tafakkur*).

(p. 10)

Moreover, the empirical papers predominately rely on case studies and qualitative methodologies, while there is a lack of quantitative, mixed-methods, and comparative research in this area. This means that the effect of Islamic-based or spiritual leadership and policy in terms of pedagogical instruction, Islamic values practices, and graduates' features are less evident.

Fourth, in trying to answer our question about the topical focus of the publication, our analysis yielded two broad categories relating to educational policy and leadership, particularly addressing Islamic-based educational leadership and policy. Each broad category represented main themes and sub-themes. The most popular theme in the policy-related papers were curriculum reforms and implementation of either Islamic education or national reforms imposing the central education

curriculum aiming at integrating Muslim students in the West (e.g., Maxy et al., 2010; Merry and Drissen, 2014), both principals' appointment criteria and recruitment policy and procedures were among the main sub-themes discussed. Adding to this, professional development policy, regularities, and follow-up dynamics were among the themes elucidated. Thus, implicit and explicit forms of policy implementation, related challenges, and the dynamic of inspection including covering different forces in policy design and implementation, especially in Islamic schools in the Western context, were among the themes discussed (Shakeel, 2018; Umar et al., 2012).

In terms of Islamic-based educational leadership-related papers, various models of leadership were identified. These include charismatic and spiritual educational leadership resting mainly in charismatic ethical monotheism leadership and pedagogic supervision programs in developing teachers' competencies and facilitation in improving the quality of Islamic-engaged education processes and students' outcomes in faith-based schools based on Quran and Hadith (e.g., Ayagan et al., 2014; Clauss et al., 2013). These models have received greater attention in trying to utilize Islamic faith-based leadership practices and agency in implementing Islamic values. The common point of view across the majority of these studies is that a school leader is a role model and embraces Islamic values based on Quran and Hadith. The next sub-theme identified in this category was community-engaged leadership, which includes culturally relevant models and democratic models arguing for cultural relevant leadership that represents educators, students, and community voices while developing critical social consciousness, Muslim identity, and interfaith dialogue in non-Muslim contexts (e.g. Ezzani & Brooks, 2019; Hammad and Shah, 2019). Besides, the last sub-theme identified was gender and feminism stemming from studies representing Muslim women leadership mainly in the USA, United Kingdom, and other Western contexts, leading Islamic schools through empowerment, social justice, and transformational resistance (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019; Hammad and Shah, 2019; Khalil and DeCuir, 2018). However, conceptual and methodological clarity is still needed in this research, especially concerning Islamic-based educational leadership approaches. Therefore, from this systemic review, we identified some gaps in the scholarship focused on nonwestern approaches to leading schools (Shah, 2016): the shortage of empirical mixed-methods and comparative research on Islamic-based educational leadership is still evident, and the current body of research still needs further conceptualization of spiritual and faith-based leadership in Islamic schools, given the heightened anti-Muslim sentiment in the global north. Such conceptualization can benefit from previous grounded studies and conceptualizations in problematizing Islamic ways of knowing, and testing current conceptualizations (e.g. Brooks and Ezzani, 2019; Brooks and Mutohar, 2018; Hammad and Shah, 2019; Shah, 2016). Thus, grounded epistemologies, positionalities, and paradigms in future research are encouraged.

Therefore, out of this systematic review, we encourage researchers and practitioners to revisit what Muslim scholars (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018; Jayanti et al., 2021) provided in relation to education and educational leadership in order to identify the main priorities and areas of future development. Then, we can

improve educational opportunities, as was done in the GA. Furthermore, there is no research on policy and leadership domains regarding the experience of students and families in schools that are adopting Islamic-based educational leadership. As the research contributions in this field are mostly from Anglo-American researchers, there is a crucial need to hear more from scholars from the global south and scholars with lived Muslim experiences. In turn, their ideas could help us further conceptualize educational leadership and policy in Muslim schools.

Our findings indicate some avenues for future research in terms of methodology and approach. More participatory, emancipatory, and critical approaches could be utilized for a deeper analysis of the topic. As most of the publications in this area are of a qualitative nature, future research could benefit from quantitative and mixed-methods approaches to fill in the gaps in the literature. Moreover, there is a dearth of literature on the linkage of research and policymaking. Further research could inform policy and practice, particularly in the context of Islamic education. Finally, in this study, we suggested a new term that might pave the way for a better understating of current practices and avoid confusion. As a term, Islamic-based educational leadership might help Muslim and non-Muslim educators to compare different understandings and see to what extent their practices align with those of Islam. This new term is expected to provide a space for a different understanding, away from Islamophobia or ambiguous perspectives and assumptions. Furthermore, this term might help educators to reflect on their practices to develop educational opportunities that better meet the needs of their learners.

We encourage educators to explore current educational leadership and management theories and see if they help in shaping and clarifying the main principles of Islamic-based educational leadership. In turn, this will help to equip educators, school leaders, and policymakers with the most effective theories and practices to provide quality education to Muslim learners. Furthermore, these theories and practices will enable Muslim educational leaders to utilize the skills and knowledge they have to promote lifelong learning. Thus, there are many questions to be posed in this field and more research needs to be done to understand Islamic-based educational leadership both in Muslim schools and schools run by other faiths and value systems. In conclusion, our findings indicate some means for future research in terms of epistemology and methodological approaches. Therefore, there is a great need to revisit, reconfigure, and relearn previous contributions made by Muslim scholars, such as Dr. Majid Irsan Al-Kilani, to introduce an Islamic-based educational leadership theory and other works published in Arabic. This will require scholars to clarify to what Islamic ideologies they refer (i.e., Sunni or Shi'a), as this might affect their methodology and findings.

Nevertheless, more participatory, emancipatory, and critical approaches could be utilized for deeper analysis and rigor. As most of the publications are qualitative, case studies, or multiple case studies, in nature, future research could benefit from quantitative, mixed-methods, and grounded research approaches. Moreover, there is a dearth of literature linking Islamic research and policy design.

## Notes

- 1 *Madrassa* is the traditional Arabic word for schools in many Muslim countries. Historically, they were attached to mosques and developed by time, providing students with the opportunity to study different branches of knowledge, such as jurisprudence, Quran, Arabic, theology, Mathematics, logic, science, and literature. Currently, some countries use this word to describe schools that teach Quran and religious sciences.
- 2 We are very careful not to say in Islam, as there is a difference between our understanding that might change over time and Quran.

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## 2 The Islamic “Khilafah” model of educational leadership

From the Prolegomena to Desiderata

*Aref Al-Attari and Eman Bani Essa*

### The Prolegomena

#### *Rationale*

Establishing Islamic relevance to contemporary social disciplines, such as educational administration, is one of the most challenging tasks one could pick up. Bajunid (1996), Weir (2004) and Drechsler (2015a) mentioned some challenges that scholars who write from outside the Western scholarly traditions may encounter. Those challenges emanate mainly from the Western-centric mindset, which does not imagine the existence of non-Western paradigms in administration.

To the contrary, Weir (2012), Drechsler (2015b), Harrison and Roomi (2015) and Samier (2017) advance the thesis that there are non-Western paradigms of administration, much more than available sources can tell; that these paradigms can inform the contemporary practice; and that the Western paradigm is not ideal. The resurgence of Japan from the ashes of the Second World War ensued by the spectacular performance of the emerging economies later in the 20th century, lends support to the thesis that non-Western paradigms of administration at least merit consideration. These developments coincided with the ascendancy of the culture-aware frameworks to administration in the 1980s.

Inspired by Hofstede's landmark studies, scholars in educational administration called for addressing educational problems in their national contexts, notwithstanding the general principles and widely shared concepts (Bajunid, 1996). Walker and Dimmock (2000) took this point further to call for a cross-cultural comparative approach to educational administration that “can expose the value of theory and practice from different cultural perspectives which may, in turn, inform and influence existing dominant English-speaking Western paradigms” (p. 4).

Within the mainstream scholarship on educational administration, there was a paradigm shift from the positivistic to the interpretive and critical paradigms (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993; Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). Sergiovanni (1992) and Yeatman (1996) called for the expansion of the modes of knowing to include, besides the scientific method, the sense experience, intuition, emotions and sacred authority. Other scholars invoked inspiring sources such as the humanities, philosophy, the arts, history, poetry, fiction and aesthetics, which were marginalized in

the positivistic era of educational administration (Bates, 2010; Monday, 2012; Samier, 2012; Richardson, 2003).

According to Sergiovanni (1992), the positivism-based theories emptied management of the notions of professional and moral authority, the noble goals of education, moral deliberation and the normative questions. With the loss of professional and moral authority, faith in leaders was lost (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). The 'values turn' in educational administration in the 1990s evolved out of these concerns. Novel approaches emerged, such as servant leadership, transformative leadership, moral leadership, authentic leadership, invitational leadership and responsible leadership that leaned toward values, ethics, principles, virtues, morality and authenticity more than toward the mechanics of management. They attached more importance to the ethics of sharing, caring, trust, social justice, altruism and relations among school stakeholders. These approaches have drawn attention to two old concepts: service and stewardship which are informed by or are anchored to the Christian faith (Greenleaf, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2000).

Investigations since the 1990s report increasing levels of practicing spirituality in the workplace in a sense of questioning the deeper purpose or meaning of actions in the light of values such as honesty, trust, common good, social conscious and justice (Starratt & Guare, 1995). Though not necessarily religiously based, spirituality is oftentimes linked to religion as evidenced in the names of some professional societies, such as the Special Interest Group on Management, Spirituality and Religion, which is affiliated with the Academy of Management (AOM-MSR).

Within this context, religion has re-emerged as a participant in the academic debate on administrative issues. Subscribers to this perspective do not concede that management is technical but rather a moral issue directly related to faith, and thus religion has a right to speak (Jenkins, 1988; Lawrence, 1998). According to Cracknell (2018), a large number of management behaviors have their foundations in religious precepts, Biblical stories, parables and metaphors that help to build a composite picture of religiously inspired leaders. As a result, publications on the interface of religion and management have significantly increased in the last three decades (Gundolf & Filser, 2013).

Exploring Islamic perspectives to public and business management can be traced back to the 1970s, the decade that witnessed the so-called Islamic *Sahwat* (literally 'awakening'). A number of Muslim scholars felt that the prevailing models of management were developed within the Western secular traditions that either challenge or neglect religion. Therefore, an Islamic perspective to management was a necessity to maintain the *Ummmatic* identity. Toward this purpose, numerous books, theses and articles were authored besides establishing centers for Islamic management in some countries. This endeavor resulted in a relatively substantial body of organized knowledge on the discipline (Abu Sin, 1996; AL Buraey, 1990; Drechsler, 2015b; Egel, 2014; Fontaine, 2008; Faris & Parry, 2011; Samier, 2019; Weir, 2012).

The academic research on educational management from Islamic perspectives is relatively of recent vintage but is gaining more interest. It started by the turn of the century, which is decades after the emergence of the scholarship in Islamic administration in general. The developing interest in the Islamic perspectives on

educational administration could have increased as a function of many practical factors besides the aforementioned religion-related factors.

With the increasing numbers of Muslims in the West, the number of Islamic faith schools have increased dramatically since the 1980s in many countries/regions, such as North America, Europe and Australia (DeCuir, 2016; Merry & Driessen, 2005; Scott & McNeish, 2012). In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the London bombings in 2005, concerns were expressed that Muslim schools were undermining the coherence of Western societies rather than contributing to social cohesion, but studies conducted in Sweden and Germany did not substantiate these worries (Rissanen & Sai, 2018). Given this inconclusiveness, scholars called for conducting scientific research to better understand this segment of the school system and to understand how Islamic values and beliefs impact the performance of Islamic schools' leaders. Till recently, research into this school sector has been sparse, but it has increasingly become a fast-growing area (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Shah, 2016; Striepe, 2016).

Islamic faith schools in Western countries are established to foster an optimal environment for schoolchildren. However, not all leaders of these schools are prepared or trained on how to conceptualize the schools' missions, and there is a need for an Islamic educational leadership model that assists the work of principals of Islamic schools (Aabed, 2006; Padela, 2015). Principals in such schools draw on the Islamic notions of leadership and related values as derived from the Quran and the *Sunna*, besides the leadership literature generated in Muslim-majority countries. However, Muslim scholars recently demonstrated that such literature should be contextualized to put into consideration the situation of Muslims in Muslim minority countries. People working and attending such schools face challenges that are not the norm in United States public schools or in Muslim-majority countries. Multiple studies highlight challenges that Islamic schools and Muslim students face, such as balancing religious and national identity, navigating citizenship, and transitioning to environments that are not religiously or culturally familiar (Al-Islam, 2006; DeCuir, 2016; Padela, 2015).

## **Overview of Islamic scholarship in educational administration**

Islamic scholarship in educational administration that began to develop by the turn of the century, comprises conceptual as well as empirical investigations. The conceptual strand aims to lay the ground, expound and expand the scholarship; set forth methodological guidelines; and identify points of departure. Conceptual papers engaged the original texts (Quran and Sunnah), the Islamic heritage, the practices of Islamic leaders throughout history and the writings of Muslim scholars, epistles and letters to rulers and scribes (Arar & Yehia, 2018; ElKaleh & Samier, 2013; Samier, 2017). The biographies of Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him) and the rightly guided successors (*Khulafa AL Rashidun*) and other influential Muslim figures were invoked to build a coherent concept of Islamic administration (Gonaim, 2016; Mamat, 2017).

Empirical studies investigated, among other issues, the challenges facing principals of Muslim schools (Hammad & Shah, 2018; Shah, 2019); the impact of faith, culture and values on Islamic school leaders' perspectives of leadership (Striepe,

2016); and the role of gender in mediating school leaders' conceptualization of school-related issues (DeCuir, 2019; Khalil & DeCuir, 2018).

Following this tradition, scholars were interested in designing theoretical/conceptual models. Some scholars based their models on Islamic general principles, concepts and values. Shah (2006) presented a model comprising three dimensions: knowledge, wisdom and responsibility with the notions of caring, justice and ethics as the foundations. Brooks and Mutohar (2018) designed a framework grounded in Islamic values and beliefs about Islam, education and culture. The model incorporated the values of reflection, good counsel, sincere conduct, accountability, consultation, dissent, public interest and encouraging right and discouraging wrong. Our observation is that both Shah's and Brooks and Mutohar's models are selective in including Islamic principles, values and concepts without explicit inclusionary-exclusionary criteria. We believe that an Islamic-informed model should be all-encompassing rather than selective. As there is an almost infinite list of Islamic-based values, we, in our model, grouped them under soft and hard values, which will be clarified in the next section.

Other scholars picked up models from the mainstream Western-dominated literature on the assumption that they do not contradict Islamic teachings. Samier (2021) presented an Islamic-based model of social justice in the administration of higher education institutions. The model comprised two primary components: servant leadership, which is similar to Greenleaf's 'servant leadership' (2002) and guardian leadership, which is similar to Burns' (1978) transforming theory. The two components were embedded in some basic Islamic principles and values such as justice, fairness, consultation, tolerance, honesty, kindness, empathy, patience and compassion. Samier's approach represents a trend in building Islamic-informed models by remolding and reshaping mainstream scholarship so that it has a new structure based on Islamic principles. This approach resonates in Faris and Parry's (2011) call for balancing the Islamic perspectives with Western leadership scholarship particularly the servant and transformational theories, which are close valuationally to Islamic conceptions. For the proponents of this trend, some mainstream types of leadership are favorably received. These include the transformational, servant and ethical types of leadership, which are taken as models for Islamic leadership, although, originally, they were developed in the West and by Western scholars (Abbas & Tan, 2019). Although elements of these types of leadership can be identified in the Islamic teachings and do not necessarily conflict with many Islamic principles, we hold that an Islamic-informed model should have its distinctiveness by being anchored to the Islamic belief system. Moreover, some versions of servant leadership and even transformational leadership are deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian traditions and promote concepts that may conflict with the *Tawhid* (Oneness of God) and other core Islamic precepts. For instance, some scholars anchor the "love" dimension of servant leadership to the "agapao", which carries biblical connotations that may not converge with the Islamic faith (Reinke, 2004; Williams, 2009). In a similar vein, Beekun (2012) pointed out that transformational leadership does not always coincide with the behaviors of the Prophet Muhammad. "Transformational leaders may ... adopt the values which they believe fit the implicit theory of leadership of their followers" (Beekun, 2012, p. 10).

Moreover, we hold that similarities with other models should not be restricted to the servant and transformational models. We hold that levels of convergence and divergence may be found between the *Khilafa* model and all models that are informed by the mainstream schools of thought in administration.

Some Muslim scholars in the West contextualize Islamic-informed models to suit the Muslim minorities in Western societies or use the grounded theories to build models based on perceptions and deep experiences of teachers in Islamic faith schools in Western countries (DeCuir, 2014; Padela, 2015; Shah, 2006; Shah, 2010). Gender and color were considered in the Islamic scholarship in educational administration in the USA in particular, as sizable percentages of Muslims there are people of color, and a considerable percentage of schools’ academic and administrative staffs are women. The critical (e.g., feminist) theories were employed to guide such endeavors. Although we call for contextualization to make models relevant to the needs of practitioners in a particular context, we believe that an umbrella global model is necessary to guide contextualization. On the other hand, although critical (e.g., feminist) theories may be helpful in exposing and redressing inconsistencies and anomalies, we have reservations regarding some of their premises that may not fit squarely into the Islamic worldview.

Finally, it is observed that in all of the aforementioned models, the Islamic belief system and the positions on grand issues such as man, society, truth and knowledge were shyly addressed, although these are supposed to inform the value system, artifacts and administrative behavior. Our model makes up for this gap.

## Reauthorization of the *Khilafah* model

The first author published two papers (Atari, 1999; Atari, 2000) aiming to design an Islamic-informed model on educational administration. He consciously used the term “Prolegomena” in the first article (1999) and “emerging” in the second article (2000), implying that those attempts were just to set the ball rolling. In this chapter, we re-authorize that model. We will start with a semantic account of the term.

*Khilafah* and *Khalifah* are derived from the root verb “*Khalafa*”, which is associated with the interrelated meanings of succession, inheritance, supplanting and standing instead. The term *Khalifah* was used in the Story of Creation in the Holy Quran: “Allah said to the angels Verily, I am going to place a *Khalifah* on earth” (*Surat AL Baqara*, verse 30). Therefore Man-as-*Khalifah* is assigned *Khilafah* on earth and is accountable to carry out this task, which is described in other verses as *Amanah* (trust) (*Surat Al-Ahzab-72*).

On the other hand, *Khalifah* (Plural *Khulafa*) was used for the rulers who succeeded the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) as heads of the Islamic State, and *Khilafah* was used as the title for the Islamic State probably to distinguish it from the Empires.

Another plural of *Khalifah* is *Khala’ef*, which is used for nations that inherit other nations (*Younus*, 14; *Al Fatir*, 39; *AlAnaam*, 165). In these three places, successors are reminded that this succession process is not purpose-free, that their performance on earth is monitored and that they will be accountable.

Another derivative of *Khalifah* is *Mustakhlaf* (*Al Hadid*, 7), which implies that man is a steward but not owner of the money on earth as that money is owned by Allah. This concept impinges directly on accountability and integrity.

The role of the *Khalifah* on earth is to develop it. The Arabic term for development is *Ta'amir*, which is mentioned in the Holy Quran (*Hud*, 61). It is antithetical to all sorts of destruction, corruption, dishonesty, polluting, injustice, conspiracy and the like. It is not coincidence that *Omran* (a derivative of *Ta'amir*) was coined by the encyclopedic scholar *Ibn Khaldun* as a title for his novel science "*Ilm AL Omran*" (sociology). Needless to say, *Ta'amir* requires knowledge, education and management. *Ta'amir* is an act of *Ibadah* (worship), as worshipping Allah is the ultimate purpose of man's existence on earth: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (*Al Zariyat*, 54).

We preferred to use the transliteration form rather than the translation(s) of *Khalifah* and *Khilafah*. In his translation of the meanings of the Holy Quran, Ali translated '*Khilafah*' as vice-gerency and *Khalifah* as vice-gerent. Other scholars translated *Khalifah* as steward (Egel, 2014; Elkaleh & Samier, 2013). Our view is that stewardship could be included under the tasks of the *Khilafah* but should not be used as identical to it. Stewardship is widely used in the mainstream literature, and its use for *Khilafah* may be potentially problematic, as literal translations may subtract from the real meaning of idiomatic language. Moreover, having different equivalents for the same term could cause confusion.

## **Description of the *Khilafah* model**

The Islamic belief system represents the point of departure in our *Khilafah* model (Figure 2.1). It comprises the positions on man, universe and life besides the ontological and epistemological issues (i.e., the positions on truth and knowledge).

Man is described in the Quran as an amalgam of mud and a divine breath. Accordingly, s/he is imperfect and should toil toward perfection and improvement. Hence comes the role of education. S/he is characterized by the ability to learn and accumulate knowledge, but due to imperfectness, s/he can reach only partial truths rather than the truth, and knowledge that s/he generates shall always be tentative. This allows for mind-openness, flexibility, diversity and alternatives. Man is honored by Allah and preferred over many other creatures. The universe is subjugated to man, but the relationship between man and the universe is based on harmony rather than conflict. Hence comes the importance of managing resources prudently. The fulfillment of *Khilafah* obligations is the function of the interplay between man, universe and life. These three elements represent the spatial, social and temporal dimensions of the context for practicing *Khilafah*. According to Bin Nabi (1949; 2019), the fruitful interplay between these dimensions requires a philosophical or religious catalyst. In ideal situations, it will result in producing a high-performing and human-friendly organization.

The belief system is pertinent to educational administration, as most conflicts, standoffs and paradigm wars between theories of educational administration are the function of paradoxical positions on philosophical issues such as man, truth, knowledge and the like.

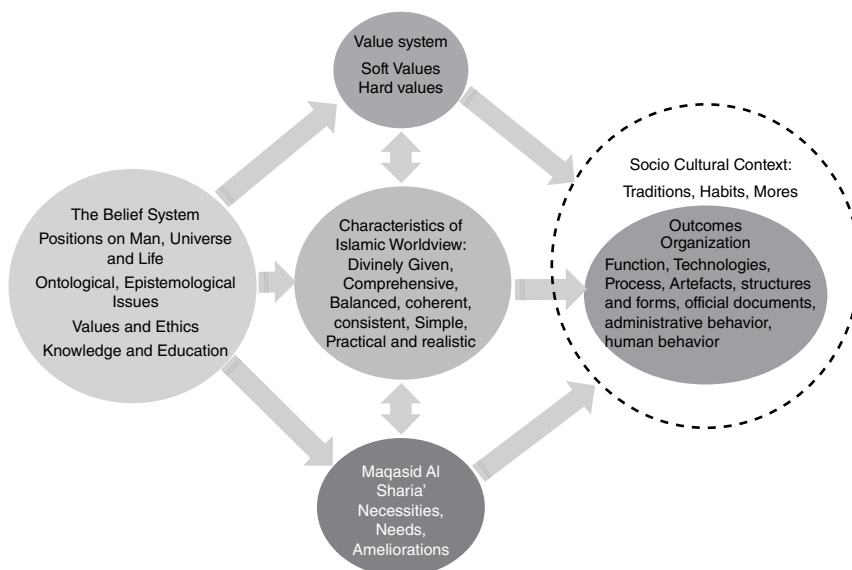


Figure 2.1 Al Khilafah model (created by authors).

Emanated from the belief system is the value system. Islamic values are innumerable. A traverse of the related literature reveals an endless list of values that authors on Islamic administration extract from the Quran and Sunnah and Islamic heritage inter alia: altruism, self-discipline, trustfulness, resolve, patience, justice, benevolence, dignity, empathy, compassion, equality, brotherhood, honesty, transparency, fairness, good council, sincerity, consultation, accountability, reflection, humility, social responsibility, self-development, perfectionism, meritocracy, tolerance, personal courage, integrity, humility and respect, to cite but a few (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Davis & Winn, 2017; Kawsar, 2016). In the *Khilafah* model, we categorized Islamic values into soft and hard values. We artificially differentiated between the soft and hard values in terms of focus. Soft values refer to those human-oriented values that are meant to ameliorate the quality of life and work environment and culminate in an employee-friendly organization. Hard values refer to organization-and-task-oriented values, which aim at maximizing productivity and performance. We emphasize that both categories are interrelated and the differentiation is only meant to facilitate their study.

The sociocultural context consists of the mores, traditions and habits which may or may not be compatible with Islamic beliefs and values. Muslim scholars consider mores, traditions and habits as acceptable unless they contradict the Islamic core beliefs and values. Oftentimes, cultures of various Muslim communities may be confused with religion. For instance, some negative attitudes toward women were changed as it was revealed that they were the function of culture rather than of religion.

The *Khilafah* model included the characteristics of the Islamic worldview and *Maqasid Al Shari'a*, which are assumed to help the *Khilafah* juggle any inconsistency



in practice. This conceptualization is supposed to impinge on the functions, practices, forms and structure, behavior and other observable artifacts in organizations.

Qutb (1983) opined that the Islamic worldview is characterized by being divinely given, comprehensive, consistent, coherent, balanced, realistic, practical and simple. According to AL Shatibi, *Maqasid Al Shari'a* are divided into three categories: the *necessities* that are indispensable to the maintenance of the religious and temporal affairs; the *need-oriented*, which is meant to ease hardships; and the *amelioration-oriented*, which aims at achieving a better life. The necessities are further divided into the protection of religion, soul, progeny, property and mind. These can also be broken into sub-categories that include justice, brotherhood, developing the earth and so on (Al Najjar, 2000; Mergaliev et al., 2019). These *Maqasid* are directly related to management. For instance, management guided by the *Maqasid* should provide safe, high-performing and worker-friendly organization; elevate the field for all; and tackle imbalances, anomalies and all sorts of unevenness and distortions. On the other hand, the characteristics of the Islamic worldview and *Maqasid* are supposed to enlighten administrators in cases of ethical dilemmas, paradoxes, value conflict and uncertainties that plague the administrators' daily routines.

The last component of the model is the observed behavior, organizational structures, official documents, physical appearance, facilities and artifacts. These constitute the tip of the iceberg under which lie the value and belief systems. This implies that to understand and improve the visible component, we need to understand the underpinning belief-and-value systems. On the other hand, to measure the success of the model, we have to empirically investigate its performance, as evidenced by these outcomes.

## **The Desiderata**

The *Khilafah* model shares many commonalities with other models whether Islamic-informed models or Western models but it has its uniqueness. The term *Khilafah* constitutes the reference point from where all other components emanate. Another aspect of distinctiveness is integrating in a very coherent way the three main components: the belief system, the value system and the observed system besides considering the sociocultural contexts that overlap with but are distinct from the religious teachings. In terms of values, our model is not selective but rather combines both the soft and hard values.

Other mainstream models, such as transformational, ethical/moral, collaborative and servant leadership, may bear resemblance to our model and can offer insight to Islamic-informed leaders, but as explained in our comment on those models, they are rooted in different legacies that may not always cohere with the Islamic precepts.

The *Khilafah* model is a normative idealized model of leadership that is concerned with what 'should be'. Practitioners may approximate its confines with different degrees of closeness. According to Frigg and Hartmann (2020), "A concept that is closely related to idealization is approximation" (p. 6), but approximation

should be quantified to represent an acceptable level of idealization. This implies that much is left to be done whether in research or practice to bring the model down to earth and see how administrative processes and functions, such as planning, organizing, coordinating, budgeting and performance appraisal will be shaped by the model, down to the details. Following is an elaboration.

It is envisaged that the *Khilafah* model transforms the very concept of educational administration into a noble mission that gives the school or institution a sense of direction. Rather than conceptualizing educational administration as a number of technical functions, it will be viewed as a reflective, purposeful and conscious human endeavor that is firmly tied to the high-order purpose of life, which is worshipping Allah. It intersects with other educational and societal sub-systems that aim to deliver the goals of education. Such a concept was lost in the positivistic era of educational administration and later under the influence of managerialism, ‘new public management’ and neoliberalism.

The organization (e.g., school) will be transformed into a micro-Umma, a community of learners who view their work as worship, who compete for the best and at the same time extend a hand to help others. Knowledge to such a community is a blessing from Allah to be shared rather than power for domination. Therefore, knowledge sharing, knowledge donation and dissemination are attached special importance. Such concepts may help in reclaiming the very objective of educational administration—that is, ‘improving student learning’, which is lost amid the creeping ‘busnocracy’ and the market-driven jargon that adversely affected the original mission of schools by turning teachers and students into cost variables rather than educative learners.

The administrator is a leader of leaders not the superordinate of subordinates, the first among equals who shoulder burdens rather than enjoy privileges, services-oriented rather than stardom-obsessed and ‘works with’ rather than ‘through’ others. S/he will not arrogantly or pretentiously work to shape the followers’ behaviors, but work with them to further the institution’s real performance. In such an organization, the hierarchy is viewed as a mechanism to facilitate, rather than confer honor on some while withholding dignity from others. An organization (say school) working from the Islamic perspective should be free of manipulation and poisonous activities.

The leader–follower relationship according to the *Khilafah* model means that a school or organization enters into continuous deliberations as followers have the right to say what they think and to question policies and practices and leaders are duty bound to listen. In a school guided by the *Khilafah* model, teachers and students should be given more latitude to explore alternatives. It is worth mentioning that the role of followers has gained more attention in mainstream literature since the 1990s (Essa & Atari, 2019).

According to this model, teachers should be seen as leaders, should be given the opportunity and provided the necessary facilities to excel in leadership. Not only teachers but other staff and even students should be trained to lead. An administrator’s performance will be judged by, among other criteria, preparing others to lead. This should be counterbalanced by accountability (there should be office bearers) and realism (not every person can or wants to lead). Currently, “teacher

leadership” and “student leadership” are given more attention in the mainstream literature and are contemplated in some leadership theories such as the distributive and shared leadership theories.

It is worth mentioning that a number of scholars made insightful attempts to apply Islamic-informed models to specific functions of educational management, such as communications, resolving conflict and decision-making (Atari, 2008), mentorship in higher education teaching, research and supervision (Samier, 2021) and the daily practices of school leaders (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), to cite but few.

It should be emphasized that all these attempts are intellectual exercises (*ijtihad*) that should be done by qualified people and should be applied in a nondogmatic manner. Educational administrators face novel situations that require innovative applications. Applying the model to emerging cases should be conducted with the utmost rigor. Literal understanding, pretentious self-righteousness, equating a person’s understanding with divine intention and similar forms of intellectual laxity will defeat the purpose. This requires contextualization of the model. For this purpose, our model included the sociocultural factors within a dotted circle, implying that this component is always changing and mediates the application of the model.

The balance that characterizes the Islamic worldview helps overcome the contentious dualities in educational administration, such as the ‘is-ought’, ‘individual-organization’, ‘task-orientation/human orientation’, ‘value-fact’, in addition to the controversies concerning the legitimate sources of administrative knowledge, the role of theoretical knowledge and the like.

The *Khilafah* model maintains and upholds the dignity of man in organizations (e.g., students, staff, and members of the school community). The unique position of man and the missionary nature of administration entails that members of both the internal and external publics of school be seen as shareholders equally concerned for the educational enterprise, rather than as means to be used or even resources to be tapped to achieve a desired goal. Rules and regulations, productivity and efficiency should not jeopardize man’s dignity.

The balance that characterizes the Islamic worldview integrates both the soft values (caring, sharing, love, leniency, concern for others and compassion) and hard values (high achievement, competition, mastery, efficiency, accountability, hardworking and result-orientation). An administrator should be affectionate, considerate and human-oriented, while at the same time, s/he should show disapproval or even express outrage if the results are disappointing. It is a radical departure from both the social Darwinist and laissez-faire approaches.

The comprehensiveness of the Islamic worldview would be manifested in different ways—for instance, putting into consideration both the intra- and extra-organizational factors whether in order to understand organizational behavior or to prescribe optimal solutions. Acknowledging the role of extra-organizational factors connects administration to other sub-systems and, finally, with the grand system, which is the universe. This sets the base for many ethical and environmental implications and may constitute the basis for an Islamic-informed concept of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Realism requires leaders to be aware of the heterogeneity of the staff. Not all staff will be at the same level of dedication, sacrifice and altruism. Leaders should tailor their leadership style to the current educational and commitment levels of their staff without losing faith in the ability to tap into the staff’s higher potential. A leader could start as transactional and end as transformational who strengthens the heartbeat of schools, as Sergiovanni (2015) put it.

The simplicity of the Islamic worldview is supposed to dilute the hyper-bureaucracy, red tape, boredom, alienation and dysfunction of communications.

*Maqasid Al Shari’a* means that schools should be healthy, safe, free of stress, burnout and all kinds of untoward behavior; characterized by justice, fairness and respect; prudent in managing time and resources. In this sense, the *Khilafah* model aligns more with positive psychology, which makes a paradigm shift from focusing on burnout, stress, alienation, boredom, problems and obstacles to work engagement, capabilities, optimism, hope and belief in self-efficacy.

The model we advance in this chapter is not “The Islamic Model” (with capital T) but a model from an Islamic perspective. It is a framework that could spawn more theories, models and frameworks. Therefore, the *Khilafah* model should be problematized, criticized and nuanced.

The *Khilafah* model should be empirically tested. There is a need for an item pool consisting of statements inspired by the model that could be developed into scales and questionnaires. In this respect, we refer, for instance, to the “Scale of Islamic Work Ethics” that was developed by Ali (1988) and afterward was widely used. In other terms, there should be a shift from the normative to the descriptive. This is important given the fact that there is a gap between Islamic values and work practices in most Muslim countries and societies. Worse is that many Muslims are oftentimes not aware of this gap.

There are some attempts to conduct empirical investigations on the impact of some Islamic values on the performance of educational leaders (DeCuir, 2019; Hamza et al., 2016; Striepe, 2016); on the problems facing principals of Islamic faith schools (Hammad & Shah, 2018) and on the leadership styles of school leaders (Abbas & Tan, 2019). This line of inquiry should be enhanced to see how leaders position religion through their school’s ethos, culture and activities (Lumby & Ruairc, 2021).

We hold that the *Khilafah* model helps to enter into creative intellectual engagement rather than aping or randomly selective engagement, with the mainstream scholarship. This requires both internalizing the *Khilafah* model and understanding the mainstream scholarship. As mentioned earlier, there will always be levels of convergence and divergence between the *Khilafah* model and mainstream scholarship. This engagement should be done with rationality, maturity and honesty. Going by the way Muslims of the early centuries of Islam engaged with the sciences and knowledge of the old civilizations and, in particular, with the Greek legacy, this engagement may end with accommodating, integrating, problematizing, nuancing or rejecting some aspects of the mainstream scholarship. In this respect, we warn against the immature and irrational inclination of some Muslims either to overestimate the mainstream scholarship by taking it as the baseline or underestimating it. The other face of immaturity and irrationality is to give unwarranted credit to the Islamic heritage or take defensive stances or claim Muslims’ precedence in

everything. Maturity and rationality dictate appreciating and critically engaging with the other while being conscious of both contributions and shortcomings.

Finally, putting the *Khilafah* model into practice should not be taken lightly. The theoretical underpinnings of the model—namely, the belief-and-value systems, the characteristics of the Islamic worldview and the *Maqasid*—are inferred from texts. And texts are vulnerable to all kinds of reading(s), careless reading, partial reading, incomplete reading, misreading and, worst of all, slavish copying (Said, 2002).

One of the challenges facing the Islamic-informed *Khilafah* model is discontinuity of the Islamic legacy due to centuries of Western domination and colonization during which that legacy waned and became inaccessible and unreadable to the majority of contemporary Muslims. To make the *Khilafah* model of educational administration a viable alternative requires a critical mass of scholars with a shared vision and effective means of scholarly communication who dedicate systematic efforts to chart out plans and courses of action. Bibliometric studies that were conducted on Arab scholarship in educational administration (Atari & Essa, 2021; Atari & Outum, 2019) and on educational administration in some Islamic countries (Ahmed, 2020) revealed that there is a limited number of scholarly articles on Islamic-informed educational leadership, no centers for developing knowledge or training practitioners, no academic journals and, above all, no critical mass of specialized scholars. The interest is limited to a few scholars who mostly write theses or do research in sparse time and to a few courses offered in some universities. In other terms, we lack both the scholarly community and the infrastructure that are *sine qua non* for scholarship to reach a high paradigmatic status.

## Limitations

Advancing an Islamic-informed model to educational administration is vulnerable to the liability of newness. Literature on Islamic educational leadership is still emerging, and there are presently very few specific models for Islamic educational leadership. Islamic scholarship in educational administration in general involves epistemological as well as methodological challenges while lacking universally accepted guidelines. On the other hand, this scholarship is still small compared to mainstream scholarship and even to Islamic scholarship in other management specialties. It needs much more effort and time to become a fully-fledged segment of research. However, it can in the future draw upon the relatively reasonable body of knowledge on Islamic-informed scholarship in management and leadership, on the critical mass of scholarship in religion-inspired approaches in general and on the morally inclined and ethically oriented approaches to leadership.

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### 3 Managing emotions in schools

#### Insights from religion sources and a model for school leadership

*Mustafa Toprak and Mehmet Karakus*

##### **Introduction**

Emotions are defined as “people’s valenced (positive or negative) reactions to events that they perceive as relevant to their ongoing concerns” (Koole et al., 2011, p. 23). Despite an emerging awareness among scholars, Western conceptualizations of emotions have not yet fully embraced the function of emotions in cognition and, by and large, continue treating emotions and cognition as split constructs. In the words of Fineman (2000), Western philosophical thought has not yet abandoned its view of treating emotions as obstructors of rationality while it is now being recognized that emotions serve rationality, thus, emotions and rationality are entwined. An informed look into various previous philosophies such as Greek rationalism (e.g., Aristotle, Plato) and Renaissance (e.g., Descartes, Locke, Hume) and other current rational choice theories demonstrates a view founded on the notion that “human action... originates in reason” (Sandelans & Boudens, 2000, p. 47) and on a view that “privileges rationality over emotions” (Fineman, 2000, p. 11). Such a view situates humans as rational decision-makers who are almost “uncoloured by emotion” (Sandelans & Boudens, 2000, p. 47). On the other hand, almost all religions recognize the emotional states such as reverence, pure fear, fear with curiosity (awe), hope, love (Leuba, 1912), faith, charity, consolation, affection, and cheerfulness (Thagard, 2005). Leuba (1912) argues that love in the context of religion as an emotion is in better agreement with modern-day generations than past generations who were more easily moved by fear. James (2002), likewise, stresses the centrality of emotions in religions in this statement: “[I]n a world in which no religious feeling had ever existed, I doubt whether any philosophic theology could ever have been framed” (p. 334).

The lack of consensus on the nature of religions’ approach to emotionality as a tool of influence aside, it is clear that religions have long viewed the use of emotions as a behavior-mobilizing instrument. For instance, attunement to emotions and a high level of awareness of emotionality can be discerned in Quran, Islam’s central text, in Prophet Mohammed’s (PBUH) statements and in his personal and administrative life. The following verses distinctly represent Quran’s guidance to Prophet Mohammed on attunements to emotions:

It was thanks to Allah's mercy that you were gentle to them. Had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from you.

(Quran, 3:159)

Certainly, a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your distress, he has deep concern for you, to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful.

(Quran, 9:128)

Although some researchers and practitioners in the field of educational administration have recently been invested in the identification of leverage for nurturing positive behavior at schools, they have largely failed in turning their attention to religions and their strategies in increasing individuals' commitment, well-being, and morale, along with task-related behavior. The emotion-behavior link, an awareness of empathy, and other emotional-behavioral connotations seem to have been recognized in world religions. We could safely argue that the approach taken by religions, Islam in particular, has proven effective considering followers' dedication and the increasing number of people looking to religion as a source of well-being and happiness.

Managing behavior is principally about knowing the human psyche and social connectedness, and the management of emotions is central to such knowledge at the workplace. School is such a workplace where administrators, teachers, parents, staff, and students frequently interact with one another, and due to the centrality of these social interactions, schools are full of emotions (Hargreaves, 2005). These emotions seem to shape the nature of interactions, the learning and performance of individuals in educational settings (Pekrun et al., 2007). Also, just like negative emotions, positive emotions are frequently experienced by students and are, therefore, important (Pekrun et al., 2002b). In fact, these positive emotions are beneficial for students' learning because they influence students' motivation, cognitive resources, and self-regulation (Pekrun et al., 2002a). However, interest in the link between educational leaders and emotions seems to be in its early stages (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018). In fact, it was not until recently that the role of emotionality on behavior has been acknowledged and scrutinized through increasing research evidence in the context of school leadership.

Given that teachers spend ample face-to-face time with students in class (such interaction has been minimized during the global COVID-19 pandemic) and that school administrators in most cases interact with people on a daily basis, we will do justice if we label teaching and school leadership as a "face-job". In other words, "people and relationships, and the social interactions... are woven into the fabric of the everyday life of a school administrator" (Crawford, 2007, p. 87). Schools are also full of what Fineman (2000, p. 11) defines as "emotionalized social processes and discourses". In a context characterized more by accountability schemes with weak support systems and by high-stake testing that appear to have become sources of much distress, Social-Emotional Leadership (SEL)—that is, "designed to build consciousness, urgency, and agency within a primary network with the goal to build character strengths and increase individual and collective well-being so as to

lead to institutional flourishing” (Alloro, 2008, p. 8)—has become much more needed. Developing competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making as essential components (CASEL, 2020) might prove instrumental in developing healthy, caring, and positive school climates (Mahfouz et al., 2019). Enabling individuals at schools to develop these competencies and promotion of them at the school level call for a more systemic approach, including academic curricula that include relevant content standards, a shared culture that has embraced such learning, and appropriate schoolwide practices and policies (CASEL, 2020). Coordination of the curriculum across grades and in-class structured SEL activities and experiences implemented by a knowledgeable and dedicated team of professionals are also needed to promote these competencies (Elias et al., 1997). Development of such a curriculum and its enactment entail concerted efforts by administrators, coordinators, teachers, and other members of the school community. Also, school administrators with instructional leadership capacities who are adept at defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and creating a positive school climate (Hallinger, 2005) could play a pivotal role in ensuring the diffusion of SEL at the school level.

School administrators, in particular, observe, feel, and strive to manage self-emotions and the emotions of others, and many, in the words of Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2004), are ‘wounded’ due to their battles with crises and critical events. Because schools are dynamic work environments characterized by frequent and mostly intense social interactions, emotions are the essential ingredients of relationships and decision-making for school administrators. As such, school administrators need both reason and effective emotion management to do their work. Fineman’s (2000) observation represents the intertwined nature of emotions and rationality at school organizations: “[E]motions can leak into organizational relationships and structures to screen the actor from an accurate reading of the situation. The removal, or better management, of these emotions...is the first step towards achieving (or restoring) rationality” (p. 11).

When emotion-behavior links and practices based on this recognition in religions are taken into account, the question that remains is whether there is an exemplar religion-based approach and/or a system of practices that can inform the current and future work on emotions in school leadership. One of the sources of insights that could prove helpful for school administrators to manage emotions is religion, including Islam, which has been practiced for 14 centuries and has 1.4 billion adherents (Lipka, 2017).

In this chapter, we explore the concept of Islamic leadership by drawing lessons that could be relevant for school administrators’ management of self-emotions and attuning to the emotions of teachers, students, staff, and parents. Awareness of emotions with a desire to better regulate them is manifested in many morals of Islam, such as knowing yourself as an indication of knowing God, restraining anger, putting love at the center of relationships, being optimistic, and being supportive. By considering Fineman’s (2000) argument that emotions serve rationality and that emotions and rationality are interwoven, our purpose is to explore the view and management of emotions from an Islamic leadership perspective to

understand the management of emotions in guiding thinking and behavior, and to provide insights for the context of educational leadership. Because doing a comprehensive systematic review of the two primary sources of Islam (i.e., Hadiths and ayahs) is beyond the scope of our work, we have largely relied on secondary sources that are focused on emotions in Islam. An ayah is a verse in the Quran, while a Hadith refers to a record of the actions, words, and silent approval of the Prophet Mohammed. Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan an-Nasa'i, Sunan Abi Dawud, and Jami' at-Tirmidhi are accepted as the most authentic Hadith collections by the majority of Muslim scholars (Lucas, 2004).

To develop an emotion-focused school leadership framework based on essential tenets of Islamic leadership, we first analyzed the existing frameworks on emotion management in leadership, then studied the relevant Hadiths and ayahs from both secondary and primary sources, and, finally, selected relevant dimensions of the existing frameworks that go well with the emotion management competencies and behavior emerged from these sources.

To this end, we have first described key terms relevant to socio-emotional leadership, such as empathy, positive affectivity, emotional reframing, and supportive behaviors, and then critiqued Islamic thought, discourse, and practices by drawing on Quranic verses and Hadiths to cast further light on the life of Prophet Mohammed.

### ***Description of the context***

We argue that Islamic leadership lays a substantial emphasis on awareness and regulation of emotions and that such leadership praxis could be quite relevant in the context of educational leadership. To further develop this argument, in this part, we have first described the context, later explained some emotional concepts we find relevant to that context, and, finally, presented exemplary behaviors that represent emotionality in Prophet Mohammed's behavior and discourse.

Prophet Mohammed was born in 571 AD in Mecca, where an intertribal feud was fierce and the source of many conflicts and battles. He became known as Mohammed-ul Amin (Mohammed the trustworthy) due to his absolute personal integrity. The society he was born into was a patriarchal society in which women were viewed as secondary citizens. In fact, there were many instances of people burying their daughters alive. People were known to have strong tribal identities, had quick tempers, and saw fighting with one another as a primary path for protection and survival. People largely lacked humanist values and were in spiritual and social darkness (Yılmaz, 2012). In the Arab society before Islam, there was strong tribal solidarity (*Asabiyya*) serving simply as the means of protection and identity for both tribal groups and individuals (Watt & McDonald, 1988). A simple discussion over a trivial issue could sometimes have led people or groups of people to go on a fight just for the sake of their strong attachment to the family or tribal pride (*kibr*) (Kirazli, 2011).

While Islam does not dismiss rationality, it has a unique approach to reason and emotion in that it lays much more significance on the heart than on the head (Bauer, 2017). Quantitative analysis by Bauer (2017) shows evidence of such a view. He has identified that, in Quran, the four words that are associated with heart (*qalb*, *sadr*, *fu'ad*, *lubb*) are cited 218 times, while the word "aql" (with

multiple meanings of reason, intellect, understanding) is cited 49 times all to mean heart. This heavy emphasis on the heart could be because the heart is viewed as the central organ for perception, it is where capacity for rational understanding is located in addition to the heart being the “locus of feeling” (Bauer, 2017, p. 19). Based on Quran’s understanding, “aql” (reason/understanding) is positioned in the heart: “Have they not travelled in the land so that they may have hearts by which they may understand, and ears by which they may hear?” (Quran, 22:46). In another ayah, feelings are located in the heart: “Then we caused our messengers to follow in their footsteps; and we caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow, and gave him the Gospel, and placed compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him” (Quran, 7:179).

### **Analysis, key terms and main themes**

In the current study, we have first independently reviewed Hadith sources and the Quran for the purpose of extracting relevant Hadiths and Quran verses. We have also relied on secondary sources that have referred us to these Hadiths and Quran verses. Following both a priori coding (through concepts established in emotional management literature) and an open coding approach we, then, categorized these Hadiths and Quran verses under relevant constructs. We have also followed axial coding procedures for further grouping, subcategorization, and merging.

Our review of Islam’s primary sources (Quran and Hadith) yielded various constructs that we have grouped under two main themes: emotional competencies and emotion management behaviors. The current categorization revealed a similar theoretical structure to Goleman et al.’s (2002) “Emotional Intelligence Quadrant” model, which consists of self-awareness, social awareness (empathy), self-management (self-regulation), and relationship management dimensions. The first main theme (emotional competencies) of our theoretical model covers the first three dimensions of their model, while our second main theme (emotion management behaviors) corresponds to the relationship management dimension of their model. Both models imply that leaders are expected to have certain emotional competencies (understand their own emotions, and the emotions of others, and regulate their emotions) in order to successfully manage their relationships with others.

#### ***Emotional competencies***

Our analysis has uncovered empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation as emotional competencies that are emphasized in Islamic leadership.

##### *Empathy: Socio-emotional sensitivity and empathic caring*

Empathy is the competency and disposition to recognize and share others’ feelings. It implies socio-emotional sensitivity, including receiving and interpreting verbal and nonverbal socio-emotional messages, an essential socio-emotional skill of effective leadership (Riggio & Reichard, 2008). Empathy also includes recognizing others’ conditions, experiencing their feelings, and understanding their needs,

even when they are not expressed (Lunenburg, 2011). Empathy has been described as an essential part of the Muslim faith by the Prophet Mohammed in this following Hadith: “None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (Sunan an-Nasa’i, 2021, no: 5017). Similarly, empathic caring was praised by the Prophet and was deemed as a necessity to gain God’s mercy: “If you show mercy to those who are on the earth, He Who is in the heaven will show mercy to you” (Sunan Abi Dawud, 2021, no: 4941).

Enhancing empathy in school leadership might largely contribute to the development of a positive climate (Zaki & Ochsner, 2016). Socially sensitive school leaders go beyond recognizing emotions by expressing their care, and they are competent in acknowledging their constituencies’ accomplishments and strengths (Lunenburg, 2011). Empathy is strongly emphasized in Islamic leadership. As a role model of an empathic leader, Prophet Mohammed is introduced in Quran as “caring for all the issues of his followers, sensitive to all their needs, kind, and merciful” (Quran, 9:128). “Muslim community should be like a single body” according to the Prophet, and “each limb should react empathetically with compassion, mercy, and affection when a limb suffers” (Riyad as-Salihin, 2021, no: 224). By virtue of such social and emotional sensitivity, for the Prophet, “He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while the neighbor to his side goes hungry” (al-Adab, 2021, no: 112). We can then argue that socio-emotional sensitivity and empathic caring in Islamic leadership are competencies with much potential to generate and nurture positive emotions and, thereby, to create strong bonds and connections among people.

### *Self-awareness*

Here we find it necessary to differentiate between the concepts of self-management, self-awareness, self-control, and self-regulation. Defined as “an ongoing attention to one’s internal states” and “a neutral mode that maintains self-reflectiveness even amidst turbulent emotions” (Goleman, 1998, p. 87), *self-awareness* emerges as a concept upon which self-control and self-regulation are built. Collins and Jackson (2015) refer to the deliberate nature of self-control. They define self-regulation as a capacity rather than a conscious and deliberate act. It then follows that self-awareness; self-regulation, as a more unconscious act; and self-control, as a more conscious act, are essential ingredients of self-management.

Islamic leadership emphasizes “Knowing yourself” by setting it as a condition for knowing God. The following Hadith exemplifies this approach in a nutshell. “He who knows himself best knows his Lord best” (Ibn Arabi, 1911). Quran also seems to equate not knowing oneself with not knowing God: “And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget their own souls” (59:19). Such an approach could be rooted in the belief that personal change can occur only if the person knows himself/herself (Loughran, 2020). Viewing self-awareness as a facilitator of personal transformation is a quite nuanced approach to the human psyche. An explanation for this is provided by Lunenburg (2011): “A leader with good self-awareness would recognize factors such as whether he or she was liked, or was exerting the right amount of pressure on organization members” (p. 2).

*Self-regulation: Anger management and tolerance*

Emotional self-regulation is a psychological resource that could help people manage distressing situations, handle impulse, and deal with upsets (Goleman, 1998). People engaged in self-regulation “seek to redirect the spontaneous flow of their emotions” (Koole et al., 2011, p. 23). Such a competence might assist individuals in “keeping disruptive impulses in check, displaying honesty and integrity; being flexible in times of change; maintaining the drive to perform well and seize opportunities; and remaining optimistic even after failure” (Lunenburg, 2011, p. 2). This competence appears to be one of the fundamental ingredients of Islamic leadership, and in our study, we have unearthed the two main dimensions of this concept: anger management and tolerance.

Self-regulation in Islamic leadership is particularly manifested in the forms of managing anger, regulating the urge to reciprocate, and tolerating and forgiving others. For instance, upon returning to Makka as a victorious commander, Prophet Mohammed chose to excuse people who had inflicted much pain on him and his friends by making the following statement: “[T]here is no denouncement for you today” (Yıldız, 2006).

A leader sets/should set the tone in an organization and form a frame of reference for the people around him/her by modeling the expected behavior. Managing anger through increased thinking and awareness of self, regulation of emotions in challenging situations where feelings of reciprocation might be intense, and being able to reframe anger into compassion will be an impactful leadership act. Such self-management might enhance understanding and trigger the act of forgiveness. Also, such awareness and regulation of emotions might motivate others to revisit their perceived emotions and think on these emotions to transform them as well, given that, from a modeling perspective, through observation of leaders, followers get to learn normative behavior (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

The concept of self-management is exemplified in another case retold by Yıldız (2006):

A bedouin approached Prophet Mohammed, held him by his tabard and then by his neck and angrily gave an order: “Give me my right!”. While this behavior stirred up the companions around him, he peacefully said: “give this man what he wants!”

Responding to such intolerable behavior with a smile manifests his auto-control capacity and his all-embracing and enduring love for humans (Yıldız, 2006). This case demonstrates that a leader with high self-management would not suddenly throw a temper tantrum when things do not go as planned or when there is a different opinion (Lunenburg, 2011). His following Hadith also confirms the virtue of self-management: “The strong man isn’t the winning wrestler, but he is the one who controls himself when he is angry” (Sunan Abi Dawud, 2021, no: 4779). Leaders should consider the potential impact of their handling of emotions on others’ ways of handling emotions because followers look up to their leaders, particularly in difficult times. Also, because managing self-emotions facilitates others’



management of emotions (Humphrey et al., 2008), effective self-emotion management is a precursor for reframing others' emotions.

Anger management emerges as a recurring theme in the emotion management of Islamic leadership. Prophet Mohammed underlined its significance in the following incident:

A man said to the prophet: "advise me!" The Prophet said, "Do not become angry and furious". The man asked the same question again and again, and the Prophet said in each case: "Do not become angry and furious!"

(Bukhari, 2021, no: 6116)

Quran similarly lists anger management and forgiveness as essential virtues by describing individuals with these competencies as "good-doers" in the following verse (Quran, 3:134): "[W]ho spend in the way of Allah both in plenty and hardship, who restrain their anger, and forgive others. Allah loves such good-doers". Prophet Mohammed seems to have recommended several strategies to manage anger such as (as cited in Karšli, 2011): (a) not making decisions when angry (Buhari, Ahkâm, 13), (b) seeking shelter in God: *istiaze* (Ebu Davud, Edeb, 4, (4780), (c) being silent (Ahmed İbn Hanbel, Volume 1, p. 283), (d) taking wudhu (Ebu Davud, Edeb 4, (4784), (e) changing the shape of your body [standing up if seated, seated if standing up, etc.] (Ebu Davud, Edeb, 4, (4782). These practices are similar to Richards et al.'s (2006) spiritually based intervention strategies for self-management in the workplace, which include passage meditation, repetition of a holy word or mantram, slowing down, putting others first, and inspirational reading.

## **Emotion management behaviors**

Emotion management-related behaviors are loving others, communicating in a healthy and tactful manner; being kind, compassionate, and forgiving; displaying social and emotional expressions; reframing emotions; and being considerate and supportive.

### ***Loving others: Fill your heart with love and greetings and congeniality***

Islam's advocacy of loving humans is exemplified in the adage by Yunus Emre, a Dervish who lived in the 12th century: "I love the created beings because of the creator". The following famous Hadith also highlights love-based relationships and the heart as a source of well-being: "There is a piece of flesh in the human body. When it is good, all body is good; when it is bad, all body is bad. Be aware! That flesh is heart" (Buhkari, 52). This suggests that humans need to continuously reflect on their emotions and make sure they fill their hearts with positivity. The term "mercy" that recursively appears in Islamic texts ("And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Quran, 21:107) also accentuates love. Accordingly, love-oriented interactions emerge as one of the guiding

principles of Islamic leadership. The following ayahs illustrate the emphasis on motivating people to engage in interactions based on compassion, affection, and love: “[O Muhammad], you were compassionate with them. And if you had been impolite [in speech] and strict in heart, they would have dispersed from about you” (Quran, 3:159). “and He placed between you affection and mercy” (Quran, 30:21).

A leader is expected to effectively manage relationships with others and interact with others. Understanding and guiding others’ emotions helps in building such congenial relationships. Building meaningful relationships is significant for different reasons: increasing well-being, feeling of worth, and self-efficacy. This may both increase trust in the leaders and increase leaders’ capacity to influence. The Hadith: “Oh people! Disseminate the salaam (saying greetings to others)! When you meet someone, give them clear greetings” (Muslim, 2021, no: 2066) can be viewed as a guide for frequent quality exchanges with people. There is also an apparent intent on highlighting “greetings” as an initiator of relationship-building exchanges:

A man asked the Prophet: “Whose Islam is good or what sort of deeds (or what qualities) of Islam are good?” The Prophet replied, “To feed (others) and to greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know”.

(Bukhari, 2021, no: 6236)

### **Communicating in a healthy and tactful manner: Empathic listening and using kind and constructive language**

Leaders need to interact with followers in a manner that meets the emotional requirements of the situation and the emotional expectations of others. Recognition of these emotional expectations entails healthy and tactful communication. A leader’s tactful communication serves to meet followers’ emotional and informational needs, and a positive change in their emotions could lead to increased performance (Kaplan et al., 2014). Recent evidence has revealed that healthy communication practices of a leader promote followers’ job satisfaction, job performance, self-determination, and retention (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). The Quran advises to communicate with other people friendly and wisely (Quran, 16:125) by using nice words in all situations (Quran, 2:83), and by speaking to them gently to stimulate mindfulness (Quran, 20:44). There are many examples of healthy and tactful communication in the life of the Prophet. Anas bin Malik, a companion who served the Prophet for ten years, testified that the Prophet had never made even a slightly harsh statement implying impatience and he had never blamed him for anything (Bukhari, 2021, no: 6038). The Prophet communicated with his followers tactfully, kindly, and respectfully. When shaking hands, he would not withdraw his hands until the other person withdrew his and during a conversation, he would not turn away his face from any person until the other person turned his to the other side (No’mani, 1982).

Empirical evidence shows that school principals' healthy communication practices (such as empathic listening) are associated with a greater positive emotional change in teachers (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018). Becoming an attentive listener and paying attention to the sender's words are essential for empathic listening in Islamic leadership (Nadvi, 2014). That the purposeless talk was frowned upon by the Prophet because of its capacity to damage and erode social bonds in this Hadith: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him say good or remain silent" (Bukhari, 2021, no: 5672) also manifests an emphasis on active but purposeful communication with a purpose. In short, healthy communication characterized by tactful, respectful, kind, and empathic interactions is offered by Islamic leadership as a plan to stimulate positive emotions in followers.

### **Being kind, compassionate, and forgiving**

In the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2022a), *compassion* is described as "a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of others and a wish to help them"; *kindness* as being: "generous, helpful and thinking about other peoples' feelings" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022b); and *forgiveness* as "to stop blaming or being angry with someone for something that person has done, or not punish them for something" (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2022c). Forgiveness is also about "letting go of one's own and others' mistakes" (Lennick & Kiel, 2011, p. 128). Based on these definitions, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness are closely related to acknowledgment that people can make mistakes, they can have sufferings, and based on this recognition, leaders must be there for people to alleviate their sadness, to strongly feel for them, to offer genuine help, and to avoid blaming people for their failures and mistakes. Toprak and Karakus (2018) emphasize the contribution of forgiveness to innovativeness and autonomy as well: "[F]orgiveness competency seems to work towards increasing employees' autonomy and contributes to their innovative and creative capacities by giving them the message that mistakes are normal, tolerable, even encouraged at times" (p. 903).

Compassion is one of the signature concepts of the Quran and one of the names of Allah (God in Islamic terminology). It is cited in the Quran's introduction (1:1): "In the name of God, the Compassionate and The Merciful". Haskins and Thomas (2018) stated that there is a lack of attention to kindness in behavior management, but all religions, including Islam, consider as a valuable virtue. We might consider forgiveness as an outcome of deep kindness and compassion held by leaders for their constituencies because a kind and compassionate leader who accepts that others can make mistakes and that others can have difficult times will be more likely to let go of others' mistakes.

Prophet Mohammed's following statement indicates his emphasis on kindness during interpersonal interactions: "O 'Aisha! The worst people are those whom the people desert or leave in order to save themselves from their dirty language or from their transgression" (Bukhari, 2021, no: 6054). Quran also emphasizes leniency as a quality that binds a leader and constituencies together:

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from you. So, pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter.

(Quran, 3:59)

An interpretation of this ayah could establish kindness and leniency as antecedents of forgiving behavior.

Although reciprocating an evil act is an option, forgiving behavior is recommended in Islamic texts as a behavior that God will reward: “And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation—his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers” (Quran, 42:40). Forgiving can come to many as a difficult behavior, particularly when a forgiving individual is mistreated, cheated, or bullied. In the context of mistreatment, the Quran advises, “Take to forgiveness, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant” (Quran, 7:200). Our reading of these ayahs is that behaving in kindness and compassion develops the capacity to forgive others and make the display of forgiving behavior more likely.

### **Displaying social and emotional expressions: Spreading the salutation of peace and using nice words/gestures to convey positive feelings**

Emotional expressiveness can be defined as the competency to communicate affective states using nonverbal motions (Riggio, 2017). However, social expressiveness means the competency to utilize effective verbal communication in interacting with others (Riggio & Reichard, 2008). A leader’s social and emotional expressions have a substantial impact on followers’ perceptions and judgments, and so they can facilitate a leader’s efforts to manage the followers’ emotions (Kaplan et al., 2014). Putting on socio-emotional performances, leaders attempt to evoke functional emotional states in followers and impact their behaviors (Humphrey et al., 2008). Evidence suggests that social and emotional expressiveness is among the most critical leadership competencies, and both are related to leader effectiveness (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

In Islamic leadership, Muslims are encouraged to utilize effective socio-emotional expressions to generate positive emotions in others. The Prophet urged people to love each other and to express their love using nice words and salutations. Loving others and expressing love for others are at the center of Muslim faith according to this Hadith: “The ones who do not love one another are not real believers. Greet one another (with the salutation of peace) to express your love” (Riyad as-Salihin, 2021, no: 378). The following Hadith also confirms this notion: Anas bin Malik narrated that a man said to the Prophet,

“I love this man”. The Prophet asked: “Have you informed him?” He replied: “No” The Prophet then said: “Express him that you love him”. Then, he

went up to the man and expressed to him: “I love you for the sake of Allah”, and the other responded: “May Allah, for whose sake you love me, love you”.  
(Ad-Dimashqi, 1998)

Not only nice words but also nonverbal gestures such as facial expressions were recommended by Prophet to spread positive emotions: “Your smiling in the face of your brother is charity” (Jami‘at-Tirmidhi, 2021, no: 1956).

### **Reframing emotions: Hope, optimism, patience, prayer, perseverance, hard work**

Emotional reframing is defined as “recast[ing] an undesirable emotion or reason for the emotion in a manner that is more consistent with the organization’s goals and culture...such that the emotions are obviated, transformed” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002, pp. 217–229). One way such reframing is administered is through projecting optimism and hope to people during difficult times, which is evident in the following Ayah and Hadiths: “I am amazed by optimism, the good word, the kind word” (Bukhari, 2021, no: 5422). “Do not lose hope, nor be sad” (Quran, 3:39). The leader in this perspective is expected to create a strong image of relief by developing a difficulty-relief link and by expecting the individual to persevere, to be patient, and to work hard. This ayah, “God will create ease after hardship” (Quran, 65:7), for instance, is focused on developing hope and optimism by developing a belief that hardships are not there everlasting but are temporary. What matters is not only to be hopeful and optimistic but also never to quit striving for the best: “Surely, with every difficulty, there is a relief. So, when you have finished (with your immediate task), still strive hard (then toil)” (Quran, 94:6–7). Leaders also need to work on motivating people to “patiently persevere”: “Oh you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayer, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere” (Quran, 2:153).

A recent Randomized Controlled Study by Valosek et al. (2018) shows that mind-body techniques such as Transcendental Meditation significantly increase emotional intelligence, general mood, stress management, adaptability, intrapersonal awareness of individuals and significantly decrease perceived stress. Prayer, a form of meditation (Alwasiti et al. 2010), is an essential practice in Islam, along with patience and perseverance. Growing research evidence highlights the effect of prayer on increased well-being, hopefulness, confidence (Yücel, 2007), management of stress and emotions (Pieper et al., 2018), and increased relaxation due to increased alpha activity (Doufesh et al., 2012). Being hopeful and optimistic is valued to the extent that despair is viewed similarly to disbelief, as clearly described in Quran (12:87): “[A]nd never give up hope of Allah’s mercy. Certainly, no one despairs hope of Allah’s mercy, except the people who disbelieve”. A leader, from this perspective, mingles with people and understands and feels their distress: “Someone who joins people and endures their sufferings is more benevolent than someone who does not” (Jami‘at-Tirmidhi, 2021, no: 55). Adverse times are normal for any context, and what Islamic leadership offers to us in such contexts is the

belief that hard work pays off—that people will be relieved through hard work, perseverance, hope and optimism.

### **Being considerate and supportive: Fraternity, compassion, support, consideration**

Leaders can display considerate behaviors in the form of informational, instrumental, or emotional support (Humphrey et al., 2008). Leaders' considerate and supportive behaviors are among the predictors of positive emotions and emotional well-being if they are perceived as genuine and altruistic by followers (Kaplan et al., 2014). Research evidence (Javed et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2015; Murtaza et al., 2016) shows that the Islamic work ethic that derives its principles from the Quran and Prophet motivates individuals to be more considerate and supportive toward other people, thus creating a positive climate at the workplace even under stressful and unfavorable working conditions.

In Islamic leadership, there is a recommendation for establishing a religion-based social support network, which is based on the *collective morality* concept elaborated in the Quran with the terms of *mercy, compassion, solidarity, brotherhood, justice, equality, and fairness* (Barise, 2005). This brotherhood is expressed in the Quran: "The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers" (Quran, 49:10). The Prophet advised considerate and compassionate behaviors in these Hadiths: "If you show mercy to those who are on the earth, God will show mercy to you" (Sunan Abi Dawud, 2021, no: 4941); "the best Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims remain safe" (Bukhari, 2021, no: 4995);

whosoever dispels from a believer some grief of this world, Allah will dispel from him some grief of the Day of Raising. Whosoever makes things easy for someone in difficulties; Allah will make things easy for him both in his life and the next. Whosoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal (his faults) in this world and the next. Allah is ready to help a servant so long as the servant is ready to help his brother.

(Muslim, 2021, no: 2699)

The Prophet advised such supportive behaviors while acknowledging the rights of fellow Muslims:

Help him if he asks for your help. Give him relief if he seeks your relief. Show him concern if he is distressed. Congratulate him if he meets any good. Sympathize with him if any calamity befalls him. Harass him not.

(Bukhari, 2021, no: 958)

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In modern education systems, post-bureaucratic governance challenges school leaders in their attempts to promote schooling and encourages them to adopt SEL behaviors to promote school success (Bush, 2014). In contrast with task-oriented

leadership, SEL focuses on member relations rather than productivity (Livi et al., 2008). It also aims at nurturing individuals' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Behaviors such as keeping interpersonal relations satisfying, providing encouragement, being collegial and approachable, paying attention to the welfare of the constituents, treating them fairly, maintaining healthy communication with them, empathizing with their viewpoints, asking their opinions, appreciating their efforts, and relieving their stress levels (Casimir & Ng, 2010) are also part of SEL. Schools are now, more than ever, faced with demands (particularly accountability schemes, other relevant forms such as standardized testing and the pressure to improve without adequate provision of resources) that seem to put much more distress on principals, teachers, students, and other staff. Such a work environment demands a revisit to SEL framework our work in this chapter was a response to inquiring into religious texts to find messages relevant to leadership that can improve SEL in such a context.

If not appropriately managed through management of emotions, these demands can generate negative emotions, cause internal conflicts, stress-related illnesses, various disruptive and withdrawal behavior, and intentions to leave. Considering these realities facing the school community, we have attempted, in this study, to probe into Islamic sources to find insights that could prove helpful for school staff in their struggles with the intent of supporting them in managing such a distressing work environment and their personal lives. By doing a less-than-systematic review of existing Islamic sources, we have brought to light several emotion management-related competencies and behaviors that we find relevant to school administration. Using a combination of a priori and open coding and taking into consideration the socio-emotional behavior emphasized by Islam, we propose a model of emotion-based educational administration that consists of two main themes: emotional competencies and emotion management behaviors (Table 3.1).

Our model is anchored in the belief that leadership is a work in both rationality and emotions and that positive emotions contribute to making optimal decisions and are instrumental in generating desirable behavior in the school context. Such leadership requires much labor on developing positive affect and a subtle recognition that schools are not only made of bricks and mortar but of individuals who are wired to display emotionally charged reactions to school events and to the social environment. Such conceptualization of school leadership entails a mind shift (a "metanoia" in the words of Peter Senge), emphasizing that it is the primary task of the school administrator, first, to be aware of their own affective states and of others if she/he wants to develop a community that feels happy, resilient, and motivated.

The model underlines the importance of empathic caring and socio-emotional sensitivity in educational leadership. School leaders are best advised to be sensitive to their followers' social and emotional expectations, understand verbal and non-verbal signals, interpret those signals empathetically and compassionately, and react to their needs with empathic caring.

We see changing oneself as a prerequisite for changing others. Because change entails self-reflection on your actions, values, and emotions, we have found that introspection is a must-have quality for leaders who are good at emotion management. We, therefore, recommend daily short self-reflection sessions for school

Table 3.1 A model of emotion management in school leadership

Theme	Relevant concepts
Emotional competencies	<i>Empathy</i>
	Socio-emotional sensitivity
	Empathic caring
	<i>Self-awareness</i>
	<i>Self-regulation</i>
Emotion management behaviors	Anger management
	Tolerance
	<i>Loving others</i>
	Filling your heart with love
	Greetings and congeniality
	<i>Communicating in a healthy and tactful manner</i>
	Empathic listening
	Using kind and constructive language
	<i>Being kind, compassionate, and forgiving</i>
	Kindness and compassion as foregoers of forgiving
	<i>Displaying social and emotional expressions</i>
	Spreading the salutation of peace
	Using nice words and gestures to convey positive feelings
	<i>Emotional reframing</i>
	Hope
	Optimism
	Patience
	Meditation (prayer)
	Perseverance
Hard work	
<i>Being considerate and supportive</i>	
Fraternity	
Compassion	
Support	
Consideration	

(created by authors)

administrators so they can take a step back, think about and evaluate their emotions, and make efforts to positively reframe them. This notion is similar to *tafakkur* (meditating on actions, reflecting on what is beneficial and what may induce harm) in Brooks and Mutohar's (2018) Islamic school leadership conceptual framework. Such reflection might include "reflection-in-action" when the event is occurring (Schön, 1983) but it echoes more closely with reflection-on-action defined by Donaldson (2008) as "retrospective analysis". We corroborate Donaldson's (2008) argument that self-observation in the forms of both reflection-in-action (particularly for immediate productivity) and reflection-on-action generates significant learning and insights and is most likely to enable the administrators to make "adjustments to the plan to lead, giving the leader a better toe-hold on how to make a difference" (Donaldson, 2008, p. 109). Such "withdraw from practice to reflect" is an important notion of Islamic theory and practice that resonates with modern-day conceptualizations (Shah, 2006).



We view this as an essential skill to have, considering that school administrators set the emotional tone at schools. We have also found that managing anger and being tolerant of others through personal restraint and not reciprocating are core qualities of self-regulation. We believe that not making decisions when angry, keeping silent and not responding on the spot, taking a walk, and washing face, hands, arms, and feet (as in *wudhu*) might also work to keep the anger in check and give yourself time until you evaluate your emotions, think on them, and behave based on the transformed emotions. Such an approach is similar to Scherl's (2014) Awareness (perceiving the emotions)—Reflection (understand/analyze the meaning of emotions perceived)—Emotional Management (managing—working with emotions judiciously) approach to developing emotional intelligence in leadership.

The model additionally proposes that an essential ingredient of leadership is unconditionally loving others accompanied by frequent congenial interactions with people. This aspect of our model is similar to Gronn's (2015) *obligingness* concept, which means "being accessible and approachable, and equally of being to be so, and of making a conscious effort to work the corridors, to meet and greet, and to drop by colleagues' offices to say hello" (p. 59). One of the reasons why such interactions are crucial is that others' emotions become more visible and accessible to the administrator through them. Also, an administrator who is familiar with others' emotions will be more adept at analyzing them from a better vantage point, and they will tend to better help them reframe their emotions.

Our model proposes significant insights in the context of conflict resolution, as well. School administrators can also find our model's focus on kindness, compassion, and forgiveness helpful in managing tensions, failures, and conflicts. Individuals in administrative positions at schools might face conflicts with others and might have to manage the conflicts between individuals. Some of these conflicts might be immense, to the point that people might want to shy away from further interactions with one another instead of resolving the conflict by following kindness, compassion, and forgiveness as the core principles to resolve a conflict. Because we have positioned kindness and compassion as foregoers of forgiving, we advise that administrators first be kind and compassionate and adept at forgiving others' failures and mistakes. Put differently, a sequential approach of kindness and compassion and forgiveness might prove useful in conflictual situations.

Development of social/emotional competencies has emerged as a core of Islamic leadership in our study. To diffuse social-emotional learning at schools requires a more systematic approach by improvement not only in leadership but also in both intended and enacted curriculum. Coordination of effort maximizes the efficiency and effectiveness in promoting social and emotional attitudes and behavior. We, therefore, recommend that instructional leaders who intend to promote socio-emotional competencies begin with a revision or an overhaul of the curriculum to ensure that it prioritizes improvement of reflection, self-management, and an awareness of and attunement to others' emotions. Development of relevant content standards and the use of case studies that capture and promote these competencies may help develop a curriculum conducive to SEL. Using instructional leadership capacities to ensure school community's embracement of these notions

and to manage such a program will increase the diffusion of SEL as a focal point of the instructional program. Life school curriculum scope (Weissberg et al., 1993) that has relevant skills (self-management, problem-solving and decision-making, communication), attitudes (about self, about others, about tasks), and content (self/health, relationships, school/community) can be followed as a model.

School is gradually becoming a source of stress for the community it holds. Reframing emotions in such an environment may prove extremely difficult. Such a context brings renewed responsibilities for administrators, among which is to transform negative emotions into positive ones. Our main argument in the model is that, particularly in stressful times, administrators should capitalize on elevating hope and project optimism. They should also publicly share that patience, perseverance, and hard work will bring relief. Workplace mediation can also be helpful in this context. Administrators can successfully elevate positive emotions by both emphasizing hard tasks (perseverance, patience, hard work) and drawing a desirable mental picture for the future (optimism, hope, relief, rewards). In other words, a combination of present and future-oriented approaches might increase individuals' psychological capacities. The positive impact of optimism on physical and psychological health and other qualities, such as perseverance, achievement, and motivation, are well-documented (Luthans, 2011). However, we need to proceed with caution here. We mean realistic optimism that is focused on a real achievable future rather than false optimism. Going beyond optimism and demonstrating some quick gains during any school endeavor can help increase self-efficacy and raise hope by creating both the "willpower" (agency) and the "waypower" (pathways) dimensions of hope (Luthans, 2011).

School leaders' healthy and tactful communication is another crucial ingredient of our model. We view them as impactful in terms of their capacity to produce positive emotional changes in the followers. Listening to the followers patiently, empathetically, and respectfully would help a school leader better understand followers' social and emotional expectations. Besides, using nice words and constructive language and speaking gently and wisely would empower a school leader to stimulate mindfulness in the followers.

Leaders are expected to convey emotional signals by utilizing appropriate social and emotional expressions to create a positive emotional climate at school. Islamic leadership advises that the salutation of peace be spread as frequently as possible and recommends the use of nice words and gestures to inform others about our positive feelings. Since the emotions are contagious at school (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018), displaying positive socio-emotional signals is most likely to nurture emotion-based relationships with the followers and build trust and foster positive feelings that could then materialize into improved performance.

Being considerate and supportive is another component of our model to make positive emotional changes at school. Islamic leadership treats the leader and followers as equal brothers and recommends that a leader builds an emotional climate characterized by fraternity, compassion, support, and consideration. However, in real-life practices, religious motives are not the only antecedents of emotion management behaviors. A school leader's emotion regulation behaviors are also predicted by unique social and organizational contexts (Arar, 2019). So, the current

model provides a vision from the vantage point of the religious sources rather than depicting the current situation of real-life Islamic educational contexts.

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## 4 Be the light

### Islamic-based teacher leadership

*Rania Sawalhi*

#### Teaching profession in Islam

The prophet Mohamed (SAW) introduced himself as a teacher, as the Quran describes his mission to teach wisdom and unknown things to the people of this world, highlighting that teaching is the prophets' profession. Even more, many *Hadiths*<sup>1</sup> emphasize that "Allah gives *hasanat*<sup>2</sup> to those who teach people how to do good things, His Angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earths—even the ant in his hole, even the fish—say Salat<sup>3</sup> upon the one who teaches the people to do good".<sup>4</sup>

Teachers teach all other professions; they do not provide information to learners only but form learners' personalities, developing a sense of awareness of their roles locally and globally which might lead to social development (O'Sullivan, 2005). Wette and Barkhuizen (2009) in their study show how teachers struggle between teaching the book to help the students pass the exams and their desire to raise students' awareness of themselves as learners and how to learn that which they describe (educating the person). In the same vein, Kamaruddin and Patak (2018, p. 15) state, "Education is primarily a conscious effort given by educators in order to bring students to the ideal human being aspired". While I agree with this statement, it is important to recognize that the educational process involves developing teachers, school leaders, parents and many stakeholders, not just students. This educational process requires leading in order to provide powerful learning opportunities (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014) in different educational organizations across the Islamic world.

Although Muslims launched different forms of teaching and learning organizations, such as mosques, Madrasa and many other educational organizations (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2010; Bano, 2014), the current educational systems and policies implemented in Islamic countries to teach Muslims are borrowed from the West and follow Western design and theories. In the same vein, the current teacher preparation programs borrow Western countries' policies and seek accreditation from Western organizations despite the culture and context of other nations. For example, the word *teacher* could mean *Ustath*, *Mulim*, *Murrabi*, *Mudib*, *Mudaris* in Arabic (Ghani & Sahrin, 2019; Park & Niyozov, 2008). These terms are used interchangeably to refer to teachers in Islam, although some countries differentiate use *Ustath* for secondary or university teachers as in Tunis (Sellami et al., 2019).

The words' different meanings affect how they are used in practice and within institutions. This highlights the importance of understanding each term in the light of history, language and religion in Arab and Islamic countries. This applies to both the term and its selected translation. Sometimes, people assume that terms are clear to others when they are not.

Despite all the aforementioned terms,<sup>5</sup> Muslim scholars claim that being a teacher includes being a Murrabi (Kazmi, 1999; Paramboor & Ibrahim, 2013). This claim is supported in my published PhD thesis when interviewees mentioned this term to describe teachers' roles. Murrabi comes from *Rabb*, one of Allah's names in Islam, which means fostering, raising formation to the highest perfection. No other word was found as an equivalent to this word in other languages. Kazmi identifies a Murrabi and his/her main characteristics as follows:

The one who is not only knowledgeable and wise but also pious, kind and considerate. In other words, a *Murabbi* is a person who combines a life of learning with a life of virtue, and hence a perfect and an ideal person to learn from.

(Kazmi, 1999, p. 209)

Discussing these different terms is not a luxury; they should be explored in depth, as they affect the practices and the educational process. Sellami and others (2019) investigated Arab educators' perspectives toward defining educational leadership, and their study showed that these terms affect educational policy and educational leadership practices since education is translated into ta'lim and *tarbiyah*. In the same study, findings showed that some educators select ta'lim (teaching) to refer to education in Arabic, which drives educators to focus on teaching the book more than educating the person. Similarly, Hammad and Shah (2019, p. 946) clarify that "Islamic or Rabbani leadership is constructed as a divine responsibility in Islam, a trust from God for which the leaders are accountable to God. Godliness and righteousness are the essential qualities for the leaders in addition to professional competence".

In addition, the term leadership has many equivalents in the Arabic language and Hadith. Brooks and Mutohar (2019, p. 3) show that "the term leadership is conceptualised in both of these texts as ra'in (leader), khalifa (steward), and amir (ruler)". These terms indicate different levels and ways of leadership and management, therefore there is no agreed definition of leadership from an Islamic perspective. Furthermore, Brooks and Mutohar (2019) suggest an Islamic educational leadership framework (see Figure 4.1). However, many of the terms used in this framework need further explanation in the contemporary world, such as *hisba* and public interest. Besides that, suggesting these domains is debatable, such as selecting *ikhhtilaf* to be one of these domains. Although this framework highlights the importance of beliefs, I need to admit that many individuals face difficulties in walking the talk or walking their beliefs. In addition, this model does not include spirituality, as I claim that it is the main aspect in developing learners' personalities in the lens of their relationship with Allah.



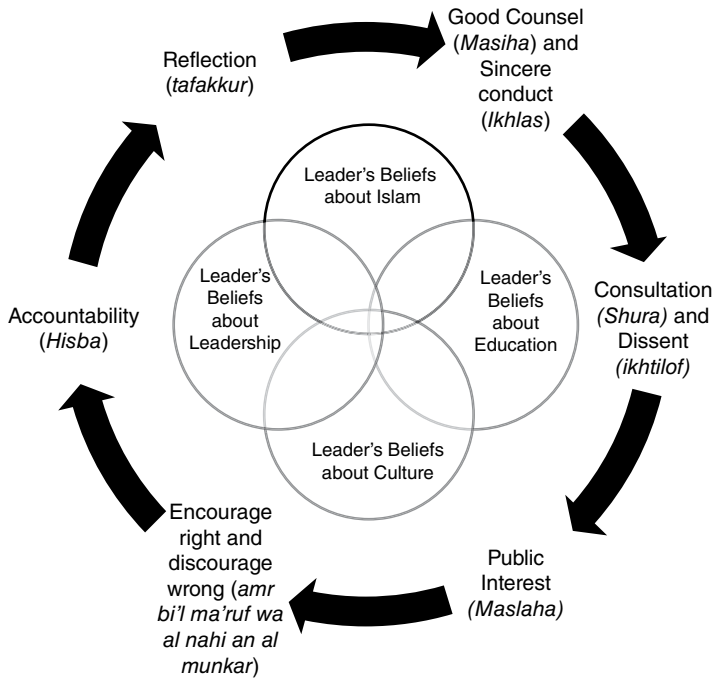


Figure 4.1 A conceptual framework for Islamic school leadership (Brooks & Mutohar, 2019).

Researchers highlight that there is a lack of studies exploring educational leadership in non-Western countries (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019; Oplatka & Arar, 2017). Muslims' voices are not heard in many educational leadership domains such as teacher leadership (Nguyen et al., 2019; Sawalhi, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Few studies have explored teacher leadership and its practices from a religious perspective. Boyaci and Oz claimed that teacher leadership varies across societies according to “components of culture such as religion, tradition, values, norms, and the emergence of the ethos of leadership throughout the history of societies” (Boyaci & Oz, 2017, p. 11). In light of this, future studies might investigate the impact of religious orientation in detail to be able to explore religion as a factor that affects teacher beliefs and practices and to what extent religion should be included in teacher preparation programs.

## Teacher leadership

The term *teacher leadership* combines two terms and both have different equivalents in Arabic. Teacher might mean Mulin, Murrabi, Mudib, as mentioned previously.

Despite the increased interest in exploring teacher leadership, there is no agreement on the definition. It is more like an umbrella term that includes formal and informal teacher leadership roles such as subject coordinator, year leader, professional development coordinator, research coordinator. I find York-Barr and Duke's definition of teacher leadership as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school

communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (pp. 287–288) to be clear, and it represents teacher leadership effectively as it highlights the fact that it is a process.

Sawalhi (2019) indicated that there is a difference between the process of influence that teacher leadership represents and being a teacher leader. Having said this, Sawalhi elaborates that every teacher can practice leadership from where they stand, and they all go through the process of developing and improving their own practices, colleagues, and school in order to improve students’ achievements, and even more. Teacher leaders tend to have roles assigned by the school leadership or by their colleagues. Even if these roles are on a voluntary basis, they are recognized easily by others, such as organizing social events.

Previous studies explored factors affecting teacher leadership related to demographic variables such as gender, nationality, age, years of experience, school level, or other factors related to principals’ support and school culture. Results vary for each variable according to the context (Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2014; Angelle & DeHart, 2011; Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2019). Notably, there is a lack of studies exploring teacher leadership in faith-based schools (Sawalhi, 2019) or from a faith-based perspective.

There is also a lack of studies that explore teacher leadership and religion (Sawalhi, 2019). This chapter provides new insights related to teacher leadership and religion and offers a new model to encourage teachers in particular and educators in general to see the light they spread and the reason behind this light/influence. This chapter reflects not only the interviewees’ perspectives and experiences but also my own experience and beliefs.

## **Methodological Background**

This chapter is based on the main findings in the qualitative phase conducted as part of the researcher’s PhD thesis, following semi-structured interviews with 96 teachers working in public schools in Qatar during 2017–2018. Interviewees were nominated by their colleagues using an online form.

Qatar is a Muslim country that is known for its massive educational reform launched early in this century. Western systems were borrowed to launch a modified version of charter schools, which was canceled in early 2017, leading to a massive change in teacher preparation programs and establishing a teacher and school leader licensing system. In addition, school structures changed and allowed teachers to assume more formal leadership roles such as professional development coordinator or activities coordinator. However, many of these roles have been canceled in the last five years.

Qatar attracts teachers from many Arab countries due to its salaries and living conditions, which are regarded as better than in many other Arab countries considered conflict and crises areas.

## **Defining teacher leadership through a Muslim lens**

The interviewees’ definitions of leadership varied tremendously. Some restricted leadership to formal positions, others mentioned power and authority, while the

majority mentioned influencing others and referred to the Hadith (*ra'in*) and that each teacher is responsible for their students and their work. Under this umbrella, all interviewees stated that teacher leadership is mainly about influencing students in the classroom because the main functions of teaching include classroom management, maintaining a good relationship with students and instilling values. However, their comments varied as to whether teacher leaders influence only students or all stakeholders. One of the interviewees stated, “A teacher leader is like a driver with different passengers”.

The interviewees' answers mainly focused on defining teacher leaders by listing their main characteristics, such as instilling values and building character.

Interestingly, all interviewees used *Murrabi* to describe teacher leaders' practices more than other terms used in Arabic, avoiding the word leader. An interviewee highlighted “Being a leader may bring to mind the great man theory and being a hero.”

Being a leader may bring to mind the great man theory and being a hero.

Park and Niyozov (2008, p. 326) state, “The Muslim world was not spared by Western colonial expansion. The Western takeover of Muslim societies affected their confidence and was part of the soul searching”. Being a leader comes with certain expectations, some of which might be distinctive in the Arab world, although some researchers oppose the Arab mind concept, as they consider it racist (Hagopian, 1977).

### **Teacher leaders' characteristics**

This section identifies the main characteristics mentioned by the interviewees in the lens of previous studies. The majority of interviewees focused, firstly, on personality and, secondly, on relationship skills. The emphasis on personality traits is consistent with Leithwood (2003). The interviewees also noted that some characteristics might be required for some tasks and not others. Finally, they mentioned some characteristics that are not common in the literature. These included being a *Murrabi*/instilling value in students.

The emphasis on relationship skills is consistent with previous research by McKnight, Graybeal, Yarbrow and Graybeal (2016). The interviewees talked about the importance of building relationships and good communication skills, being open-minded, being well-educated and being patient. McKnight et al. (2016) explored what makes effective teachers in 23 countries. They found that respondents in Qatar thought the ability to maintain good relationships was one of the most important characteristics.

Although the majority of these characteristics were expected and most of them had been mentioned in previous studies, I faced a challenge in translating a few of them from English into Arabic as I could not find an equivalent word. One of the most surprising responses was from an interviewee who mentioned the importance of having the right facial expressions. Although this could be listed under relationship skills, such a detail is worth highlighting. Scholars have explored the impact of facial

Table 4.1 Facial appearance and leadership: An evolutionary framework (taken from Van Vugt & Grabo, 2015, p. 486)

Leader attributes	Facial cues	Adaptive domains	Follower heuristic	Examples
Dominance	Masculinity, height-to-width ratio	Conflict, war	Fellow dominant individual	Military leader, CEO of major company
Trustworthiness	Femininity, ethnicity	Cooperation, peace	Fellow prosocial individual	Politician, NGO leader, hospital director
Competence	Age, baby-facedness	Knowledge (social, physical)	Fellow informed individual	Scientist, statesperson, entrepreneur
Attractiveness, health	Facial symmetry/asymmetry, skin coloration	Physical change	Fellow healthy individual	Sports captain, explorer

expressions on leadership and what followers expect from leaders based on their faces (Van Vugt & Grabo, 2015; see Table 4.1). In addition, Arar and Oplatka (2019) highlight the impact of masculinity on teachers' perspectives as interviewees mentioned that society sees that a male principal has a strong body, and the "masculine principal conveys power, authority, and control by his demonstrative presence in the school, through his body language and even the tone of his voice" (p. 30).

The results show the importance of psychological factors in relationships as they affect leadership and differ from one person to another. This example is similar to a story mentioned in the Quran, *The Occasion of Revelation*, when the prophet Mohamed (SAW) did not smile when a blind man came to ask him about Islam, as he was busy with other people. Allah (blamed) the prophet for not treating the blind man well, even though, being blind, the man would not have noticed the difference. "He frowned and turned away/Because the blind man came unto him. /What could inform thee but that he might grow (in grace) /Or take heed and so the reminder might avail him?" (Al-Islam.org, 2018).

Furthermore, some interviewees linked teacher leadership characteristics to religious practices. I list those characteristics under "belief", e.g., fidelity and pursuit of a reward from Allah. Ghani and Sahrin (2019), in their systematic review, showed that there are "three studies focused on the quality of worship of Allah, and six studies focused on intention and three studies focused on the supervision of Allah". This shows the need to have more studies that explore Muslim teachers' beliefs and practices.

Surprisingly, three interviewees who stated they were non-Muslim explicitly mentioned these characteristics as intrinsically motivating and used the same

Islamic terms. They said that they have the same concepts in their religions, and they use the same language, as they work with Muslims. Therefore, this chapter suggests using the term Islamic-based instead of Islamic teacher leadership.

### **Do teachers consider themselves teacher leaders?**

Although Islam considers that each one is responsible for others, not all interviewees linked that to their leadership practices. The majority agreed and responded positively that they considered themselves teacher leaders and gave examples. Many interviewees did not see themselves as teacher leaders, and they had been nominated based solely on their relationships with others. Those interviewees participated in many committees and had many success stories. Interestingly, when I asked them why they did not consider themselves leaders, nine of the 11 referred to the importance of being humble and not seeing themselves in a more advanced position than their peers did. Six mentioned that it was unacceptable to show their abilities in order to avoid being arrogant. Some referred to this as an Islamic belief. For example, the Quran states, “Do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like anyone who is self-deluded and boastful” (Quran 31:18).

Humility can guide us to Heaven, just as its opposite, arrogance [*kibr* in Arabic], can only lead us into Hell.

It is not for me to say whether I am a leader or not; others should recognize this in me.

Although some interviewees answered that they considered themselves leaders, others commented that they had not shown their abilities yet and were waiting for a better opportunity. Moreover, they did not consider what they were doing at the time as “being a teacher leader” because they considered this a day-to-day task. I found this to be a very interesting point of view that might indicate underestimation of their work or a lack of knowledge of what leadership is.

### **Teacher leadership’s aspects/domains**

As mentioned, teacher leadership is an umbrella term that covers many other terms, formal or informal positions or even voluntary initiatives. The interviewees were keen to point out that teacher leaders could exercise leadership in many different ways, both inside and outside the school, depending on their abilities and expertise. They also noted that what colleagues assumed teacher leaders did, and what they actually did, might differ. It was agreed, however, that teacher leaders should continue to teach and that, if they did not, a different label was needed.

Most interviewees wanted teacher leaders to lead change, present ideas and improve school performance, and not just manage day-to-day tasks. This is in line with previous research (Blegen & Kennedy, 2000; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014). They said teachers influence students, colleagues, parents, school leaders, the Ministry of Education and the community, as well as the wider world through

involvement in international initiatives. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012).

Some scholars suggest that leaders have followers and that this is also true of teacher leaders (Lovett, 2018; Smylie & Eckert, 2018; Van Vugt & Grabo, 2015). In contrast, Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) argue that trying to identify followers might limit teacher leadership practices to a specific audience when, in fact, they affect many stakeholders. Similarly, Weller and Weller (2002) view teacher leadership as a specific type of collaboration with no followers. One participant said teacher leaders should have followers, but clarified that students were mainly their followers. However, the majority of interviewees said that teacher leadership is less about having followers and more about helping others to improve and providing the best ways to apply what is required. It is even possible for teachers to exercise leadership unintentionally. For example, when a teacher uses the best teaching practices, students learn these strategies. Then, colleagues, and sometimes parents, might start applying some of these strategies, even if the teacher is not expecting parents to learn from their example.

The participants made a related point. Colleagues who are influenced by a teacher leader are not required to follow that person to achieve a specific goal (which is how leadership is often defined). The interviewees reported that teacher leadership was more like opening the path to improvement and unleashing interviewees' potential, attempting to see things differently regardless of the leadership structure in schools. This means seeing teacher leadership in a separate light from authority or power. In addition, some interviewees believed that teacher leadership starts with leading oneself, which is consistent with Bembenutty (2006), Klassen et al. (2011), Foti et al. (2012) and Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012).

The majority mentioned that those characteristics were built in when a teacher was a Murrabi. Murrabi is an Arabic word that has been explained as "not simply a teacher, as we understand this word today, but rather an exemplary human being" (Kazmi, 1999, p. 222). Teachers who believe in their profession, regardless of their position, practice leadership in any educational aspect or field. This kind of teacher is needed to cultivate students who excel in academic and moral values (Abidin et al., 2016). The literature on teacher leadership includes the concept of moral purpose (Bezzina, 2007; Boylan, 2013). However, teachers saw a Murrabi as more than a teacher who has a moral purpose. He or she is a role model and cares about others, especially students. In addition, such teachers do their best to unleash students' potential and to change students' behaviors and attitudes. Although some studies described teacher leadership as having pastoral roles (Muijs et al., 2013), a Murrabi is a teacher who is expected to do more than just provide information.

Building on this definition and previous teacher leadership characteristics, a Murrabi in education might be defined as the teacher leader who influences and educates others' intellect, soul, body and heart, and develops an effective personality. I chose to use the word *others*, not *students*, because teacher leaders influence all stakeholders each day on different levels, directly and indirectly. All interviewees gave examples of dealing with different stakeholders inside and outside schools.

Selecting this term, Murrabi, builds on the results mentioned earlier about the impact of the term *leader* and is relevant to the context and history of the region.

This term is commonly used informally in a few Arab countries such as Qatar when educators want to compliment a teacher. Selecting this term does not mean adding it to the schools' structures or educators' ranking. I see it as a better Arabic word to describe the practices of teacher leaders, instead of translating it literally.

Ysidro and Salazar (2010, p. 2) state, "Traditionally, teaching roles have been defined by a factory model that views the teacher as a semi-skilled worker with virtually no autonomy". Acker-Hocevar and Touchton (1999, p. 7) make the same point: "Based on a 19th century industrial model, this hierarchical nature of public schools continues to promote an adversarial relationship between administrators as managers and teachers as laborers". The teacher leadership movement is trying to give more freedom to teachers to encourage them to demonstrate new ideas and not to see themselves as laborers (Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). Having said this, Muslims need to identify Muslim scholars' contribution to the enrichment of educational thinking (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018).

A few interviewees claimed that teacher leadership should be focused on one goal: improving student achievement. Most interviewees, however, said that teacher leadership could be applied to any aspect that the teacher was interested in. In fact, the interviewees practiced formal and informal leadership roles in every aspect of school life, both internally and externally, e.g., research coordinator or international competitions leader. These findings were consistent with previous studies, which listed many areas in which teacher leadership could be exercised, e.g., instructional practices and extracurricular activities (Cooper et al., 2016; Hamzah et al., 2016; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Yet, there was a strong emphasis on instilling values in students and on teacher leaders being Murrabi. The interviewees thought this would improve student achievement, even though that was not the main aim.

The interviewees talked about two forms of teacher leadership. One was about contributing to the day-to-day work of colleagues on a daily basis; the other was about being explicitly recognized as a leader. Many scholars argue that being a leader means achieving one's vision intentionally while influencing others (Bush, 2008; Lovett, 2018). Others say it is possible to practice leadership indirectly and/or unintentionally (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014). The interviewees gave many examples of how they were surprised by the comments their colleagues made regarding their practices. They were unaware of the impact their actions were having on others until colleagues pointed it out to them.

Figure 4.2 is my attempt to summarize what the interviewees said about the nature of their leadership practices and my interpretation of the effects these practices had on their communities and beyond. To me, the solar system is a helpful metaphor. Teachers exercising leadership might be thought of as the sun; their practices and performances warm and help (i.e., influence) all the other stakeholders/planets. The solar system is very dynamic, and this reflects an important aspect of teacher leadership—namely, that it supports stakeholders in different ways according to the situation. As the conditions vary, some planets might be more exposed to the sun (i.e., teachers exercising leadership) than others, with the result that they are more strongly influenced.

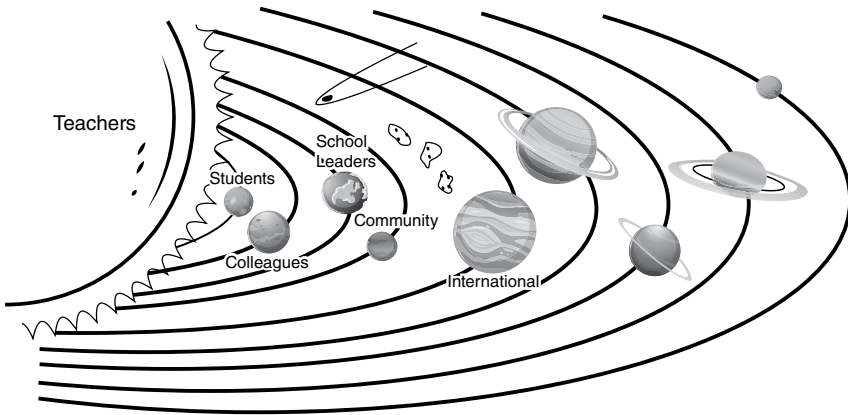


Figure 4.2 Teachers practicing teacher leadership (orbit model) (Sawalhi, 2019).

Teaching might be considered a profession of faith, rooted in Muslims' beliefs. The prophet Muhammad (SAW) says in his Hadith,

O Allâh, place light in my heart, light in my tongue, light in my hearing, light in my sight, light behind me, light in front of me, light on my right, light on my left, light above me and light below me; place light in my sinew, in my flesh, in my blood, in my hair and in my skin; place light in my soul and make light abundant for me; make me light and grant me light.<sup>6</sup>

Scholars explain this prayer by showing that it might be used as a metaphor for seeking to be protected or showing the impact of knowledge and good deeds on the body and soul. Muslims seek knowledge more from the Quran than from new sciences and skills. Muslims try to become Khalifah on earth to continue the reformation and moral training.

The closest orbit in this figure is that of the students; all teachers communicate with students, including those they meet outside the classroom, in competitions and extracurricular activities or even in pastoral duties. The interviewees highlighted the importance of instilling values when caring for all students, even if they did not teach them. They shared many examples of how they supported students academically and personally.

The second orbit is their colleagues. During their daily tasks, teachers can influence their colleagues directly or indirectly, through formal and informal professional development, as well as by networking with teachers in the same department or school, or in other schools and communities. Some teachers learn by listening to their colleagues' conversations, even if they are not being addressed directly. This explains how teacher leaders can be unaware of their impact until others point it out. In addition, the interviewees told stories about how they influenced parents and the wider community. These relationships with external stakeholders are represented by orbits further away from the sun because their influence on



them tends to be weaker and/or less frequent. As already mentioned, the most important point is that the process is dynamic.

Teachers learn, intentionally or accidentally, when they have a variety of opportunities to deal with all these stakeholders. Teachers' reflections on their learning, as I see them, are linked to the sun's source of energy (nuclear fusion), which gives us light and heat. However, the teachers (sun) are not the same all the way through. It is hard to predict to what extent each teacher will learn from the same situation, but, with time, stakeholders tend to see the light of their practices and feel the heat. Significantly, the sun (teachers) rotates around its axis and around the center of the Milky Way (educational systems and strategies). Within the real solar system, the planets are never aware of how much the sun is influencing them. This aspect of the metaphor does not work so well. It is generally better for stakeholders to notice when teachers are exercising leadership and provide them with whatever support they need. Teachers' light increases as long as they know their intentions and link them to their own beliefs and faith.

Many teachers also referred to their religious beliefs and said that what drove them to be responsible or proactive was requesting rewards and good deeds from God. Once again, this was related to the concept of a *Murabbi*. Paramboor and Ibrahim claim that "it is the time to think of the relevantization of *Murabbi*" (2013, p. 154). Although this orbit model was part of my thesis submitted to the University of Warwick (2019), I quote Amanda Gorman's poem recited at the inauguration of President Biden:

For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided new insights about teacher leadership and introduced a new model to recognize teachers' leadership contributions inside and outside schools. This chapter also aimed to shed light on the importance of exploring religious factors that affect teaching leadership practices. The results highlighted the need to consider the terminology used. Selecting terms requires careful choice and clear definitions. Scholars have noted the importance of linguistic, functional and cultural equivalence, not only when borrowing policies but also methodologically (Burdett & O'Donnell, 2016; Peña, 2007). Results indicate the importance of helping educators redefine leadership according to their particular context and using the right terminology. In addition, they show the importance of cross-cultural studies to explore the religious and cultural impact on teacher leadership (Boyaci & Oz, 2017).

Results show that Islamic-based educational leadership needs to be re-explored to benefit from educational practices in early Islamic centuries to learn more about how the teaching profession was practiced and not limited to schools (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018). Identifying Muslim scholars' contributions will guide faith-based teachers' formation in general and Islamic school leadership in particular. Islamic countries must acclimatize the teaching profession by giving it prestige and not

ignoring the capabilities of teachers and their role not only in instructional duties but by linking learners to their Creator. Muslim teachers need to learn more about how to integrate God's names and their impact on their personal and professional lives. In addition, teachers need to refer to Quran and Hadith in improving their practices as a reference to developing teaching and learning and leadership practices.

Teacher preparation programs should introduce the concepts of Murrabi and Rabbani leadership, and provide customized courses to embrace individual backgrounds, personalities, religious beliefs and experiences. Professional development programs should help teachers to understand themselves, their beliefs and cultures. Educational leadership in general and teacher leadership in particular should not follow a one-size-fits-all approach (Bush, 2017). In addition, it is important that various opportunities are provided on a continuous basis. The results show that teachers' practices evolve every day, and they may not notice these changes themselves.

## Limitations

The literature on teacher leadership is still evolving and emerging. There is a need for more efforts to explore the extent to which teacher leadership practices are connected with teachers' religious beliefs. However, this model is an attempt to explore teacher leadership from a new and fresh perspective.

## Notes

- 1 Narration of the sayings, doings or approvals (Taqrir) of Muhammad (SAW).
- 2 Credit for good deeds.
- 3 Prayers.
- 4 <http://qaalarasulallah.com/hadithView.php?ID=32813>.
- 5 These terms could be written differently such as *murabi* or *morabbi*, *ustad* and *ustath*.
- 6 <https://abdurrahman.org/2014/01/30/duaofflight/>.

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**Part II**

**Islamic-based educational  
leadership in secular  
countries**



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# 5 Islamic antiracist school leadership

*Amaarah DeCuir*

## Introduction

Antiracism is not a 21st-century call to action nor a modern social concept, it is a deeply rooted faith-based obligation embodied in Quranic and Prophetic foundations of justice and equity. Today, educators and scholars are gaining prominence by defining and articulating tenets of antiracism based on modern social constructs within Western society, without attribution to the foundations of this work. Ibram X. Kendi, author of best-selling *How to Be an Antiracist*, said in a 2019 interview, “I define antiracist as someone who is expressing an antiracist idea or supporting an antiracist policy with their actions, and I define an antiracist idea as any idea that says the racial groups are equal” (Schwartz, 2019). Anneliese A. Singh (2019) wrote, in the *Racial Healing Handbook*, “The term ‘antiracist’ refers to people who are actively seeking not only to raise their consciousness about race and racism, but also to take action when they see racial power inequities in everyday life” (p. 98). Kimberlé Crenshaw, law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, and Columbia, says the first step in becoming antiracist is acknowledging that racism exists right now in our everyday lives (Shim Roth, 2020). Although these scholars are among our most prominent academics in the field, their articulations of antiracism fall short in describing its age-old foundations.

The Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) offer an Islamic foundation to what is known today as antiracism. Al-Hibri (2015), a female American Muslim legal scholar, asserted “the centerpiece of the Islamic worldview is ‘adalah’, or divine justice” (p. 150). The Quran, recognized by Muslims worldwide as the textual embodiment of God’s Words, contains parables of justice, commandments to advance equity, and prohibitions against injustice. Revealed during a period fraught with racism, gender bias, and social marginalization—the Quran offers a social treatise of antiracism defined and communicated to all people across time and place. The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad represents the preserved collections of his sayings, attributes, actions, and teachings with others around him. Identified by Muslims as the Last Prophet of God, the Prophet Muhammad taught Islam, the way of life known as “submission to God Almighty”. His wife, Aisha, was known to have said, “The character of the Messenger of Allah was the Quran” (Sahih Muslim, 746), meaning the values and life actions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) reflect the living example of the Quran, and that his life’s work



to advance antiracism in an unjust, inequitable society is understood as an act of submission to God Almighty. Through this chapter, I assert that antiracism is deeply rooted in the Islamic faith, through the Quran and the Sunnah, offering perennial definitions, values, and commandments with contemporary applicability to address America's inequities and injustices.

Antiracism seeks to disrupt racism and the manifestation of racist inequities and injustices as they exist in individual relationships, internalized beliefs and assumptions, and through institutions and systems in larger society. Racism remains present in our modern social constructions, and it is experienced deeply in America today. America, since its inception, has demonstrated anti-Black racism from the legal practice of enslaving Africans on American soil to the Jim Crow era (1868–1968), which enforced racial segregation through state and local policies and practices and failed to extend federal civil rights protections to African Americans. Today, African Americans continue to be subjected to disproportionate state-sanctioned racial injustices and inequities. One can look to the horrific incidents of police killings of unarmed Black men and women and children (The Washington Post, 2021), the reality that most Black children attend under-funded and under-resourced schools (The Century Foundation, 2020), and that Black families are more likely to be unemployed, homeless, or living in poverty when compared to families of other racial identities (American Psychological Association, 2017). African Americans face bias and discrimination in the workplace, in the justice system, when seeking housing, and within schools. Although today's social justice leaders are unified in a call to promote antiracism to address anti-Black racism across America, the call fails to mobilize followers around a timeless set of values, motivations, principles, and actions to disrupt deeply rooted racism.

Less is known about anti-Muslim racism. Globally, there are horrific examples of state-sanctioned anti-Muslim racism that threatens the lives, humanity, safety, protection, and livelihood of ordinary Muslim men, women, and children (Allen, 2010; Mamdani, 2002). Look to China's forced labor camps for Uighur Muslims, India's restrictions on Muslims in Kashmir, Burma's genocide of Muslim Rohingya, France's civil assaults on its Muslim immigrants, or America's earlier iteration of the Muslim ban. Domestically, there are many lived experiences of anti-Muslim racism collected as community anecdotes (Acim, 2019; Allen, 2010), but few scholarly attempts to analyze their impact across the American Muslim community (Mogahed & Ikramullah, 2021). The federal government maintains records on hate crime incidents (Kishi, 2017), Muslim organizations document civil injustices (Council on American-Islamic Relations, 2018), and polling institutions capture values and assumptions of Muslims held by the general public (Gallup, 2010). But none of these produce a wide-scale acknowledgment of the presence of anti-Muslim racism across individuals, institutions, and systems. Spotlighting anti-Muslim racism is obscured by the widespread Islamophobic rhetoric that frames Muslims as terrorists and disruptors of Western society, making anti-Muslim racism invisible and illegitimate in American society.

American Muslim school<sup>1</sup> communities confront both anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism. Across America, Muslim communities establish independent schools to create accessible, alternative schooling options outside the local public

schools (Memon, 2020). These schools tend to share a dual purpose of both promoting a Quran and Islamic studies curriculum, content not taught in public schools, and providing a Muslim-affirming school climate that is often not experienced in public schools (Khan & Siddiqui, 2017; Memon et al., 2021). But anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism exists in and around American Muslim schools, and American Muslim school leaders are tasked with both acknowledging it and confronting it (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019). Drawing upon my previous study of women leading American Islamic schools (DeCuir, 2016), I show that today's leaders enact faith-based antiracist school leadership practices to both resist injustices and inequities facing their school communities. This chapter centers Muslim school leaders' core practices drawn from the Quran and the Sunnah that guide them to embody what I name as Islamic antiracist school leadership.

### **Description of the context**

Muslim families choose to enroll their children in Muslim schools for a variety of reasons: the Islamic curriculum, the Muslim environment, or as an act of resisting the public school experience (Memon, 2020). It is also understood that the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of God is a faith imperative (Alavi, 2008; Al Zeera, 2001). Al-Attas (1979) wrote that the pursuit of knowledge is an act of social justice because knowledge impacts the larger community. And Hassim (2010) documented a common phrase attributed to Prophet Muhammad, "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim". These motivators transcend cultural differences as American Muslims from diverse nationalities and backgrounds often seek to enroll their children in American Muslim schools (Khan & Siddiqui, 2017). Through each of these examples, we see the common motivator grounding American Muslim schools—to create learning environments that draw students and the community closer to their worship of God, their practice of Islam, and the development of their community.

Clara Muhammad Schools were established to confront anti-Black racism dating back to their inception in 1931 (Sister Clara Muhammad Memorial Education Foundation, n.d.). Beginning from a humble start in Detroit, Michigan, led by Sister Clara Muhammad, an early believer in the Nation of Islam, these schools confronted anti-Black racism by producing a curriculum and pedagogical framework that positively affirmed the identities and intellectual capacities of the young Black children in their community (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992). At the time, the community faced deeply entrenched anti-Black racism in the Detroit Public Schools curriculum, and across society under the shadow of Jim Crow (Salahuddin, 2015). Clara Muhammad Schools were our nation's earliest example of an American Muslim school offering a clear framework for dismantling anti-Black racism, and it emerged from a national movement promoting Black independence through an Islamic paradigm. Clara Muhammad Schools grew into a national network of over 41 independent schools across American cities and towns and continues to serve its mostly Black Muslim community members through faith-centered antiracism (Sister Clara Muhammad Memorial Education Foundation, n.d.).

The American Muslim community grew exponentially after the 1965 Immigration and Nationalization Act opened avenues of immigration for Muslim students and young professionals worldwide. Arriving from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa, these immigrants first established places of worship and then later constructed community schools to serve their local needs. Some of the oldest schools were established in the early 1970s and continue to be created today (Memon, 2020). The curriculum of these schools came from both borrowed traditions of Quran and Islamic studies education from the immigrants' home countries and adopted state standards of education for core academic studies (Memon et al., 2021; Merry, 2007). Despite the patchwork of curriculum sources, Muslim families remain consistent in their motivations for enrolling their children in local Muslim schools—to free their children from the oppressive impacts of anti-Muslim racism widespread in larger society, and to foster an American Muslim identity that upholds justice and equity (Badawi, 2006). And, on occasion, these community schools seek to confront anti-Black racism as both experienced by their fellow Black Muslims and reproduced by immigrant Muslims ignorant of the hegemony of anti-Black racism.

The leaders of American Muslim schools—those located in predominantly Black communities, those from mostly immigrant communities, and those whose communities reflect the complex diversity of the American Muslim community—are all tasked with identifying racism and confronting it within and outside of their school communities. This work is made complicated because many leaders of American Muslim schools are women who face gender bias and discrimination within the Muslim community and in larger society as they assume leadership roles within school communities (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). They often receive less community and institutional support for their professional endeavors, and their leadership decisions are questioned and dismissed more commonly than their male peers' (DeCuir, 2016). Not only do these women face patriarchal oppression, but they may also be subjected to anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism both within their school community and in their local area. These intersecting oppressions appear as complex experiences of oppression and marginalization, commonly named intersectionality. Although these women leaders face multiple oppressions through their leadership roles, they rely upon the Quran and the Sunnah to direct their leadership work as embodiments of advancing justice and equity in the face of the impacts of racism on their Muslim school communities (DeCuir, 2016).

### **Education-specific dynamics**

American Muslim schools are independently led community organizations, but the women leading these schools demonstrate a collective effort to embody anti-racist leadership. Consistent with the work of private school leaders in other contexts, these leaders bear full responsibility for the administration and management of their school organizations. But, unique to the work of religious school leaders, they are also in charge of maintaining a religious environment that fosters the practice of Islam in all aspects of the school. As a religion, Islam commands the establishment of equity and justice, and these school leaders are tasked with formal

and informal work expectations to establish equity and justice across their school communities. In this chapter, using critical reflexive analysis of 13 qualitative interviews conducted in a larger study of women leading American Muslim schools (DeCuir, 2016), new findings point to four thematic areas of work prioritized to advance equity and justice across their school communities. Together, these frame what I am asserting as Islamic antiracist school leadership—resistance, transformation, disruption, and faith.

The Quran provides a framework of leadership foundations that advance equity and antiracism, as a demonstration of faith. Muslims believe that it is the manifestation of God’s Word and was revealed as a guide for humanity, including those tasked with the responsibilities of leadership. In the Quran, Surah An-Nisa, The Woman, verse 135, there is an example of advancing equity and justice, translated as follows:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

(Quran, 4:135, *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*)

In this verse, we begin by understanding that the call to advance justice and equity is a call to those who have attained faith, which is a critical distinction that this work is to be regarded as an embodiment of faith in God. It continues by commanding us to stand out “firmly” for justice, which implies action over a passive acknowledgment of justice, even if standing out for justice goes against your family or your community. The verse disrupts any assumptions that justice should be weighed by a person’s social or economic status and instead reminds us that God’s justice protects all. In America, the divisions between rich and poor continue to align by racial and ethnic identities, making this verse a stronger commandment of antiracism and one that grounds antiracism in its Islamic origins. The verse concludes with an admonition against following your own conceptualizations of justice, distorting truth, or refraining from advancing justice because God is always aware of your actions, and failing to advance God’s justice is failing to demonstrate the attainment of faith.

The Quran includes 21 other verses that address equity and justice, core pillars of antiracism (Quran Explorer, 2017). As I present a few of them here, I draw your attention to commonalities across each of the examples. One, advancing equity and justice is consistently paired with a manifestation of faith, so believers are tasked with acting to advance antiracism. Secondly, God created all of us with intentional diversity, yet all races and all people should be treated equally. This is both a central attribute of antiracism and a firm denunciation of white supremacy culture. And lastly, each of the following verses, including the one earlier, makes clear that God is aware of all our actions, and we should fear Him if we fail to advance equity and justice in our daily lives. These verses are translated as follows:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear God for God is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

(Quran, 5:8, The Meaning of the Holy Quran)

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

(Quran, 49:13, The Meaning of the Holy Quran)

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are signs for those who know.

(Quran 30:22, The Meaning of the Holy Quran)

In addition to these verses, the Quran also includes narratives of prophets, like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, who led their communities toward faith, often while confronting social or cultural injustices. One verse in the Quran translates this concept as, “We have sent Our messengers to humanity with clear and miraculous proofs ... so that people might establish justice in the earth” (Quran, 57:25, The Gracious Quran). Muslims can turn to the Quran to find guidance, commandments, and examples of advancing antiracism in our daily interactions.

The Prophetic Sunnah provides additional context on how one can embody antiracism within our society. The Sunnah is composed of the sayings, actions, teachings, and behaviors of the Prophet Muhammad. Although it includes many examples of antiracist practices that advance equity and justice, one excerpt from his final sermon defines how to advance equity in the presence of inequities and injustices using restorative justice as the core principle.

O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as Sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Return the goods entrusted to you to their rightful owners. Treat others justly so that no one would be unjust to you. Remember that you will indeed meet your Lord, and that He will indeed reckon your deeds. God has forbidden you to take usury, therefore all usury obligations shall henceforth be waived. Your capital, however, is yours to keep. You will neither inflict nor suffer inequity.

(Qazi, 2018)

The excerpt continues by offering the clearest repudiation of racism and white supremacy that defines antiracism succinctly.

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no

superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Learn that every Muslim is a brother to every Muslim and that the Muslims constitute one brotherhood.

(Qazi, 2018)

Although spoken over 1,400 years ago, the power of this message is that it is still relevant and urgent today as it was then.

Beyond public assemblies to denounce racism, the Prophet Muhammad is also noted to have conveyed a meaning attributed by God Almighty, in the collection of Nawawi's Forty Prophetic Traditions, to repudiate actions and beliefs that reproduce inequities and injustices. In one statement, narrated by Muslim, the Prophet is known to have said, "O my servants! I have prohibited oppression for Myself and made it prohibited amongst you, so do not oppress one another" (Guezzou, 2014, p. 101). This is understood as the Prophet conveying a message that it is impossible for God to oppress and therefore people should not beseech God to judge, favor, or wrong others for the sake of somebody else (Guezzou, 2014). In a different narration, according to Abu Ruqayyah Tamim ibn Aws al-Dari, the Prophet is noted to have stated, "Religion is doing well by others ... by God, His Book, His Messenger, as well as by the leaders of the Muslims and by their commonality [the community]" (Guezzou, 2014, p. 46). The phrase "doing well by others" is translated to mean a community obligation to guide people, help them achieve, fulfill their needs, protect them from harm, and engage in mercy and respect (Guezzou, 2014). Together, these two narrations convey the dual obligation to both prohibit oppression and do well by others, attributes that when engaged as a community serve to disrupt injustices and advance equity.

There are many other sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad's teachings on how to embody antiracist practices and beliefs. At-Tabarani and Ab-Bazzar narrated that the Prophet said, "He does not believe in me, who spends the night satisfied when his neighbor beside him is hungry, and he knows about that" (al-Hashimi, 2007, p. 180). This suggests that one should have an internalized disposition to disrupt injustices and advance equity when one is aware of the suffering of others. In another statement narrated by Abu Dawood, the Prophet is known to have said, "He is not one of us who promotes tribalism; he is not one of us who fights for the cause of tribalism; he is not one of us who dies following tribalism" (al-Hashimi, 2007, p. 380). This goes further to reject actions that reproduce racism, the embodiment of tribal favoritism. In contrast, Ibn Amr shared that the Prophet said, "[Angel] Jibreel (Gabriel) kept urging me to treat neighbors well until I thought that he would make them heirs" (al-Hashimi, 2007, p. 281). This suggests that one is called to advance justice and fairness to those around him, to the extent that they are cared for as if they are family. The collection of these Prophetic sayings makes clear that the Prophet recognized the presence of social injustices and called Muslims to forbid unjust thoughts and actions, and advance fairness across society.

In today's American Muslim schools, there are instances of racism, inequity, and injustice faced internally and externally. Anti-Black racism exists between

individuals within the school community, and it is often reproduced toward others outside of the school community. Academic and discipline disparities exist between Black students and their nonblack peers, even in American Muslim schools with commandments to advance equity and justice. Anti-Muslim racism is experienced as external practices directed against the school community and its members by the local community or social discourse at large. On occasion, these sentiments are internalized and observed when members of the school community disparage their own religious identity and practices. The Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah both articulate that antiracism is the faith-based solution to an inequitable and unjust society, and advancing antiracism is an attribute of a believing Muslim.

Leaders tasked with leading American Muslim schools rely on the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah to shape their decisions and actions to disrupt inequities and injustices wherever they appear within or around their school organizations. Across the network of American Muslim schools, most are led by women, and many of those women did not receive formal school leadership training or preparation before assuming the role of school leader (DeCuir, 2016). Instead, they were selected as school leaders because of their informal roles as community leaders or leaders of children/youth programming. When asked how they learned the skills necessary for leading a school organization, their responses reflected a common approach of turning to the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah to identify values, behaviors, and practices of faithful leaders (DeCuir, 2016). They also shared that they used Islamic principles to prioritize inequities and injustices to confront in their leadership actions (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). Although many of the school leaders choose to earn an advanced degree in education leadership after accepting the leadership role in their community school, they remarked that although these university programs taught them valuable administrative and management skills, none provided the guidance needed to lead a Muslim school to advance an Islamic conceptualization of antiracism. Instead, these women relied upon their religious expertise, their faith-based motivations, and their community knowledge to construct Islamic antiracist school leadership.

*Resistance.* One attribute of Islamic antiracist school leadership is to lead a school community to demonstrate resistance against any embodiment of racism. This is reflected in the Prophetic Sunnah that translates the obligation to resist as

[W]hoever of you sees an evil must then change it with his hand. If he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his tongue. And if he is not able to do so, then [he must change it] with his heart. And that is the slightest [effect of] faith.

(Narrated by Muslim, 49)

One common form of anti-Muslim bias is the narrowly defined social expectations assigned to Muslim women as quiet, subservient, and weak. These biases exist both external and internal to the Muslim school community. Externally, they reflect a larger social narrative of anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia. Internally, it is recognized as a reproduction of gender bias and patriarchy that marginalizes

Muslim women. The women school leaders in my study shared that they resisted these biases by naming themselves as community leaders and asserting their leadership decisions when their authority was questioned. One participant also described that she volunteers for public speaking engagements in her local area to help resist the bias that Muslim women can't contribute meaningfully to public discourse. The women leading American Muslim schools use their leadership roles as acts of resistance against multiple forms of bias and racism directed against them.

These school leaders also actively promote antiracist leadership by leading their school communities to demonstrate resistance against multiple types of racism and injustice in their local areas. One school community was victimized by an act of anti-Muslim arson, another school faced local opposition to the construction of their new school site. Many immigrant Muslims tend to shy away from civic engagement, as they are unsure how to engage effectively in the American democratic system. Not only did these American Muslim school leaders foster an antiracist school climate through curriculum content, but they also created experiential learning opportunities for students and teachers to advance social justice in their local community. One school leader led the school to adopt a local highway and maintain it as an effort to promote environmental awareness. Another school leader encouraged their school families to speak out at a local government meeting or to demonstrate against acts of racial injustice. When other leaders may overemphasize the standardization of academic content, these leaders were prioritizing civic engagement to both disrupt anti-Muslim racism and advance social justice. Many of the school leaders referred to the leadership practices of the Prophet Muhammad as their motivation for engaging in resistance work. They referenced the time when the Prophet resisted anti-Muslim discourse by establishing a new community in Medina or the time when the Prophet resisted anti-Black racism by selecting a Black Arab to make the first call to prayer. These leaders sought ways to demonstrate the importance of resistance to their school community through their leadership actions.

*Transformation.* Antiracism seeks to transform systems, practices, and beliefs in our society to establish the perceived and realized equality of races. Islam, understood as a way of life, is a transformative faith that impacts social and public systems as well as personal interactions by establishing equity and justice through God-consciousness. Across the network of school leaders included in this study, most of them structured their transformative leadership actions around a Prophetic practice of consensus building. This was understood as inviting multiple stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to problem-solving or addressing concerns relevant to the school community. Not only did this generate support for transformative school efforts but also served to transform the practice of school leadership itself by disrupting authoritative leadership. One leader shared that she keeps an artifact of consensus building on her desk as a regular reminder, another wrote a poem based on the importance of Prophetic consensus building and reads it to her staff each year. Since many of the women school leaders were either the school founder or the first selected school leader, they did not often look to other Muslim school leaders as role models for leadership actions. Instead, they tried to address conflict



or develop new initiatives through consensus-building strategies modeled from Prophetic leadership. They felt motivated to embody this leadership practice because it was both transformative and rooted in their faith convictions.

Additionally, leaders of American Muslim schools transform what is prioritized across the school community by centering Islamic conceptualizations of social-emotional goals (DeCuir, 2019). Leaders described their work to advance social-emotional practices among faculty and staff as being responsive to their lived experiences and creating work schedules that support their existing family responsibilities. Creating a fair and comfortable work environment is a demonstration of antiracist leadership because the leader is focusing on advancing equity through the distribution of work responsibilities. The leaders also shared common practices of promoting social-emotional advancements of students and their families by regularly greeting students by name, getting to know students' families to better serve them, and developing school programs to meet the demonstrated needs of students. Sometimes this meant helping connect families with behavioral health providers, and other times it meant incentivizing social-emotional practices in the classroom. Leaders shared that prioritizing the holistic development of children was an Islamic attribute and sought to transform their school priorities over the national discourse of standardized academic content. On occasion, they referenced academic scholarship that validated the importance of social-emotional development, but more regularly they reflected that this was an Islamic practice and worked to confront the social-emotional inequities facing their marginalized students.

*Disruption.* The leaders within American Muslim schools were able to identify inequities within their school communities that they sought to disrupt as manifestations of their antiracist leadership commitments. They drew their motivation from Quranic stories of prophets, particularly Moses whose prophethood was declared to disrupt oppression faced by his people, or Prophet Muhammad who sought to disrupt gender and social inequities through the establishment of Islam. This realization compelled the leaders to disrupt when they were made aware of school-based inequities. One leader shared that she became aware of anti-Black racism in her school enacted through exclusionary discipline practices. There were teachers at the school who consistently sent a young Black girl into the hallway or to the principal's office for being "disruptive". The leader observed that the girl was easy to settle and often preferred to draw as a self-soothing technique. The leader began to observe the classroom teachers who enacted this discipline regularly and created interventions to disrupt their punitive responses. Another leader became aware of a school policy to line up students whose tuition payments were late and publicly humiliate them for their parents' errors. This became a repeated harm enacted on students living in poverty, and an unjust response to a family's financial situation. The leader disrupted this school policy, terminating it on the grounds that public humiliation is not an Islamic leadership practice. In both situations, the leaders understood that injustices can take place within Muslim institutions, but Islam forbids all acts of injustice regardless of who is responsible.

Another injustice that was commonly experienced across multiple American Muslim schools was the unfair practice of preferential treatment. In some schools,

families assumed preferential treatment because of their race, ethnicity, or country of origin. In other situations, preferential treatment was observed by a family's wealth or social connections. In all cases, preferential treatment reproduces a supremacist culture that does not reflect the tenets of antiracism. Instead, several leaders confronted families or students to enforce school policies of fairness and equity and refused to accept gifts or requests for differential treatment. Disrupting these assumptions was challenging, as it required leaders to confront members of their own school communities, and it required foregoing potential donations or resources that could be useful to the school. Instead, these leaders suggested that standing on their principles of justice and equity was necessary to disrupt assumptions or practices of preferential treatment, as they do not reflect the attributes of an Islamic community.

*Faith.* Faith is often described as an embodiment of one's personal relationship to the Almighty, but leaders of American Muslim schools also consider their faith as manifestations of antiracism. Their faith motivates their leadership work. Their faith enables them to recognize inequities and injustices. And because their faith remains challenged in the public square, their visible commitment to faith-based leadership is understood as a rebuke of anti-Muslim racism. Several leaders of American Muslim schools used their faith to construct the leadership and pedagogical frameworks of their schools, promoting the adoption of a faith-based pedagogy rather than a state-standard pedagogy. This is a bold leadership decision to reject the standardization of class instruction and position a faith-based pedagogy as the core operational practice. This changes the nature of teacher-student relationships to one that better reflects the Muslim heritage of learning from beloved teachers in collaborative spaces. It also reframes the curriculum content through a faith-based lens where academic learning takes place to increase our appreciation for nature's perfection or humanities are taught to celebrate God-given talents and creativities. Leaders spoke about transforming common classroom practices to reflect faith priorities such as morning meetings for prayer, making supplications before assessments, or using community prayer to reinforce the school climate. In this framework, learning takes place through community, and practices that foster unhealthy competition, individuality, and secular academics are rejected. By rejecting classroom norms that persist in larger American society, these leaders position faith-based pedagogies as antiracist because they resist the popular frameworks that reproduce social and cultural inequities.

Most American Muslim school leaders are Muslim women, and they accept their unique position as community role models of faith and leadership. As mentioned earlier, in an environment of anti-Muslim racism largely targeting Muslim women, public displays of faith are acts of antiracist leadership. But several leaders mentioned that this work is critical because of the young girls and boys who attend their school and need to see visible examples of Muslim women in positions of community leadership. One leader shared that she goes roller skating with her students, wearing modest clothing and a headscarf, knowing that she is modeling how to exist in American culture while maintaining faith commitments. Another leader helped class teachers recognize that they were also Muslim faith role models to their students, and she expected them to model both modesty and excellence in

their work. Across Muslim communities, these leaders recognized that most Muslims tend to regard members of the clergy as community leaders, and these are typically positions held by men, so the women leading American Muslim schools position themselves as community leaders to establish positive role models for women, girls, men, and boys in their Muslim community.

Islamic antiracist school leadership exists within the defined work priorities of American Muslim school leaders. This work is Islamically rooted because it is grounded in Quranic and Prophetic principles of equity and justice, and privileges faith as a motivation for leadership work. The leadership is antiracist because it seeks to explicitly disrupt inequities and injustices wherever they may occur. Both anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism are equally rejected and summarily challenged as oppositional to their faith. They do this work as school leaders, commanding authority over school functions and school climate as instructional leaders, and they work across the school community as faith-based role models and Muslim community leaders engaged in community transformation. There are four themes that frame Islamic antiracist school leadership, and each is exemplified in the leadership work of American Muslim school leaders – resistance, transformation, disruption, and faith.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Islamic antiracist school leadership is a framework for leading American Muslim schools to advance equity, justice, and antiracism in a social context plagued with anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism. Its principles are drawn from the Quran and examples from the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Drawn from a school leadership community led primarily by Muslim women, this leadership framework is a powerful articulation of antiracist school leadership. There are four thematic components of the framework, drawn from the leadership motivations and practices of Muslim school leaders: resistance, transformation, disruption, and faith. As school leaders in Muslim communities seek out leadership frameworks that best represent the integration of Quranic and Prophetic principles of equity, justice, and antiracism suited to confront racist inequities in social contexts, this assertion of an Islamic antiracist school leadership answers the leadership call needed for this time.

The framework discussed has the potential to transform Muslim communities, globally, into sites of systemic equity and social justice. Drawing upon foundational knowledge from the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, it represents a complex application of Muslim leadership. Two of the core tenets of antiracism are the validation of the equality of all racial groups and the rejection of racial supremacy, both conceptualized in the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah. Advancing antiracism requires a commitment to disrupt racial inequities, biases, and racism wherever it is experienced globally. American Muslim school leaders are tasked with confronting two explicit embodiments of racism that impact their school communities, internally and externally, anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism. Anti-Black racism impacts Muslims, either because their own racial identity is targeted or because anti-Black racist discourse reproduces harmful hegemonic social norms within the Muslim school community. Anti-Muslim racism can be

internalized within Muslims, and it subjects Muslims to harmful discourse in wider society. School leaders remain tasked with disrupting racism that impacts school communities in their local areas, and Islamic antiracist school leadership continues to serve as a powerful framework to root it out beyond the American context.

American Muslim communities struggle to confront patriarchal practices borrowed from immigrant cultures because they are often cloaked as Islamic. As a minoritized religious community in America, Muslims tend to privilege social norms in Muslim-majority countries as authentic. One persistent patriarchal relic in these countries is a lack of women in leadership roles. Enacting Islamic antiracist school leadership in American Muslim schools has wider implications for disrupting Muslim community patriarchy because it positions women as community leaders with authentic Islamic leadership practices. This model of school leadership is explicitly grounded in Quranic and Prophetic principles of equity, justice, and leadership, which bolsters its validity and recognition. Women leading American Muslim schools can be observed leading, administering, and managing the people and resources of a Muslim school community. And, as an antiracist leadership framework, it shows women in positions of leadership confronting inequities and advancing justice in a larger context of anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism. Positioning women as community leaders helps disrupt patriarchal biases and stereotypes and establishes expectations of equitable treatment across the Muslim community.

Islamic antiracist school leadership should be used as a preparation strategy for onboarding new American Muslim school leaders. This preparation strategy would center Quran and Prophetic knowledge to increase the leader's foundational knowledge of equity, justice, and antiracism as faith-based concepts. New school leaders should have a strong understanding of the religious groundings that should direct their leadership work. Additionally, if this framework were meaningfully centered in preparation efforts, new leaders would have practical instruction on operationalizing this framework to truly advance antiracism across their school community. Rather than borrowing from university preparation programs that narrowly focus on state curriculum and policy implementation, this framework would provide strategies for critical self-reflection, policy development, instructional leadership, and equity-oriented transformation rooted in Islamic principles. Instead of expecting school leaders to develop their own leadership philosophy or failing to offer meaningful preparation for the work of a Muslim school leader, this framework would establish baseline expectations that leaders of American Muslim schools should center their work on Quranic and Prophetic principles to uphold equity, justice, and advance antiracism.

Parallel to a strong preparation program is an effective leadership evaluation and assessment strategy. Nonprofit boards and community leaders should evaluate and assess the work of American Muslim school leaders through an Islamic antiracist school leadership framework. Using the four key tenets of this framework—resistance, transformation, disruption, and faith—school leaders can be assessed on their ability to embody each of these concepts to advance equity, justice, and antiracism across their school communities. Rather than reduce leader evaluation processes to assessing budget plans, retention rates, or standardized test scores, this type of

framework would establish Islamic indicators of leadership excellence in an evaluation strategy. Although future research is needed to develop a set of indicators associated with this framework, early adopters can begin by piloting strategies that advance the assessment of Islamic leadership competencies within American Muslim schools.

Islamic law is a field of inquiry that examines the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah to construct legal standings on contemporary matters. It is through Islamic law that Muslims have rules that govern social, economic, political, marriage, and family relationships. In all cases, the legal standings consider the contemporary applications of Quran and Prophetic principles. Al-Hibri (2015) described this as “the flexibility of Islamic law to address new situations and circumstances in ways that maximize public interest” (p. 10). Today, many Islamic legal scholars conduct their legal analysis in Muslim-majority countries and less is understood about Islamic legal standings in Muslim-minority contexts. The few scholars addressing this situation contemplate issues such as implementing Islamic marital law under the American legal system or establishing Islamically permissible sources of credit within our current economic structure. Scholars of Islamic law have also provided leadership guidance, usually political leadership in Muslim-majority nations. Future research can be conducted on the Islamic legal considerations of leading community institutions as a Muslim minority within America. This line of inquiry would incorporate the unique contexts of the Muslim community living in America and the nuances associated with both their minority status and challenges confronting anti-Muslim racism. Although the Islamic antiracist school leadership framework offers a strong conceptual plan, it needs the contributions of contemporary Islamic legal scholars with expertise in minoritized communities to establish the Islamic legal obligations of American Muslim school leadership.

The future success of this leadership framework requires community validation, both within the American Muslim school community and the larger Muslim community globally. This framework draws upon the perfections of the religion of Islam and how it can be embodied in social contexts fraught with racial injustices. Because the overwhelming number of American Muslim school leaders are women, there is a greater likelihood that gender bias will invalidate the significance of this leadership framework. And because this framework is rooted in America, there is a possibility that it will be discredited because it is constructed in a minoritized context. Or because the term “antiracist” has been misappropriated as a secular concept, there is a possibility that Muslims will question the foundation of this framework as an extension of secular politics and social movements. But the reality is that Islamic antiracist school leadership is grounded in the religious knowledge of the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, it responds to the American context replete with anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism, and will likely be led by Muslim women who should be regarded as community leaders. Our global community of Muslims needs antiracist school leaders to demonstrate resistance, transformation, disruption, and faith in leading our schools and communities to establish a society rooted in Quranic and Prophetic principles of equity, justice, and antiracism.

## Note

- 1 In this chapter, I define “Muslim schools” as institutions of learning guided by the principles of Islam, translated as submission to God Almighty, but led by Muslims striving to submit to God’s will. Although the more common term is “Islamic school”, the use of the word “Islamic” connotes that the institution itself embodies the perfection of the religion of Islam. In reality, institutions led by Muslims reflect our human limitations and shortcomings, and as such are not Islamic but rather Muslim.

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## 6 Islamic-based educational leadership in UK higher education

### Balancing securitization, marketization and Islamic values

*Fella Lahmar*

#### Introduction

Teaching Islam within the UK higher education system takes diverse forms. Leaders in these institutions filter through the internal pressures and the external policymakers' requirements and embedded values that permit the existence of such institutions in the first place. Leaders mediate between their Islamic values, practical demands, market pressures and quality assurance to retain requisite accreditation, validation and reputation in the market. How the internal processes underpinning Islamic-based higher education institutions (IHEIs) in Britain are influenced by systemic pressure remains under-researched. This chapter does not aim to map out the provision of Islamic higher education in the UK nor claims to be comprehensive of the dilemmas and tensions that leaders face in grappling with the different opportunities and challenges encountered during their leadership praxis. As part of a 'reflexive deliberation', the chapter instead aims to raise some questions on practice trying to view nuanced connections and disparities that may impact the quality and direction of such a provision. The analysis focuses on Islamic-based programs which are accredited and validated.

Accordingly, this chapter seeks to examine three issues. First, it contextualizes Islamic-based higher education provision into a socio-political context in England. The analysis involves exploring policies that contribute to shaping the nature and scope of this type of provision. Second, it focuses on questions of leading and managing programs within the accredited and validated sector of Islamic-based higher education in England. By doing so, it echoes the author's three-year experience as a program leader at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) by detailing emergent dilemmas in the reflexive process of deliberation over policies, resources, and sources. It examines the opportunities and limitations that contribute to shaping the micro-political processes within Islamic-based educational institutions as arenas of contending values through policy development and enactment (Grace, 1995). Finally, it establishes a concept of *tafakkur* 'reflexive deliberation' over aspects of Islamic-based educational leadership, administration, and management using a *Maqasidi* (higher objectives of Shari'a) framework, to question the complexity of the nature of 'Islamicity' driven by the security context and marketization of UK higher education.



**IHEIs in UK higher education: Securitization and marketization*****Muslims in Britain: Discourses of the Muslim “other”***

The profile of the Muslim population in Britain reflects a globalized context and continuous migration across continents due to different factors, including past colonial history and political unrest in South Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. Muslims were the second-largest religious group in the 2011 Census for England and Wales with 2.7 million people (4.8% of the population) (ONS, 2013).<sup>1</sup> In the 2011 Census in Scotland (The Scottish Government, 2015), of the main religious groups, 77,000 people identified themselves as Muslim (1.4% of the population). The Muslim population supported the youngest age profile of the main religious groups in England and Wales in 2011 (ONS, 2013). Based on the same 2011 Census for England and Wales, nearly half of Muslims (48%) were aged under 25 (1.3 million), and nine out of ten Muslims (88%) were aged under 50 (2.4 million). In terms of ethnicity, while the majority of Muslims in Britain derive from South Asian origins, various other ethnic backgrounds are also represented. Moreover, almost half of the Muslim population (46%) were residing in the 10% of the most deprived local authority districts in England (ONS, 2013). In Scotland, overcrowding was highest for Muslim households compared to the other main religious groups. Also, Muslims were among the least likely to own their own home, and 16% of them had never worked (The Scottish Government, 2015). The area of residence will raise questions over the quality of resources available to these communities, health, education, and networks to employment opportunities.

The economically deprived profile of Muslim populations is further drawn into security public discourse in which the Muslim ‘other’ is presented through the prism of ‘risk’ to liberal values (Abbas, 2021; Modood & Calhoun, 2015; Qureshi, 2015). In Britain, the aftermath of the July 2005 bombings provides a context for raising concerns about radicalization among British Muslims. Nevertheless, Siddiqui (2007, p. 20) rightly argues that the events of 9/11 and 7/7 present “a new urgency to the need to regard the growing Muslim population and their future role in the country as an asset and not a liability”. Instead, muscular liberalism as a discourse has been presented as an alternative to the perceived failure of multicultural debate and policies; it becomes imperative within British political conversation to defend “our British values” from the foreign cultural ‘other’ (Cameron, 2011). This debate is framed within a security agenda of preventing extremism via the setting of the controversial Prevent strategy as part of surveillance across different organizations, including higher education institutions (HEIs). Universities were highlighted as potential sites for extremism (Scott-Baumann & Perfect, 2021). Since 2015, the Prevent duty has been a legal requirement for further HEIs and staff due to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Although concerns about all forms of extremism are being stated, including concerns over far-right extremism, different data show that Muslims have been disproportionately focused upon by Prevent (UK Home Office, 2018, 2019). This security context problematizes Muslimness—considering it prone to radicalization and a

potential threat to Western liberal values or, in particular, to the policy's key concept of Fundamental British Values (Gholami, 2021).

The negative discourse about the Muslim 'other' details adverse consequences on Muslims' experiences in Britain. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2018) has highlighted how 70% of Muslims surveyed experienced religion-based prejudice in 2018. In 2017, a government report by the Social Mobility Commission (SMC, 2017) found that young Muslims living in the UK were "being held back from reaching their full potential at every stage of their lives". The report (2017) describes "enormous social mobility challenges", including being more likely to drop out of their studies early, less likely to gain 'good degrees' (1st or 2:1s) and more likely to be unemployed than their non-Muslim peers. While some young Muslim participants were ready to assert their Muslim identity and face possible constraints on subsequent career choices, others felt under pressure to hide their Muslim identity. Yet, many participants reported experiences of Islamophobia, discrimination and racism. Such discourses in the media seem to negatively impact some participants' career development and progression due to the reported lack of cultural awareness in the workplace. It is also reported that these young Muslim's successes did not translate into the labor market, as they experience the most significant economic disadvantages of any faith group in UK society (SMC, 2017).

Similarly, in 2017, the *Muslim Students' Survey* (NUS, 2018) was launched, exploring the experience of Muslim students during 2017–2018, to which 578 responses were received from UK-based Muslim students. The report found that the Prevent duty consistently and significantly affected the engagement opportunities for Muslim students across areas of democracy and debate on sensitive issues that relate to their Muslim identity (NUS, 2018). The report also highlights two emerging key themes from the survey: hate-motivated incidents and experiences of Islamophobia. Particularly, one-third of respondents felt negatively affected by Prevent. Given the young age profile of Muslims in Britain, these negative experiences reported by Muslim students raise serious concerns about their well-being. In Scotland, for example, the 2011 Census reported that almost a quarter (23%) of the 'Muslim' group were full-time students (The Scottish Government, 2015). Yet, in their research on Islam on campus within the British higher education context, Scott-Baumann et al. (2019, p. 1) also highlight how counter-terror securitization measures have contributed to "discrimination against Muslim staff and students and the politicization of their identity at university campuses".

Despite this ongoing controversy over the Prevent duty and its negative consequences on communities and the review process, on 1 April 2021, statutory "Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales" was published emphasizing the continued mandate of the duty (UK Home Office, 2021). Part of the Office for Students' (OfS) role under the Prevent statutory duty is to institute a monitoring framework, observing the steps higher education providers in England take to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. In doing so, higher education providers are expected to have regular contact with the relevant Prevent coordinator in order to comply with the Prevent duty. Moreover, institutions are required to develop a Prevent action plan to mitigate identified risks (OfS, 2021).

It is within this broader context of the Muslim population in Britain that Islamic-based institutions providing programs of Islamic studies and related fields are developing. Muslim educational institutions are deriving their students from such a young but disadvantaged community background. This background makes the discussion of Islamic educational goals complex, as it interlinks with issues of religious identity, poverty alleviation, social justice, equality, culture, dignity and citizenship, among other factors. These are areas directly related to debates over the major themes of *Maqasid al-Shari'a* (higher objectives of al-Shari'a-law), including protection of faith, life and dignity, intellect, family and wealth. Accordingly, this section questions how such a context might influence Muslim leaders' level of autonomy in shaping their Islamic-based institutions. The marketization setting of British higher education presents further issues to consider while examining how IHEIs' internal dynamics develop as a result of these pressures.

### ***The marketization of British higher education***

Various government interventions sought to shape higher education in the UK toward a market-driven model of education. These include *The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE)* [Dearing Report], *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (1997) (NCIHE, 1997), *The Future of Higher Education* (2003) (DfES, 2003), Higher Education Act (2004) ("Higher Education Act 2004", 2004) followed by raising the annual fees to £3k, *Higher Ambitions – the Future of Universities in a Knowledge Economy* (2009) (BIS, 2009), *Securing a Sustainable Future for HE* [Browne Review] (2010) (Browne et al., 2010) followed by raising the annual fees to £9k and *Students at the Heart of the System* (2011) (DfBIS, 2016).

Initially, the *Dearing Report* (NCIHE, 1997) made a clear argument that the benefits and costs of higher education should be shared to cover the underfunded sector, recommending that "students enter into an obligation to make contributions to the cost of their higher education once they are in work". The newly elected Labour government in 1997 embraced the report's recommendation to introduce fees and welcomed the emphasis on widening participation (WP). The initial fee charged was £1,000—later revised to follow the subsequent differing policies. In 2016, the white paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (2016) set out a range of further reforms to higher education toward increased marketization and competition on the basis that

[c]ompetition between providers in any market incentivises them to raise their game, offering consumers a greater choice of more innovative and better quality products and services at lower cost. Higher education is no exception.

(DfBIS, 2016)

To stimulate institutional competition within the market, the reforms include plans to facilitate the process for "new high quality challenger institutions to enter the market and award their own degrees". The changes meant reforms "to the way in which providers can award their own degrees—degree awarding powers (DAPs)—or call themselves a University" (DfBIS, 2016). Accordingly, providers or

courses that fail to sustain their provision or recruitment will be closed. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was formerly responsible for distributing public money to universities and colleges to fund teaching and research. It was created in 1992 and closed on 1 April 2018. HEFCE (2000) set out a key strategic aim to “maintain and encourage the development of a wide variety of institutions, with a diversity of missions”. Yet, this encouragement to diversity and WP has its limitations; it is conditioned with quality, cost and distinctiveness of mission. As the diversity of provision is encouraged, students are perceived as ‘customers’ who need to be informed of the quality of provision and whose rights would be protected. Hence, the move supported mechanisms of differentiation, allowing applicants to shop for quality, and gave weight to feedback on their educational experience.

To become intelligent customers of an increasingly diverse provision, and to meet their own increasing diverse needs, students need accessible information. We will ensure that the views of students themselves are published in a national annual survey available for the first time in Autumn 2003, which will explicitly cover teaching quality.

(DfES, 2003, para 4.2)

As government financial contributions to HEIs’ budgets have been declared insufficient for sustainable quality provision, institutions head toward charging higher student fees for their courses with steady increases noted since its inception. Accordingly, a large number of students are forced to take loans in order to cover the high levels of their higher education expenses within the UK. In 2022, it became common for home students in the UK to graduate with an average accumulated debts of £27,000 across the three years of their undergraduate degree programs, excluding repayment of any maintenance loan (The Times Higher Education, 2022a).

To encourage market choice and student mobility when shopping for the best value for money for education, the system now allows for the transfer of a certain number of credits to permit students to change their educational provider. Hence, program leaders need to include student exit points in their programs to give students recognition of the completion of courses if they decide to withdraw.

Standards of quality at each level of the higher education provision (levels 4, 5, 6 at the undergraduate level and 7 at the postgraduate level) are also provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) guidelines (QAA, 2014, 2019, 2022). Such standards aim to allow students to compare services and move between institutions providing similar courses. Moreover, via the “Higher Education and Research Act 2017” (“Higher Education and Research Act 2017”, 2017), the HEFCE was replaced by UK Research and Innovation and OfS. The OfS (OfS, 2021) is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Education (DfE). The OfS sets out four objectives: participation, quality of academic experience protecting students’ interests, outcomes in terms of progressing into employment or further study, and the value of their qualifications, stipulating that all students receive value for money.

Part of providing information to applicants to make informed decisions about where and what to study is via the National Student Survey (NSS). The NSS is managed by the OfS on behalf of the UK funding and regulatory bodies (OfS, 2020b). The NSS gathers students' opinions on the quality of their courses as part of the accountability process and for universities and colleges to improve the student experience. Every university and recognized higher education provider in the UK takes part in the NSS. The student response rates are consistently high.

In addition, the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) by the government in England has been running since 2015. Participation of HEIs has been voluntary and results in rating the participating universities and colleges in the UK as gold, silver or bronze (or provisional where there is not yet enough data to make a full assessment). The TEF rating is used as a marker of quality differentiation in market competition (OfS, 2020a). The NSS results are incorporated into the TEF (DfE, 2017) and have an impact on the rating system. According to the TEF data, the areas that students care about the most are

- teaching and learning,
- assessment and feedback, and
- employability skills: to develop graduates who are digitally capable.

In the process of designing programs for validation, leaders at IHEIs will need continuous evaluation and reflection on the QAA standards and the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and how they relate to practice. The annual NSS continues to show 'assessment and feedback' as one of the least satisfactory categories of students' evaluations (Walker et al., 2019). In practice, designing the type of assessment can be split between authenticity, inclusivity and practicality within the constraints of the institution's resources and staff pedagogical professional development.

The Higher Education Academy (2020), which is known now as 'Advance HE', is another body formed to provide professional development training in higher education and recognized fellowships for enhancing educational teaching and leadership considering the QAA quality standards and the UKPSF for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. In this regard, universities are increasingly seeking recognition as part of enhancing their practice and profile with TEF. For example, MIHE self-promotes as being registered with the OfS and holds a TEF silver award besides accreditation and validation. For the OfS, promoting competition and choice for students is part of its mission.

### ***IHEIs in Britain***

Types of Islamic higher educational institutions in the British context vary. Key research on Islam in UK higher education by Scott-Baumann et al. (2020) divides the sector into two broad categories, "teaching and learning Islam (Islamic theology), which usually takes place in Muslim seminaries" and "teaching and learning about Islam (Islamic Studies), which usually takes place in universities". IHEIs also vary in terms of their accreditation, quality reviewing and program validation.

While some prefer to remain autonomous from the accreditation restrictions, others seek accreditation. For example, Ebrahim College (England) was established in 2003 with the vision to present “a Darul Uloom style seminary appropriate for the modern world”. It is a hybrid form of Islamic education stating its aim as follows:

To benefit from the rigour and credibility of the traditional Darul Uloom and, where it was deemed beneficial, merge it with the best in modern curriculum development, pedagogy, technology and research.

(Ebrahim College, 2021)

Other institutions seek accreditation which offers support to students’ international visitor visas and demonstrates credibility that their programs are consistent with British higher education levels, although they have not attained validation from other mainstream universities. The Muslim College (2017), based in West London, presents an example of this second type of Islamic-based institution. The college was established in 1983 by the late Professor Zaki Badawi (1922–2006); it explicitly defines itself as “an Islamic higher education institution” that is working toward refining “its academic identity, rooting itself firmly in the Islamic and Western scholarly academic tradition”. Hence, its Islamic identity is not perceived as conflicting with its Western scholarly context. The Muslim College is accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges for independent, further and higher education colleges. As of October 2021, no validation partnership has been identified on their website.

A third type of IHEI chooses to seek validation for their accredited programs through a ‘collaborative provision’ partnership with degree-awarding institutions. For example, Cambridge Muslim College (CMC) is accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education (BAC) and approved by the Open University to offer higher education programs leading to Open University validated awards. The CMC stated mission is “to develop Muslim thought leadership through world-class education, training and research”. Its underpinning values are explicitly stated as the CMC having

full commitment to values of Islam and the most authentic classical Islamic scholarship and equipped with a critical and deep awareness of the nature of modernity and contemporary British and European contexts.

(Cambridge Muslim College, 2022)

CMC was the original vision of Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad (Tim Winter), lecturer of Islamic studies in the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University and director of studies in theology at Wolfson College, who plays a key role in its establishment and intellectual, scholarly activity.

The Islamic College (2018) is another institution that was established as the Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS) in 1998; it is accredited by the BAC and developed a partnership with Middlesex University with the validation of a BA (Hons) and MA Islamic studies programs. In 2008, ICAS was renamed ‘the Islamic College’ “to reflect its growing higher education course provision”. The

college aims to provide students with a learning environment that meets “the standards of academic study of Islam in top universities as well as the long established Hawza centers” (The Islamic College, 2018). The college publishes an academic refereed journal: *The Journal of Shi’a Islamic Studies* (JSIS) through its associated ICAS Press.

The MIHE (2021a) is another higher education provider that is accredited by the BAC and reviewed by the QAA. Interestingly, ‘Islamic’, ‘Muslim’ or any Arabic commonly used descriptions for Islamic institutions are not apparent in the name of MIHE. MIHE’s validation was originally gained from the University of Portsmouth, followed by the University of Loughborough, then the University of Gloucestershire and currently by Newman University. These are only a few examples of the growth and diversity in the sector of higher education Islamic educational provision in Britain. Mainstreaming “traditional Islamic higher education” is an approach that some Muslim educational leaders in higher education seek to strengthen by developing their Islamic-based programs within the established mainstream UK universities (UoW, 2021).

However, changing policies have implications for institutional priorities to comply and hence exert consequences on the developing culture and language. It is the responsibility of educational leaders and administrators in IHEIs to analyze these consequences on the institution’s internal cultural values and direction, with particular attention paid to the unintended impact of these policies on the overall provision of Islamic higher education.

## **Leading Islamic-based higher education in the UK**

### ***The education-specific dynamics of the context***

#### *Leading with a vision beyond the phobia of the ‘Islamic’*

In England, the Islamic-based institutions are functioning, negotiating, and constructing their identities, internal policies and cultural values within the context of ‘risk’, fear and ‘suspicion’ of the ‘Islamic’ (Lahmar, 2020a, 2020b; Scott-Baumann & Perfect, 2021). The 2007 Siddiqui Report<sup>2</sup> (2007) commissioned by the (then) Department for Education and Skills examined the study of Islam in English universities. The report concludes that the focus on Islam and its civilization in various mainstream universities in Britain remains anchored in the colonial legacy: “the success and continuity of imperial Britain” (Siddiqui, 2007, p. 17).

In light of such a context, it is no surprise that Islamic-based higher education organizations would be subject to alarmist rhetoric about the dangers of ‘radical Islam’ from right-wing media reporting and particular think tanks and campaign groups (Scott-Baumann et al., 2020; Scott-Baumann & Perfect, 2021). In their negotiations to secure collaborations with other universities, these institutions have to prove their distance from fears of radicalization and extremism. Their autonomy becomes even more limited as the validating universities have to prove their robust system of maintaining standards and quality through their validating partners (Scott-Baumann et al., 2020).

Yet, this same rhetoric fear of the ‘Islamic’ becomes invested into by some Islamic-based programs, which might indicate other avenues for educational development of the study of Islamic subjects. For example, to tackle extremism through education, El-Awaisi and Nye’s (2006) report raised concerns over key IHEs in England by linking many of them to different political and sectarian associations. Moreover, the authors (2006) opposed the teaching about Islam and Muslims in higher education to be left to “religious organisations” or to be taught through a faith-based approach. Instead, they (El-Awaisi & Nye, 2006, p. 4) argue, “The way in which higher education in the study of Islam and Muslims is structured and delivered must [...] be recognised as a key area for public debate and scrutiny”. Through a security lens of eliminating “extremism and fundamentalism”, Islamic-based higher education organizations, whether accredited or not, are perceived by this report as problematic to “our multicultural society” through their “misguided and narrow interpretations of Islam” that should be prevented. El-Awaisi and Nye (2006) further argue in the preface that “it is only through multicultural education”, which “should not be faith-based”, that such risks could be eliminated. Yet, the report itself was commissioned by the Al-Maktoum Institute, Scotland. The Al-Maktoum Institute has its own political networks in Dubai, as the college patron is the late Shaikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates Minister of Finance. The college website (Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education, 2021) acknowledges that “HH Shaikh Hamdan, whose vision for multiculturalism and education is at the heart of the College, is its Patron and Sponsor”. This may raise questions on the impact of international political tensions on discourses about Islamic-based educational institutions of higher education in the UK and ways in which fear of ‘Islamism’ and ‘radicalization’ could be invested in the market competition. It also questions how the need to disassociate from perceived ‘extremism’ or ‘Islamism’ might play its role in shaping Islamic-based leaders’ educational choices and the internal institutional dynamics of change and development. This association of educational institutions with security fears has the potential to contaminate the culture for collaboration among independent institutions led and taught by a majority of Muslim staff, whether they categorize their institutions as ‘Islamic’ or disassociate themselves from such a description.

#### *Competitive dynamics across Islamic educational provision*

Defining what is ‘Islamic’ in educational provision presents Muslim educators with an ever-challenging task as part of 21<sup>st</sup>-century pluralistic global societies. On the one hand, different theorists are looking for practical visions of what is distinctively ‘Islamic’ about education and how to envision success in Islamic education. So, questions of who is ‘the educated Muslim’ becomes relevant as an outcome of this ‘Islamic’ education. Yet, universities in Britain are turning into places where money is invested and made. This system has questioned the nature and role of higher education in the Islamic tradition that is built on *waqf* free availability of education, including fees and accommodation (Makdisi, 1981).



In the market dynamics, funding remains a crucial factor in the sustainability and development of these institutions. Practitioners and philanthropists, such as the Aziz Foundation (2022), want to see tangible visions that can be implemented and their value for money impact evaluated. In this regard, Naidoo and Jamieson's (2005) analysis captures the challenging competition context in which

[u]niversities that are in the upper levels of the hierarchy with high levels of academic, reputational and financial capital are likely to draw on superior resources to engage in practices intent on conserving the academic principles structuring the field of education, thereby maintaining their dominant position. Institutions in a more vulnerable position in the field are more likely to experience the forces of consumerism in pristine form.

(Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 271)

The University of Warwick (UoW) presents an example of such competition that small IHEIs, such as MIHE, have to deal with a mainstream model of their unique programs. The "Islamic Education: Theory and Practice" forms one of the MA programs that the Centre for Education Studies at UoW offers students (UoW, 2021). The UoW has a degree-awarding power, provides "graduates of traditional Islamic seminaries who have an interest in studying the theory and practice of education" at the university level the opportunity "to progress onto one of the Masters courses offered by the Centre for Education Studies" after successfully completing a one-term Postgraduate Award in Islamic Education (PGA) course in Islamic Education (UoW, 2018). Yet, at MIHE, graduates from similar "recognised Islamic seminaries (Darul Ulum)" are requested to complete at least two years of levels 5 and 6 to gain their degrees before progressing to MA programs, including Islamic education (MIHE, 2021a). Still, the MIHE BA programs provide students with the possibility to progress to a traditional Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)<sup>3</sup> teacher training program route if they wish to pursue a mainstream teaching career this way; whereas the Islamic education master's route at UoW may curtail this progression if students do not have a BA degree, as PGCE course entry requirements stipulate a first degree or equivalent (UCAS, 2021). PGCE programs are a popular graduate route into teaching in England, gaining a Qualified Teacher Status and may prove useful in seeking teaching in another country. However, the PGCE qualification is not necessarily needed to teach in England (UCAS, 2021). Accordingly, many students interested in teaching in England may still not see the PGCE as a sufficient motive to pursue an extra two-year BA degree compared to directly moving into the MA level through the UoW PGA access course. Still, many *dar-al-ulum's* graduates may find it challenging to produce work that would meet an MA level 7 assessment and pass quality criteria before developing the necessary academic skills if they were not gained during their previous studies.

In light of this market competition, MIHE develops programs delivered at different campuses, including at one of *dar-al-ulum*, *As-Suffa* Institute in Birmingham, to serve students at their most convenient locations, fulfilling the quality standards of accreditation and validation. This allows students to gain the classical Islamic

curriculum alongside the validated university degree and develop the required academic skills during the same period of studies at their *dar-al-ulum* institution, given that they will be able to manage the workload and offer the required fees.

In the job market, the UoW provides students with a brand name of a well-established university that is a member of the Russell Group UK elite universities and leading research in education.

Yet, the MA Islamic education: theory and practice at UoW cost £1,575 per 30 CATS PT module for the 2020–2021 academic year, which means that a full MA of 180 credits would have cost home students over £9,000 for 2020–2021. There was a further increase for the academic years 2021–2022 and 2022–2023 to £1,660 and £1,740, respectively, per 30 CATS PT module (UoW, 2022).

Whereas, from September 2020, a similar MA degree at MIHE only cost UK and European Union students £5,500 at the Markfield MIHE main campus and £6,000 at the East London MIHE campus (MIHE, 2021b). MIHE's MA programs are validated by Newman University, Birmingham, which gained its full university status in 2013, and is a relatively small university compared to the UoW (The Times Higher Education, 2022b). Interestingly, Dr. Abdullah Sahin founded the MIHE MEd Islamic education program and then moved to UoW, creating a similar MA Islamic education course. The context of UoW offers the academic staff the breadth of research resources, administrative support and better chances for funding opportunities in a competitive environment compared to the limitations of restricted small institutions. Hence, competition is not merely in securing students to join courses but also in retaining staff expertise. This case shows some of the market dynamics affecting Islamic-based institutions, their provision and their resources.

Nevertheless, the claims of better responding to “religious extremism and radicalisation” find their way into the promotion of the aforementioned short access course of Islamic education launched at the UoW:

As such the course is the first real step in setting the educational and pedagogic standards for the training of Muslim faith leaders and teachers in the UK and preparing them to better respond to the impact of religious extremism and radicalisation.

(UoW, 2018)

These claims raise complex questions over how to evaluate that perceived “real” in setting standards for Islamic education in light of the interplay between pedagogical choices, marketization, securitization and the potential stigmatization of particular communities and institutions. Accordingly, it becomes necessary for educational leaders to question how the market contextual socio-political factors can interplay in the development, funding and promotion of Islamic studies-related courses in UK higher education.

Besides the factor of university status in the market, academic subjects constitute another variable in this competitive arena, as subjects that have weaker classification and framing are expected to be more vulnerable to consumerist forces than subjects with stronger classification and framing. Hence, for example, Islamic

education requires more work in framing its programs to the job market to stand the competition against a well-established specialized department of education with all its exchange expertise, networks and resources. In addition, Naidoo and Jamieson point to the influence of university status, such as that of UoW versus MIHE, on the student demand for change as

in elite universities and departments students are least likely to push for changes because they understand that a combination of the university and the subject has a very high exchange value in the external job market.

(Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 271)

In the context of Islamophobia, the Islamic environment that small Islamic institutions provide may compensate for some students interested in an academic milieu that would support their faith background and appreciate their struggles beyond fears of radicalization and extremism. However, funding and resources remain crucial factors in the dynamics of quality educational provision. For example, based on religious convictions, some Muslim students reject loans that contain interest to study, and therefore, the low fees option in IHEIs becomes more viable to this category of students. Nevertheless, reducing fees limits the funding capacity of these institutions, which has consequences on the nature of provision, including retaining highly qualified and experienced staff. The job market demands graduates with high technological skills and breadth of knowledge in their fields, which require high-quality equipment, building spaces, library resources, ongoing breadth of training and high-quality academic staff with opportunities for professional development, research and career promotion. Such requirements are not cheap and demand investment and quality leadership vision. Hence, competition toward excellent student satisfaction ratings in evaluation, including the NSS, means additional expenses within a pressurized competitive market.

Unique and unexpected circumstances, such as the Covid-19 lockdown, test educational institutions' infrastructure. In such circumstances, professionals found themselves under an urgent need to produce online quality learning platforms, wide and accessible library resources, student support and staff training. Failure to adequately provide such support and resources would be negatively reflected in the NSS students' results, which contribute to these institutions' public evaluation and TEF brands. More importantly, this Covid-19 climate raised social justice issues across the education sector, especially when functioning within deprived communities (Holt & Murray, 2021; OfS, 2020b). So, what could small institutions provide to ensure quality learning that would develop students' skills to compete within highly competitive job markets and with a deprived community profile? The high employability of graduates is not only necessary to these institutions' reputation for the future marketability of their courses but also for the future careers and prospects of these students and the economic profile of the Muslim community. Hence, I would argue that the employability of graduates remains a moral-ethical goal in IHEIs program designs and promotion toward Islamic education for dignity.

It is established within Islamic scholarly classical debates on knowledge/action that moral action forms a core element in Islamic educational outcomes, besides other benefits of seeking knowledge (Lahmar, 2020b). Hence, the consumerist approach to knowledge as a 'product' and the learner as a 'customer' can be controversial in discussions on how education is to be perceived from an Islamic perspective (Al-Attas, 1979). However, the question of including economic growth as a goal for Islamic education should not contradict the driving moral value of Islamic education per se. For example, Ibn-Ashur (1879–1973) (2006), a Tunisian prominent traditional Islamic scholar and Islamic educational reformer, considers developing skills that would assist learners to provide themselves with sufficient income and dignified living in the future as an important Islamic goal for Islamic education that would be positively reflected on both individuals and their Muslim communities. Moreover, Ibn-Ashur (2006) regards gaining respected employment via this education as a way to preserve the faith (*hifdh al-din*) itself and, therefore, does not see the consideration of the economic outcome of Islamic education as contradicting the higher objectives of al-Shari'a per se. This *Maqasidi* approach is a growing field of research in both Islamic finance and education.

*Dar-al-ulum* graduates form a targeted community of potential students for many Islamic institutions with validated programs. Competition for the students' restricted market within Islamic studies has its implications on the amount of charged fees, access courses, exemptions and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Besides internal competition, these institutions face competition from courses provided at the degree-awarding universities, as previously analyzed in the UoW/MIHE example. While these IHEIs have the advantage of an insider Muslim environment, as most of their lecturers are drawn from the Islamic faith, the limited resources, including salary scales, research and promotion opportunities, might encourage more scholars to migrate their programs into established mainstream universities. Leaders in IHEIs are juggling these ongoing different tensions and dilemmas.

The discussion, so far, poses a range of opportunities and challenges that arise when Islamic-based education is juxtaposed to marketization and securitization in UK higher education. Accordingly, it becomes necessary for these IHEIs to develop their own internal benchmarks of quality based on their clear vision and core Islamic values, but with a constant critical review process in light of the changing context. These institutions may lose sight of their purpose if leadership is left to be driven by the constant change of policies focusing on the compliance response and the procedural illusions of effectiveness and the market pressure without questioning the value system underlying the drive for change (Mulford, 2003). Moreover, following Maringe and Gibbs' (2009) analysis, the consequences of consumerism are likely to be most powerful in the most vulnerable institutions, affecting those that do not possess the fame and ingrained reputation and which accept students from disadvantaged backgrounds. IHEIs remain small, with limited resources and students. This line of analysis suggests that these institutions could potentially be more vulnerable than elite universities to the pressure of student demands for change, which makes the faculty in these institutions more responsive

to change. As this change continues under the weight of consumerism, these enterprises may lose their identity. Accordingly, the culture and values within these organizations should be perceived as a dynamic process rather than static.

Under such pressure, I argue for considering a ‘reflexive deliberation’ (*tafakkur*) approach in aspects of Islamic-based educational leadership, administration and management within Islamic-based institutions in a 21-century Western context. Considering the basic Muslim community necessities and needs should form a framework in setting goals and priorities for these institutions’ educational priorities. Yet, from a leadership experience of Islamic educational reform during the early 20th century in Tunisia, Ibn-Ashur (2006) emphasizes the complexity of change within the traditional Islamic institution of Al-Zaytunah in Tunis. He (Ibn-Ashur, 2006) deliberated upon the messy character of the change process in which the different players were involved: the students, the teachers, the leading scholars, the policymakers, the French colonial interests and powers, the media channels and the public space into which their discourses were communicated for the general public. Although these variables are still relevant to IHEIs in Britain and contribute to the nature of their change, no possible step-by-step manual is to be provided to those leading reform within these institutions. Hence, struggles form an integral part of the implementation process to revisit the proposed ideas based on contextual input and experience.

### **Leading Islamic-based higher education as a praxis**

Through the RPL, the validated programs show a potential bridging between the traditional *dar-al-ulum* of Islamic studies and the mainstream HEIs. However, for the accredited and validated Islamic studies programs in UK higher education, the pedagogic objectives of the curriculum are informed by the relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking in Theology & Religious Studies and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (QAA, 2019, 2022). Considering QAA learning outcomes at a master’s level, students are expected to develop reasoning, critical thinking and communication. Yet, graduates from *dar-al-ulum* institutions are embedded in a strong ‘foundational knowledge’ base about Islamic studies gained over years of learning through mostly tutor-centered rather than student-centered process (Gilliat-Ray, 2006; Hardaker & Sabki, 2019). Given the aforementioned broader and specific Islamic-based educational institutions’ contexts and the challenges they propose, it would be naïve to suggest that meeting the requirements of quality at higher education would have to ignore the students’ experiences, skills, assumptions and previous knowledge of what an ‘Islamic studies’ related degree or ‘Islamic education’ meant to them. The transition stage meant serious consideration of both sides of the learning coin: past students’ knowledge and experiences and current degree criteria and standards. The change in student experience goes far beyond the mere changing of settings, teaching methods or forms of assessment. For students from the *dar-al-ulum* and similar backgrounds, the experience also meant questioning their prior learning, scholarship authorities, approach to the truth and Islamic heritage and sacred sources. It is all to be done within the Prevent duty securitization broader UK higher education context.

For example, based on my three-year teaching practice at MIHE's BA and MA validated programs, the experience of what Perkins (Meyer & Land, 2005; Perkins, 1999) conceptualizes as 'troublesome knowledge' created anxiety and uncertainty for some students, and at times rejection, as they are placed in a status of uncertainty within 'liminal spaces'.

It is here that I find Gadamer's (2004) interpretation of 'practical wisdom' that Aristotle called *phronesis*, useful during my teaching, learning and leading praxis in a reciprocal relationship between professional self, quality standards and requirements, students' backgrounds and the broader context. In this regard, scaffolding becomes necessary as it provides students with the necessary support to navigate through the contradicting literature and learning expectations and develop their critical analysis faculties, communication skills and reflexivity toward grasping a new moment of understanding that has to be worked out. Hopefully, this would prepare them for their roles in society as lifelong learners making choices through "the reflective awareness" (Palmer, 2007, p. 231) amid the complexities and contradictions of a pluralist changing milieu, it is as Gadamer states,

[T]he knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are required to choose the thing to be done; and no learned and mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision.

(Palmer, 2007, p. 231)

This exercise becomes even more complex with the consumption model of universities in which student satisfaction becomes vital to the university brand (Williams, 2012). This presents a cultural and epistemological shift from the Islamic *dar-ul-ulums*' settings, learning goals and quality criteria of seeking religious knowledge. In such a context, the role of leadership and mentoring support to both students and staff is contextualized within this transitional space. Providing adequate student support demands staff who can understand and effectively navigate the contextual complexities and challenges; otherwise, it can backfire in the NSS survey of student satisfaction that will negatively affect the TEF rating and the IHEI's brand.

In this regard, Fink's (2013) taxonomy of "the significant learning experience" provides a holistic prospect in reflecting on constructive alignment at the different levels of program design, allowing space for both the quality standards and the holistic Islamic framework. The proposed aspects of integrated learning include 'foundational knowledge', 'application', 'integration', 'human dimension', 'caring' and 'learning how to learn' (Fink, 2013). Fink's (2013) model provides a conceptual framework for evaluating and identifying areas of possible improvement. In doing so, 'the situational factors' of these institutions' socio-political context need to be taken into account in development change (Figure 6.1).

For Ibn-Ashur, a view that I advocate in this chapter, the purpose of a traditional Islamic-based institution should not be merely to survive but to make a positive impact on enhancing Muslim communities' deprived status toward dignity

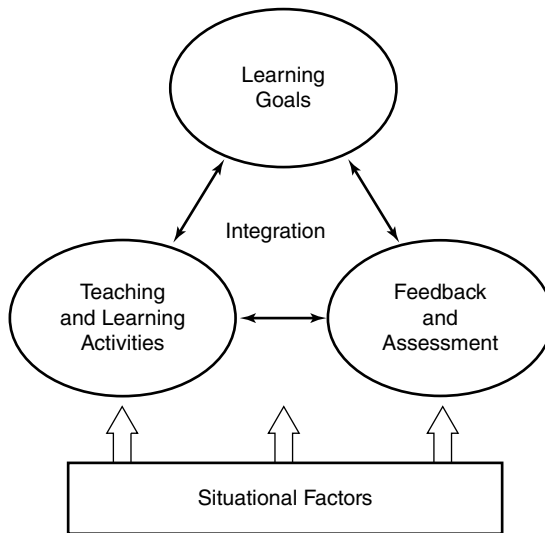


Figure 6.1 Fink's key components of integrated course design (Fink, 2013, p. 70).

and honor 'takrim' to save the faith and wealth, and also to engage with prophet Yusuf's Quranic described approach of knowledge, skills and excellence (*ihsan*) toward kinship and the non-Muslim society at large. This approach requires educational programs to develop proactive, engaging, efficacious, authentic scholarly voices that understand the opportunities and challenges of their ever-changing contexts (situational factors), develop the necessary skills embedded in their cerebral Islamic tradition but also open to the search for *hikmah* (wisdom) in life learning and application of their foundational knowledge.

Such a model could allow the integration of different aspects that form important elements in the ongoing debate over the *Maqasidi* framework for Islamic education. Leaders should not only be thinking of what students can learn during the program but of what they can retain for the future beyond their graduation (learning goals). This includes their roles in society as confident believers with *ihsan* (excellence) approach to life. The concept of *tafakkur* 'reflexive deliberation' forms an essential element of the development journey to an evidence-based and fair engagement with the 'situational factors' of the leadership practice. In this process, I argue that not only the professional guidelines should be regarded, but Islamic moral values should also form a crucial part of the underpinning cultural environment, quality criteria and critical reflection frameworks in IHEIs. Accordingly, the orientation and the general philosophy of Islamic-based leadership and environment in IHEIs should be embedded in the Islamic value system, including piety (*taqwa*), self-accountability (*muhasabah*), dignity and honor (*takrim*), fairness ('*adl*), consultation (*shurah*), service (*khidmah*), trust (*amanah*), quality (*itqan*), excellence (*ihsan*), compassion (*rahmah*) and success (*falah*) which are just a few examples of the virtues that could be explored in such endeavor.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In secular societies where religiously claimed truth is questioned and its confessional language is marginalized in the public space, the value of institutions educating for religious practice has been challenged. Hence, Islamic-based institutions in Western contexts need to justify their existence and value to their Muslim communities and to wider non-Muslim society, especially in light of the alarming discourses on radicalization and what is known as ‘Islamist terrorism’ or extremism. Moreover, in practice, within the neoliberal context of education, the abstract debate on Islamic education is expected to be translated from the moral discursive discourse to the concrete ‘outcomes’ that could be empirically examined, measured and ranked.

In translating theory to practice, leaders, administrators and managers of Islamic-based higher education address religious, philosophical, socio-political and existential dimensions of education. The implementation of any vision is enacted within the opportunities and limitations of the British marketization and socio-political context of higher education. This process has resulted in a diverse but fragmented provision. In particular, IHEIs offering accredited and validated Islamic-related programs are competing with a similar pool of students drawn mainly from the Islamic institutions of *dar-al-ulum*.

The question that this chapter finally poses to leaders in IHEIs is: how shall the various proposed visions and models of Islamic educational practice in Britain, such as *dar-al-ulum*, independent non-accredited and accredited provisions, support the wider Muslim communities in Britain to escape their inferior and deprived social profile and to confidently and effectively engage with wider British society? Where is the line to be drawn between reform, which is loyal to an ‘Islamic’ value system to preserving faith, and transformation, which is rather driven by mere compliance and passive reaction to external agendas of security and marketization?

In negotiating these tensions between the inherited past and the changing present with relation to the current IHEIs in Britain, this chapter refers to Ibn-Ashur’s vision, as a classical educational and theological *Maqasidi* scholar who led Al-Zaytunah institute’s reforms amid complex and fast-changing socio-political context of Tunisia. Ibn-Ashur’s analysis of the Al-Zaytunah case study shows the messy reality of translating theory into practice for IHEIs educational leaders. It shows that change in these institutions is not a linear process and it has its limitations of policy context, political interests, funding and resources, expertise and embedded convictions within the Muslim traditional scholarship community, as well as the broader Muslim and non-Muslim communities and the media input on which voices are to be heard and promoted. These variables drive on changes within these institutions along a spiral route. Hence, change requires an ongoing ‘reflexive deliberation’ of ‘*tafakkur*’ and navigation among the values of the context and the educational values embedding the proposed Islamic programs of study that we develop as educators, given the opportunities and restrictions of the context.

Instead of harming competition, there is a need for developing research associations, building scholarly collaborations and developing internal quality standards that take faith values into regard. This collaborative approach would encourage an



open space for interdisciplinary intellectual research activity to benefit from the development of other fields of knowledge and the different expertise that diverse Islamic-based institutions can offer. Establishing *waqf* funding bodies would be essential for supporting autonomy and financing joint projects that serve IHEIs shared objectives. It is these similar scholarly collaborations that Ibn-Ashur advocated and which are still relevant to today's IHEIs in the UK.

## Notes

- 1 As of October 2021, statistics from the 2021 Census for England and Wales are not yet to be released.
- 2 A Professor of Christian–Muslim Relations and Inter–Faith Understanding and Course Director of the ‘Certificate in Muslim Chaplaincy’ course at MIHE. He was the MA Islamic Studies Course Leader at MIHE until August 2019.
- 3 The PGCE is a Level 7 qualification on the UK National Qualifications Framework and carries 60 CATS points.

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# 7 Educational leadership in a Muslim and secular country

The case of Türkiye

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## Introduction

Modern school and education in general, present a laicist, positivist and secular identity. The rituals, cultures and symbols that education and school have despite this preference for identity are largely derived from religions and beliefs (Giorgetti, 2021). On the other hand, modern society and the modern individual show a substantial amount of loyalty and continuity in religion, spirituality and belief, despite the persistent materialism of educational systems and social context. Although very few countries in the contemporary world are institutionalized according to religious references, religion and beliefs are still social policy determinants for many countries (Turner, 2012). This factual situation has a strong and dominant effect on the modern, positivist and materialistic value of education and school.

The challenges such as multiculturalism, immigration, neoliberalism, globalization faced by the modern individual, societies and states also trigger categorization based on religion and belief. This is a natural consequence of the traditions, experiences and geography of societies, leading to polarization and confrontation. However, when this natural manifestation coincides with national, political and economic interests, it can also enter as a tool of daily politics (Robertson, 1989; Dawson, 2014). This political tumult, which sometimes becomes violent, can manifest within the same country as well as between countries. This two-way view of religion and beliefs in daily life has clear reflections on education (Boyle, 2002; Olaniran, 2018; Karataş, 2020a; Karataş 2022).

Another aspect of modern education and the relationship between school and religion is aimed at teaching new generations with religious beliefs, teachings, traditions and daily practices. Many countries show sensitivity to this need and try to produce solutions. However, groups or social segments that do not find such sufficient solutions, form their own educational institutions. Because these efforts are often considered illegitimate, the field of education appears as a conflict area between modern, secular structures and religion and belief systems (Aşkın, 2018; Bahçekapılı, 2018; Genç, 2019).

It is clear that the education systems in the world today show a significant similarity in formal terms. The levels, the starting age of education, the content of the education, the constitutional status of the education, the education method and

the style and educational environments have very similar characteristics. However, belief, culture, geography and historical differences of societies differentiate the spirit of education systems. In other words, although they are similar in form, as the contexts change, the educational processes and the identity of the school also change (Karataş, 2021).

The purpose of this section is to discuss the position and function of education and school in the context of Türkiye, where according to official documents, 99% of the population is Muslim, in line with the dimensions listed earlier. It would be appropriate to understand the socio-political context of Türkiye in order to put this effort on a meaningful basis. While examining the socio-political context of Türkiye, the position of religion in individual and social life will be central to the discussion. Why religious education in general and Islamic education in particular emerged as a need, how this need was met, the reflection of religious references on education and school administration and the problems encountered in the process, experiences and gains will be discussed. In other words, education and school as an institution and school administration as a field will be evaluated in the context of the Islamic perspective in Türkiye.

### **Context: Muslim and secular Türkiye**

Türkiye is a secular, democratic, social constitutional state founded in 1923. It is governed by the Republic. Türkiye, which was founded on the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, which was six centuries old, is the result of the modernization and westernization process of the Ottoman Empire starting from the 18th century (Mardin, 2016). This situation led to the emergence of Türkiye, which inherited the Muslim Ottoman relations with the east in terms of religious relations with the west in terms of geography and political preferences. Türkiye, as a society where east and west intersect and meet, is deeply experiencing this duality. It has given Türkiye a distinctive character from the predominantly Christian west and from the predominantly Islamic east (Kahraman, 2007).

Türkiye accommodates the aforementioned diversity in terms of its population. The population living in the lands of the Ottoman Empire in Asia, Africa and Europe, which declined during the 19th century, migrated to Anatolia. It is estimated that approximately seven million people migrated to Anatolia during the 19th century. Since the population of Türkiye at the beginning of the 20th century was 14 million, it will be seen that nearly half of the population came from very different geographies. Although the population migrating to Anatolia were from different ethnicities in Arab, Caucasian and Balkan geographies, they were mostly Muslim (Karpas, 2012; Alptekin, 2016). Along with Muslims in Anatolia, non-Muslim populations such as Armenians, Jews, Greeks and Assyrians also constitute a significant proportion. Compared to nation-states in Europe or other regions, the population of Türkiye is mostly Muslim but has diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and sect.

Türkiye has a rich and volatile nature in terms of the religious distribution of the population and the qualities of the Muslim population. Modern Türkiye is evolving into a diversified demographic structure with non-Muslims, new immigrants from

the periphery and distant regions and foreign nationals, mostly from Syria, in addition to its 99% Muslim population (Yakar & Südaş, 2019). Roughly 70% of the population is Sunni, 20% is Shiite or Alevi and 10% state that they belong to other religions or do not belong to any religion (Arslan, 2015). While the Muslim population consists of various ethnic groups in terms of ethnic origin, it also differs in terms of religious understanding and lifestyle. With the modernization, conservative Muslims who emigrated from the countryside to the city constitute an important group, as well as a population that adopts an urban and modern life and can be defined as modern Muslims. These mostly create a socialization area for themselves within religious communities. Traditional sects with roots dating back to the Ottoman Empire or earlier also survive. Apart from these, urban conservatives, who have received a modern education and regard Islam as a political remedy despite the deformation brought about by modernization and industrialization, constitute an active segment of the Muslim population (Aydın & Okşar, 2019). When a more general classification is made, it is possible to divide the Muslims in Türkiye into two main groups, around 30% modern (secular) and around 70% religious or conservative at various levels, without forgetting that change continues over the years (Konda, 2019).

It can be said that the modernization of the society has come a long way in terms of income per capita, income distribution, education level and distribution to settlements in Türkiye today (Sağlam, 2006; Aydın & Okşar, 2019). Türkiye has an increasingly conservative urban identity with an average of \$10,000 per capita income, an income distribution inequality of around 0.4 (Öz, 2019), an average educational age of nine years and an urbanization level exceeding 90%. The number of people living in rural areas and working in the agricultural sector has decreased considerably; it has become a modern, urban society with a schooling rate exceeding 85% at the high school level and 40% at the higher education level. These facts are also reflected in society's relationship with religion.

With the proclamation of the Republic, Türkiye, which transformed from a sultanate with a religious character to a secular democratic regime, adopted an approach that was distant from religion and even kept religion under control within the framework of westernization, modernization and urbanization (Kaplan, 1999). Revolutionary reform initiatives were aimed at modernizing everyday social and political life organized according to religious references. This preference is clearly manifested in the state's relationship with religion and has acquired a character that limits, controls and regulates religion. Although the state-religion relations seem to have softened from time to time throughout the history of the Republic, which is approaching a century, it has been kept under constant control (Gündüz, 2016).

### **Religious issues in educational agenda and policies in Türkiye**

Türkiye has tried to resolve the dilemma of modernization efforts in education since the end of the 18th century, with the Law of Unification of Education in 1924. As required by the law, all religious education institutions were also affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, and educational policies and



organizations were gathered in one institution of the secular state. As a matter of fact, after a very short time, all traditional educational institutions, madrasa, dervish lodges (e.g. tekkes and zawiyyas, places where Sufi education is given under the direction of a sheikh), giving religious education were closed, religious education lessons were abolished and a uniform policy was put into effect (Zengin, 2002). However, it is not possible to completely erase religion from the field of education in Turkish society, where the majority of them are Muslim and where Islamic principles and values are deeply rooted. As of today, education in Türkiye, which is governed by a completely secular regime, has always been an area where religious issues and debates are present (Özdalga, 2018).

The AK Party, the ruling political party in Türkiye since November 3, 2002, has a political view that cares about religious references and defines itself as a conservative democrat. Going back from the AK Party to the years when the Republic was established, it will be seen that the relationship of the rulers with religion and especially the religion of Islam has improved gradually. Today, discussing the issues of educational policies and management from the AK Party period backward will give an idea in terms of understanding the place of religious issues in education policies in Türkiye.

**“Hafiz” training:** “Hafiz training” is used to cover the training for memorizing the Holy Quran from beginning to end. The hafiz education, which has been continuing throughout the Republic and has been carried out in the Quran courses under the Presidency of Religious Affairs since the 1970s, was interrupted by a regulation change in 1997. Generally, children who completed the fifth grade—that is, the first stage of basic education—attended the Quran courses and continued to secondary school after completing the hafiz education. With the change made in 1997, with the increase of compulsory basic education to eight years without interruption, hafiz education was postponed from the age of 11 to the age of 14. This situation was an important obstacle to hafiz education. With an amendment made in 2012, the AK Party government tried to remove the obstacle in the way of hafiz education by making the compulsory basic education 4 + 4 + 4 intermittent (Vahapoğlu, 2016). As of today, hafiz training is carried out in some imam hatip schools (formal 3-year middle or 4-year high school type with a predominance of religion courses) as a joint practice with the Directorate of Religious Affairs. However, children included in this program have to carry out the secondary school curriculum and hafiz education together. This increases the weekly course hours to 50–60 hours. This is a pedagogically unfavorable situation. However, a special weekly course schedule for secondary schools where hafiz education is provided has not yet been realized.

**Transition issue from vocational high schools to higher education:** Imam hatip high schools were seven-year schools consisting of middle and secondary high schools. With the amendment made to the law in 1997, the middle school parts of imam hatip high schools were closed. It became a school where only high school education was provided. However, this situation was made difficult by multiplying the diploma grades of the graduating students with a low ratio when they wanted to go to departments other than their own fields in transition to higher education. This low ratio decision was applied to all vocational and

technical education schools, as well as imam hatip high schools. This situation led to a dramatic decrease in the number of students who wanted to go to imam hatip high schools and vocational high schools. The AK Party abolished the different ratio application in 2011. The main reason for the implementation of the decision was to reduce the influence of imam hatip high schools, which are considered to be religious schools. However, the measure taken had a negative consequence for vocational high schools, as well as imam hatip high schools.

With the regulation allowing the opening of imam hatip secondary schools since 2012, there has been a rapid increase in the number of imam hatip high schools and students in recent years (Bahçekapılı, 2014). As of today, the rate of students attending imam hatip high schools has approached 15% of the total students of secondary education. However, this rapid increase brought with it strong criticism and debates about the quality of imam hatip high schools.

**Elective religion courses:** No religion lessons were included in educational institutions between 1928 and 1940. Between the years 1940 and 1970, the elective religion course was included, and after 1970, the course in ethics was added to the program. With the 1982 Constitution, the only religion course taught in educational institutions other than imam hatip schools in Türkiye is the compulsory Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge course. With an arrangement made in 2012, Basic Religious Knowledge, the Holy Quran and the Life of the Prophet Mohammed were included as elective courses in all secondary schools and high schools (Gündoğdu, 2017). Thus, religious education, which can only be given in the summer in Quran courses or mosques, apart from imam hatip schools, has also found a place in secular educational institutions.

**The headscarf issue:** Women wearing headscarves in educational institutions have come to the fore as an issue in Türkiye since the '60s. Only in imam hatip schools were female students allowed to cover their heads in the lessons of the Quran, other than that, wearing a headscarf was forbidden. As a result of the debates that lasted during the 1980s and 1990s, wearing headscarves in imam hatip high schools was no longer prohibited, but it was still prohibited in other educational institutions and higher education. With the regulations made in 1997, teachers or higher education students, most of whom were working with a headscarf, were investigated, and teachers and higher education students who insisted on wearing headscarves were dismissed from institutions. After the ban that lasted for about ten years, the headscarf was allowed for higher education students in 2007 and for public personnel in 2013 (Akyüz, 2016).

**Mixed education discussions:** Education in Türkiye is defined as a right and duty for all citizens, men and women, in the Constitution. Coeducation in which men and women are together is essential in the National Education Basic Law (Karataş, 2012; Kamer, 2013). However, since imam hatip was accepted as a male-only duty until the 1970s, female students were not accepted into imam hatip high schools. Some vocational high schools were also separated as girls' and boys' schools. With the regulations made in 1997, with the view that boys and girls schools were against the Basic Principles of National Education, it was imposed that all schools should be mixed. However, with the arrangement made in 2018, the opening of girls' or boys' schools also gained a legal basis. As of today, it is seen that the

schooling rates of male and female students in Türkiye are almost equal; there are even more female students in some school types.

**Quran courses:** Quran courses are non-formal education institutions affiliated with the Directorate of Religious Affairs attended by children or adults who want to receive religious education outside of formal education institutions. The age of attending Quran courses where basic religious subjects such as reading and memorizing the Quran, basic religious knowledge and the life of Prophet Muhammad were taught was determined as after basic education with the regulation made in 1997. This regulation was changed in 2011 and the age limit was lifted. As of 2015, courses between the ages of 4–6 have been opened under the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Genç, 2019). The Quran courses, which have been criticized in terms of the pedagogical competencies of the educators, the suitability of the educational environments to the age groups and the educational content, continue as boarding or daily education institutions where male and female students receive separate education (Zengin, 2019).

**Compulsory religious culture and moral course:** Religious education has been on the agenda since the first years of the Republic and has been an elective course since 1948. After the 1970s, an elective moral course was also added. With the 1982 Constitution, Religious Culture and Moral Course has become a compulsory course to be taught in primary and secondary education institutions. After the decision taken by the European Court of Human Rights that it is not appropriate to be compulsory because it has an Islamic religious content, students have been exempted from the course upon the request of their parents. The scope of the course, which is in the program from the fourth grade of primary school, is still being discussed (Okçu, 2009).

**Theology faculties:** In Türkiye, Islam's place in the university as a science and research area has gone through a similar process with other religious education fields. The inclusion of theology faculties in higher education has always remained on the agenda in terms of training professionals who will perform duties such as clergymen, religious educators and imam hatip. Following the closure of the theology department, which was opened in Darulfünun in the first years of the Republic, the first theology faculty was opened in 1949 and higher Islamic institutes were opened in 1959. High Islamic institutes were also transformed into faculties of theology in 1982 (Ayhan, 2000; Yorulmaz, 2016). As of today, more than 100,000 students continue their education in more than 100 theology faculties.

**Imam hatip schools:** With the establishment of the Secular Republic, all institutions providing religious education were closed for the purpose of removing religion from social and political life. The fact that the majority of the society is Muslim and religious brought the need for religious education and clergymen. On top of that, imam hatip schools, which were opened in 1928, were closed for a short time due to the lack of demand. Imam hatip schools, which were reopened in 1948, continued to exist as one of the most important issues in the education agenda in Türkiye (Ayhan, 2000). As of today, approximately 500,000 students continue their education in nearly 1,600 imam hatip high schools across Türkiye.

It can also be said that the increase in discussions based on Islam in education policies and management in Türkiye in recent years is related to the ideological identity of the ruling party and therefore the expectations of its base. The policy of raising a devout generation established by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is also a graduate of an imam hatip high school, has had a significant impact on the education policies in Türkiye in recent years (Eroler, 2019).

**Migration:** Some of the issues discussed in the field of education policies and education management in Türkiye have international, inter-religious and intercultural dimensions that also concern non-Muslims and other countries. The most important of these is the forced or voluntary migration from the surrounding and regional countries to Türkiye, mainly from Syria, in the last ten years. Today, there are nearly one million K-12-aged immigrant children in Türkiye, about 80% of them being educated in the Turkish education system. The number of foreign students, which has increased rapidly in recent years at the higher education level, has approached 200,000 (Özcan, 2018). Although the concepts of culturally responsive education and multiculturalism have started to be discussed more with respect to the education of immigrants from mostly Muslim countries and the management of educational institutions, the religious affiliation of immigrants has been a challenging factor for Turkish teachers and administrators to increase their competence toward the basic principles and values of Islam (Yılmaz, 2020). In-service trainings carried out in the context of inclusive education in cooperation with UNESCO require reconsideration through the Islamic-centered cultural unity of the region.

**Muslim and Arab schools:** Especially with the increase in the Arab and Muslim populations, many foreign Muslim investors have opened private schools in Türkiye in recent years. Since these schools are opened in Türkiye with the status of foreign schools or international schools in accordance with the current legislation, they can be considered looser structures in terms of national standards (Alowyd, 2021). This new interaction can create a new interaction area with Islamic references in Türkiye, after the tradition of western- and Christian-centered private schools that has been going on for nearly two centuries. However, since the number of such schools is small and they have a short history, the reflections of this interaction will be seen more clearly in the following years.

**Minority schools:** Türkiye accepted Armenians, Jews and Greeks as a minority with the Treaty of Lausanne signed with western countries after the War of Independence. In this context, they also have the right to open, run and manage their own educational institutions like other citizenship rights. As their citizens have decreased over the years, the number of schools and students have also decreased. However, the existence of schools belonging to minorities has led to the perception that all other schools in Türkiye belong to Muslims. Although this situation is not explicitly declared in the perspective of education and education administration in Türkiye, whether private or state, it reveals the emphasis on Islam (Uygun, 2003).

**Religious conservative private schools:** The closure of the middle school parts of imam hatip high schools after the 28 February period in Türkiye in 1997 and the implementation of low ratios in transition to higher education led religious

conservatives to open private schools. Although there are a few private school experiences opened by religious conservatives since the 1950s, their number has increased rapidly since 1998 (Güngen, 2013). Although they are modern and secular schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, they emphasize Islamic values in the school climate and aim to introduce the Islamic belief system and values to students. Although none of these schools define themselves as Islamic schools, they acknowledge that they prioritize the Islamic belief and value system, even though they do not include almost any formal course on specific Islamic subjects in their curricula. Unlike Madrasas, these schools are official, and their diplomas are officially valid. A few foundation higher education institutions have also been added to these K–12 level schools. Today, it is known that approximately 20% of private schools and a few of the foundation higher education institutions in Türkiye have these qualifications (Balcı, 2020). No research or report has been found that addresses the educational and leadership experiences in these schools in terms of Islamic education or leadership.

**Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMF):** *TMF, a semi-governmental and a non-profit public educational foundation, was established by the enacted law on 17 June 2016 by the Turkish Parliament is the sole entity authorized to provide educational services abroad with the Ministry of National Education. TMF serves as a gateway to international educational arena of Türkiye that will contribute to enhancing cultural and civilizational interaction and paving the way for achieving the common wellbeing. The vision of TMF is to become a pioneering educational institution nurturing pure-minded people who use knowledge for the peace and welfare of humanity by carrying out comprehensive educational activities throughout the world based on the common values of humanity and Anatolian tradition of wisdom (TMF, 2021, 6–9).*

Especially after the July 15 coup attempt occurred on 15 July 2016, Türkiye has been making an intense diplomatic effort in sharing national and local educational values based on Anatolian tradition of wisdom, imprinted with universal values, that is open to questioning and research and generates a critical mind (TMF, 2021, 3–9) in other countries. The Anatolian tradition of wisdom express a set of values that have been kneaded with Islamic beliefs and practices in the last 1000 years in Anatolia (Işık & Gülen, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that the TMF experience produces practices worth examining for Islamic-based leadership in education. TMF, carries out teacher and administrator training activities as well as curriculum development studies. Unlike the modern education system in Türkiye, the vision of the TMF that emphasizes the principles and values of the Anatolian tradition of wisdom, creates a strong experience for Türkiye in terms of Islamic education and educational leadership experiences (Yüksel, 2017).

**Traditional madrasas:** The only educational institutions in Türkiye that are based on Islamic principles and values are traditional madrasas. Traditional madrasas are not legal educational institutions. It is estimated that roughly 10,000–20,000 students between the ages of 10–30 attend these institutions, which serve under different names, such as student dormitories, Quran courses or adult education centers, mostly affiliated with a religious community or non-governmental organization. In traditional madrasas, there are many classical works on subjects such as education, teaching and management according to Islamic principles and values as

curriculum and textbooks. Traditional madrasas that continue today have inherited and maintained this understanding and works. However, since these structures are not legal, there is very little scientific research or analysis about them (Aşkın, 2018; Demir, 2018).

**2023 Vision document:** The 2023 Education Vision document, which was announced to the public on 23 October 2018 by the minister of national education of the first government established since the transition to the presidential system, became a policy text that comprehensively addresses the current problems of education and focuses on transforming and developing it with a holistic approach (MEB, 2018). In the introduction part of the document, it was emphasized that modern education treats human beings as a one-dimensional entity in terms of material aspects, whereas human beings are two-dimensional in terms of material and spiritual aspects, and that education should be planned and carried out as a process that will contribute to the development of human by taking this richness and depth into consideration. This emphasis shows that the education system in Türkiye prioritizes treating people with a spiritual side in contrast to the positivist, materialist worldview, even though a direct religious reference is not given (Köksal, 2019).

As a result, it is possible to say that although religion and Islam do not directly determine the educational policies and administration in Türkiye, where the issue of evolution and the headscarf issue has been on the agenda from time to time, the deep traces of Islam in the society and power cause religious issues to be constantly included in the educational agenda. However, on the other hand, it is claimed that deism has spread among young people, interest in religion has decreased and even an interrogative approach has become widespread. It can be thought that this situation is the reflection of the transformation process of an urbanized and modernized society.

## **Religious perspectives in educational research and educational leadership**

It is commonly asserted that in Türkiye the production of knowledge in education in general and in educational administration in particular has an imported identity (Turan & Şişman, 2013; Oplatka & Arar, 2016; Yılmaz, 2018). When compared to the knowledge produced in the pedagogy at the beginning of the Republic, the imported identity of the knowledge in the fields of educational sciences produced since the 1970s is more evident. It is claimed that the experiences, concepts and theories of the Anglo-Saxon countries are directly transferred to Türkiye. With this characteristic, it can be said that the knowledge produced in Türkiye in the fields of pedagogy and educational sciences in particular, in the field of educational administration, does not have a direct relation and connection with the values, priorities and problems of the society with a wider understanding imported identity (Turan & Şişman, 2013).

However, it is seen that research, publications and approaches that look at pedagogy from the sources of the religion of Islam have emerged in the religious education departments opened in the faculties of theology since the 1980s

(Yorulmaz, 2016). Whether these studies are dealt with from the perspective of local culture, which is largely molded with the principles and values of the Islamic religion, is a matter worth researching. Because it is claimed that the research carried out in theology faculties is mostly based on the Quran and Hadith and based on the experiences and conceptualizations in “Asr-ı Saadet” (Age of bliss in which the Prophet Muhammad lived). It can be said that there is a similar situation in the studies in the field of educational administration.

There are other kinds of studies that can be evaluated within the scope of ethnopedagogy. In such studies, pedagogy and management principles and approaches are revealed with reference to folkloric products. These studies, which are sometimes conceptualized with names such as “Anatolian pedagogy”, are based on folk tales, idioms, sayings, lullabies and other elements that have been mixed with the principles and values of the Islamic religion (Abdurahmanova, 2016; Çınar, 2018).

There are also some interdisciplinary studies that can be claimed to refer to Islamic principles and values. In this context, there are studies based on classical literary texts, periods, institutions and individuals. Studies titled “teaching at Yunus Emre”, “values at Atabetül Hakayık”, “management at Divani LugatitTürk”, “management at Kutadgu Bilig”, “teaching and learning in Enderun” (Emiroğlu, 2012; Memiş, 2013; Emer, 2014; Aslan, 2016; Ersoy, 2016; Khouj, 2011; Mustafayeva, 2016; Kaya, 2017; Efe, 2018). Although they are not directly Islamic-referenced studies, they can be considered with Islamic references because they are based on Islam in terms of their sources.

However, those three types of studies listed here have not been able to have a strong influence on mainstream educational sciences research in Turkish academia. These researches were claimed as fantastic curiosities and could not create an important discussion and agenda.

Türkiye has nearly 200 years of experience in teacher training. Türkiye has more than 50 years of institutional and academic experience in the field of training educational and school administrators as well. However, it is not possible to say that any religious reference or principle is included in the content and programs prepared for training teachers and school administrators both in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and in the Republic period. However, it is known that original works related to modern pedagogy were prepared especially during the Tanzimat period (Akyüz, 2006). Although there are no direct school management training programs (Beycioglu et al., 2019), there is no Islamic or religious reference in graduate programs of educational administration (Karataş, 2014).

### **Islamic references and effects in the practice of teaching and educational management in Türkiye**

Since Türkiye is a secular state of law, it is out of the question that Islamic principles and rules are clearly determinant in the formation of the state order and its sub-unit, the education system. However, the sociocultural environment created by Islam has some reflections inherent in the education system and educational processes. The educational understanding of Türkiye’s political, demographic and sociocultural context has reflections on the structuring of education and the attitudes

and behaviors of educators. These reflections will be explained under the headings of *educational culture*, *pedagogical approach*, *administrative styles* and *organizational behaviors*.

***Educational culture:*** Education is a social institution, and the phenomenon of education carries the cultural effects of the society (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). This fact is valid for the Turkish education system too. Education, science, learning, knowing is a phenomenon that Islam attaches importance to. Many verses such as, “Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Are those who know equal with those who know not?” (Quran, Zümer, 9), Prophet Muhammad’s Hadiths on knowing, learning, raising children (Sağlam, 2002; Arslan, 2019), the importance attached to education and science throughout the history of Islam, build the mental background of the Muslim community in Türkiye. This mental background enables education to be perceived as valuable and important in the eyes of society, even though it is secular and non-religious. The society sees roles and responsibilities such as conducting an educational institution, supporting students, respecting the teacher and contributing to the learning–teacher process, mostly as a religious duty or worship.

Verily, while being a student or an element of the education process is seen as the closest occupation to worship compared to other jobs by a significant segment of the society, teaching is considered valuable as a prophet’s profession and schools as a place of worship. Although the debates about the weakening of these traditional cultural values, which are closely related to religious references, have appeared in recent years, the spiritual value of education continues at a significant level. In many studies conducted in recent years where the phenomenon of social justice has been discussed extensively, it is stated that the emphasis of religions on social justice is effective on the motivation of teachers and school administrators (Arar, 2015; Arar et al., 2016).

On the other hand, in Türkiye, the state puts forward religious references and recommendations in order to encourage education, based on the people’s commitment to and trust in the religion of Islam. The state encourages the contemporary education process with religious references, commonly in mosques, through methods that reach the public directly, such as sermons and *khutbas* (Doğan, 1998). As a result of this, building schools and dormitories, providing scholarships to students, meeting the needs of students and schools, contributing to educational environments such as libraries in Türkiye, as a reflection of the value attributed to education by the Islamic religion, still continue as sociocultural elements inherent in daily life.

***Pedagogical approach:*** Islamic principles and values owned by the people in Türkiye are also reflected in pedagogical processes and approaches. The clearest example of this reflection is seen in teacher–student relationships. The belief that teaching is a sacred duty in relation to traditional religious references also shapes students’ behavior and attitudes toward teachers (Halstead, 2004; Ersoy, 2016). This mental background constitutes an important source of respect for teachers. The teacher is the source of information. In this case, it is also a source of resistance to the acceptance and implementation of many new skills that are accepted as 21st-century skills such as questioning, discussing, criticizing what the teacher says. In fact, although this situation has begun to lose its validity for the new generations, it is still not fully internalized in the eyes of parents, teachers and society in the middle age



group. Indeed, the fact that the constructivist approach, which has been implemented at the K–12 level in Türkiye since 2004, is learner-centered, has been a bit strange in society in general, especially among elderly teachers. It is acknowledged that the behavioral approach is a more appropriate choice in transferring a daily life shaped by religious references to the new generations, with an understanding of teacher and subject-centered education. Since the religion of Islam accepts the Holy Book as a source, the understanding of the trustworthiness of the scriptures constitutes the source of respect and care toward the textbooks. The value religion attaches to the book lies behind the reaction against the questioning of the information in the books and the orientation of the educational processes to many different sources outside of the book, with the dissemination and availability of information.

**Administrative styles:** There are aspects of the values and principles of Islam reflected in the management of the education system and institutions. In Türkiye, which has a classical bureaucratic organization and administrative understanding with the nation-state process, the close relationship established between patriotism and religious beliefs also affects the institutional structure and management approach. Facts such as the power attributed to the managers, the relationship between the manager and the managed, the meaning and value attributed to the professional task, the decision-making authority of the manager and accountability show that there are perceptions that can be associated with religious references. Respecting the manager, obeying the management's decisions, not questioning the managers about their decisions and actions can be accepted as a reflection of the "wisdom" understanding and the principle of "obedience to ulul 'amri" (Rüstemiyan, 2012). Although the majority of school administrators in many western countries are women, the low number of female school administrators in Türkiye can be considered as the reflection of sociocultural codes molded with religious principles and values on administrative processes (Aslan et al., 2015).

Although it seems to be weakened especially in young people of today, it can be said that these basic references are effective in case of respect and subordination to the power, the state, even the administrations that came with the coup and of course the administrators of educational institutions in Türkiye. By the way, one of the main factors underlying the inability of Anglo-Saxon management and business understandings to be fully valid and effective in Türkiye is these religious references that form the perspective of management and managers.

**Organizational behaviors:** Whether it is the public, private sector or non-governmental organization, the dominant influence of the values and principles of Islam can be mentioned in institutional structures and organizational behavior codes. These elements can be seen in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of school administrators and teachers toward their jobs, colleagues, students and parents (Karataş, 2019). The definition of school administrators as "father", teachers as "mother", school as "home" and students as "son/daughter" is proof that the school is perceived in terms of family values (Karataş & Parpucu, 2013). Parents entrusting their children to schools and teachers can be regarded as a reflection of this perception in the society. The fact that the relationships among teachers, the culture of working together and the sharing of tasks are not fully adopted can be associated with teachers seeing themselves as individual leaders, heroes or

protectors like a prophet, father or mother. The same situation can also manifest itself in inter-institutional relations. Collaboration and solidarity among schools could not create a strong enough culture, which can be associated with the introvertedness of the community within the school. It is one of the main sources of motivation for the relationship established by school administrators and teachers between their professional duties and beliefs (Karataş, 2020b).

Generally saying, the reflections of Hofstede's (2011) cultural elements in the Turkish education system can be explained by the maturing structure of the society and culture with the values and principles of Islam. According to Hofstede's theory, Türkiye has a structure with a high-power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity, short-term orientation and restraint.

## **Conclusions**

Türkiye, as a modern, secular nation-state, has a political regime that does not consider religious references as a determining factor at the institutional and legal levels. However, the effective position of religion in life and its determination of national and international relations cause religion to remain on the agenda in the field of education.

It is seen that issues with religious topics in current education policies and administration in Türkiye are on the agenda as important issues. Issues such as training hafız, imam hatip schools, the hijab issue, elective and compulsory religion courses and religious education at higher education constitute an important part of Türkiye's education agenda.

In Türkiye, research and academic studies in the field of education are quite weak, even almost out of context, when compared to the relationship of the society with religion and the political preferences of the ruling party in terms of its relations with Islam. Although there is religious, national, pedagogical and administrative research, it is difficult to say that it has a meaningful effect on mainstream studies.

It can be claimed that the phenomenon of education in Türkiye is a strong reflection of the cultural identity molded with Islam within the daily practices of education between the contrast of density of political agendas formed by religion-centered issues in education and the disconnected nature of research in the field of education and educational administration. It is also strongly claimed that the principles and values of Islam are inherent in educational processes in sociocultural, pedagogical, administrative and institutional terms. This reflection creates the identity that separates the education phenomenon in Türkiye from the west or the east, as well as a situation that explains the disconnection of imported scientific studies from the field.

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# 8 Schooling system and administration practices of religious education

The case of Imam-Hatip school of Türkiye

*Emre Er, Fatih Şahin and İsmail Dođru*

## Introduction

Imam-Hatip schools are the most common public education institutions in Türkiye that provide Islamic religious education. These schools are also the ones on which there is widespread discussion because of it being a school giving religious education and some saying in a secular country there is no need for such a school. While some researchers see these schools as an obstacle to secularism (Çakmak, 2009), some researchers claim that these schools respond to social needs or expectations. Imam-Hatip schools have been very crucial and controversial since the establishment date of the secular and modern Republic of Türkiye as a religious-based schooling type. Moral education in Türkiye witnessed a dramatic transformation after the proclamation of the Republic in the early part of the 20th century (Aslanargun et al., 2014). After the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye, the first Imam-Hatip school was established in 1924. Students primarily came from a lower socio-economic status and a higher sensitivity to Islamic issues for years (Junaedi, 2016).

The Imam-Hatip schools are public vocational secondary institutions that have Islamic-based instruction. Therefore, graduate students can occupy the Imam or muezzin positions in mosques and other religious institutions around the country. But also there are opportunities for graduates to choose different career options. These schools have become especially popular among conservative and religious families throughout the country (Pak, 2004). There is resistance to these schools among secular circles because they are seen as institutions where students are raised primarily as religious but secondary as citizens (Akpınar, 2007).

There are some different perspectives on the ontological basis of the Imam-Hatip schools. Some scholars like Aşlamacı and Kaymakcan (2017) describe the Imam-Hatip school as a continuation of the Madrasa tradition under state supervision and support. On the other hand, the Imam-Hatip can also be seen as part of a governmental strategy to hold onto a measurable civil society among the Republic of Türkiye (Subaşı, 2004). These two different perspectives were commonly discussed for years, but limited studies examine these schools' instruction or administration practices.

This chapter is based on the literature review and focuses on Imam-Hatip schools, which are the first schools that come to mind when religious education is

mentioned in the republican period in Türkiye. This conceptual chapter represents scholarly efforts to discuss issues on the school organisation system and administration of Imam-Hatip schools in Türkiye. Therefore, first, we focus on the historical development of the religious school in modern Türkiye. Then we try to examine these schools' organisational and administrative characteristics in a highly centralised educational system in Türkiye. Finally, we move to discuss the importance of this Islamic-based educational model and its possible effects on Islamic societies.

## **The methodology**

The purpose of this inquiry is to analyse the historical development, leadership practice and philosophical assumptions of Imam-Hatip schools. The study is a mixture of analyses of literature and historical data on social and political developments in Türkiye. Examining the history, current leadership practice and philosophical assumptions of Imam-Hatip schools allowed us to better understand how Imam-Hatip schools conceptualise and operationalise the construct of Islamic education.

## **Religious education in early times of modern Türkiye**

In many historical and educational studies, the terms modernity, secularism, identity and religion are so frequently linked that one phrase nearly always conjures the others. This kind of conceptualisation makes the obvious but problematic question: how and why do these constructs affect the nature of education and instructional practices? As a challenging factor, religious education constituted the most vital ideological debate in Islamic countries. There are 47 countries in the world that have a Muslim population in the majority. And nearly all Islamic communities have some basic problems, regardless of their diverse contextual backgrounds.

The religious education phenomenon is particularly significant in Türkiye because of its own contextual uniqueness. National education has been a crucial element in transforming the whole nation since the foundation of the modern Republic of Türkiye in 1923. For the old Empire to become a modern state, it needed to bring Islam into the equation (Schneier, 2016). The exciting experience of modern Türkiye in religion is borrowing a secularised model of modernisation and protecting the values of Islam, which has been validated through 1,400 years of history (Salt, 1995). Also, Kemalist (the political, economic and social principles advocated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (founder of modern Türkiye) and designed to create a modern republican secular Turkish state out of a portion of the Ottoman Empire) reforms were extensive, including everything from education to religion to clothing regulations and language (Schneier, 2016). Yet, Türkiye has still its own modernisation beyond the debates between radical secularism and democratic interpretation Islamism. Therefore, the first conflict area in Imam-Hatip schools occurs between secularism and religion. Nationalism and religion as the second conflict area come along with the first and usually have some overlapping situations.



Nationalism and secularism are the two main pillars of education in modern Türkiye. In 1994, Minister of National Education Nevzat Ayaz wrote (Altınay, 2004),

In the organizational structure of our state, there are only two ministries that have the term “national” in their titles: Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of National Education. The Ministry of National Defense has assumed the duty to protect our Republic and to defend our country from outside forces. And the Ministry of National Education has assumed the duty to raise citizens who are committed to Atatürk’s principles and revolutions, and to Atatürk nationalism as it is defined in the constitution; who embrace, protect, and develop the national, moral, spiritual, historical, and cultural values of the Turkish nation; who love their family, country, and nation with a constant effort to strengthen them; who know their duties and responsibilities towards the Turkish Republic which is a democratic, secular, and social state based on human rights and the basic principles defined in the Constitution; and who have turned these duties and responsibilities into a behavior.

As a result of establishing a state which has very strong nationalist codes, the boundaries between education and defence are not firm. In other words, these two constructs linked together and gave the power to create “new” citizens. The interaction between nationalism and religion can be stated as the second conflict dimension around the Imam-Hatip schools. The creation of a new citizen and educational reforms are at the centre of the social, political and economic changes experienced during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In this context, the debate between religion, state and official ideology, which started before the establishment of the Republic, maintains its currency even today. For this reason, Turkish scholars created a very rich discussion in the fields of modernisation and education, comparative education, anthropology, sociology and political science. “Muslim Democracy”, “Islamic political identity”, “Islam and secularism”, “Postsecular society”, “Alien Citizens”, “Islamic school in modern Türkiye” are some of the key concepts that have been analysed for years. While the human typology identified with the Ottoman and its educational institutions—Madrassa—focused on the hereafter and being a good Muslim, the fiction of the school and the expectations from the school have also changed due to the need of modern schools for talented and productive individuals. This tension between boundaries created both opportunities and hard conflict areas. And Imam-Hatip schools are at the centre of this very complicated political dispute.

The roots of the problem of religious education and particularly its effect on Imam-Hatip schools can be searched from the *Tanzimat* reforms which had clearly changed the life of the Empire in all areas. This reform process created an entire generation of Muslim intellectuals, educators, bureaucrats and career military leaders who were comfortable with both European and Islamic nationalist ideals (Schneier, 2016). This social transformation caused the ulama to lose power with their continued control over the social institutions. The ulama functioned as

officials, acting as agents of the state, especially in the field of education (Azak, 2010). As a result, the changing role of this class affected social and daily life more than any other reform act.

With a historical perspective, religious education from the Tanzimat to the present can be handled in three periods (Öcal, 2019):

1. Madrasa as traditional, formal educational institutions of the state.
2. Exclusion of religious courses from school programmes in the Republic period and the opening and re-closing of Imam and Hatip schools and faculties of theology under the Law of Unification (Tevhid-i Tedrisat, 1924).
3. The democratic life after 1946, the school programmes of Imam and Hatip schools introduced the Religion (and Culture) Moral Knowledge Course again in high schools and theology faculties in our education system to receive.

### **Foundation of Imam-Hatip schools**

It is well-known that religious education started with “Madrasa”, a form of school where Islamic jurisprudence (fıkıh) was practiced among Turks. Near a Madrasa, a mosque was always built, and Turks, especially the Ottomans, built a Madrasa in a newly conquered place. Most of the emperors of the Ottoman Empire came from these Madrasas, and the foundation of the Madrasa system was founded by Seljuk Empire before the Ottomans. The Madrasa culture was continued and cherished during the Ottoman period and a total of 350 Madrasa were built by Ottoman Emperors. This number alone shows how important these schools were for the Empire, and the system was improved just as the Empire was expanding. With the start of the decline of the Empire, the Madrasa system was also beginning to decline, with standards for teachers falling and thus the failure of students (Ihsanoglu & Al-Hassani, 2004).

With the forming of the New Republic in Türkiye, the traditions and the model for education that had been in use for nearly 1,300 years started to shake and were ready to fall. The new state saw itself as secular, and the education system was not thought to be in line with this idea (Çakmak, 2009). With a new nation came a new education system. With a law that was passed on 3 March 1924, all forms of school, whether religious or not, were brought under one body of control, Ministry of National Education, and with this law, education in the country was unified. All the curricula and materials were to come from this body of governance, and all the schools were to teach what comes from the central regulating body. Different schools serving different people in the country were abolished, and along with these schools, the Madrasa system was terminated. A total of 479 Madrasa schools were closed, and in order to meet the demands of religious education, 29 education centres were formed as Imam-Hatip schools (Buyruk, 2020).

The education period that was assigned to these freshly formed schools was four years, and anyone who graduated started working for the “Presidency of Religious Affairs”, a new regulating body for Islam under the roof of the New Republic. This new form of religious education started in 1924, but its numbers rapidly diminished, and Imam-Hatip education ended in 1930 due to the problem of

student shortage because there were only two schools left and not enough students (Buyruk, 2020). Between the years 1924 and 1926, the number of students at Imam-Hatip schools dropped from 1,822 to 1,009 in just two years (Çakmak, 2009).

Imam-Hatip schools were not opened again until 1951, and during this period religious demands, such as the need for Imam, were met by Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı via special courses. With the regime shift in Türkiye from a leftists to a more conservative party, religious education was on the agenda again. This time the cry for this was more than ever in the young Republic. The governing party, Democrat Party, made the claim for the need of religious education the centre of its discourse (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017). The year 1951 marked the re-opening of Imam-Hatip schools, and the same year, seven schools were opened in different cities. The total number of students started at 867 at 7 schools, and in just ten years, the number reached 4,545 students at a total of 19 schools throughout the country. In three decades, the total number of schools reached 249, and between 1983 and 1997, the number rapidly grew, and there were 604 Imam-Hatip schools in total (Pak, 2004). As of 2016, in total, there were more than 50,000 students at Imam-Hatip schools, and this number alone shows the investment that these schools obtained from the government after the 1950s. Another reason for this surge in the number of students enrolled at Imam-Hatips is that they started to accept female students as well, which was something that was not acceptable before (Dag, 2018).

When we look at current Imam-Hatip schools, one can easily perceive two opposing viewpoints. One is that they are necessary bodies of education that aim to teach Islamic doctrine, and thus they serve a purpose for all society. On the other hand, there are those who claim these schools foster Islamic radicalism and therefore serve a purpose that is not in line with the policies of the country and the government. According to Rahman (1984), the most essential thing regarding education is the information that is out there, and he says it is the role of education to give values such as religion and culture. He also argues the best way to do this is through Imam-Hatip schools, where Islamic doctrine and scientific knowledge are given.

To summarise, Imam-Hatip schools are public schools established by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye. These state schools, which are one of the controversial institutions of the Turkish education system, have secondary and high school departments. After establishing the Republic of Türkiye, the first Imam-Hatip school of the Republic, which the Turkish Grand National Assembly accepted in March, was established. It was named the “Imam and Orator School” following the Law on Unification of Education on 3 March 1924. In the first years, the number of these schools reached 34. Known as “Imam-Hatip schools”, it became widespread in 1951 with the intense demand of the public, and their number increased rapidly. Imam-Hatip schools, which were designed as three-year secondary school departments and four-year high school departments in 1973, were named “Imam-Hatip high schools” with the National Education Basic Law (Law No. 1739). In 1985, Anatolian Imam-Hatip schools were established, and the students were taken according to the exam scores they had. The Anatolian Imam-Hatip schools emphasise the acquisition of additional foreign language (English and German) skills with Arabic. After that year, schools

(Anatolian Imam-Hatip high schools and Imam-Hatip high schools) that implement open student acceptance were included in the education system. In 2014, a new system was implemented in the transition process from secondary schools to high schools and, as in other school types, all Imam-Hatip schools were transformed into Anatolian Imam-Hatip high schools, which accept students with an exam. In Türkiye, Imam-Hatip high schools, which attract the attention of the public and are admired by the people, are given simultaneously in modern educational environments, as well as scientific and cultural lessons, and lessons related to Islamic disciplines. In this sense, Imam-Hatip high schools attract many countries of the world, and the Imam-Hatip model alone has become a current issue.

In conclusion, Imam-Hatip schools are seen by some as the successor of the Madrasa system and thus criticised on the grounds that they are not something that the New Republic needs, and this creates polarisation among the people by making them choose a side, either secular or religious. Yet, others regard Imam Hatip schools as the right choice because they argue religious education is something that must be at the hands of professionals and taught at schools that give education with the sole purpose of religious education, not seen as a subject taught only two hours a week. They also back their decision regarding Imam-Hatip schools by sending their children to Imam-Hatips to become professionals in teaching religious matters.

### **Between ideology and religion: The role of Imam-Hatip on the new citizens of postmodern Türkiye**

Debates on religious education in modern Türkiye are primarily driven by the secularist intellectuals. Therefore, most of the papers follow the rules of a teleological analytical framework. Such interpretations have traditionally understood religion as a barrier to the modernisation of a state. Nevertheless, as supporters of Islamism and its modern variations, the opposites advocate religious education as a social force to the transmission projection of government and modernisation. In this regard, Imam-Hatip schools can be handled as an agreement area between modern and traditional values.

The function of Nizamiye Madrasa in the Seljuk period was very similar with Imam-Hatip schools. Imam-Hatips are the schools that best represent the understanding of Ahlas-Sunnah, which can be described as the most common interpretation of Islamic doctrine. These schools played a role that can be called a “Pole star”, which holds the public on common ground. Imam-Hatip high schools have kept the main line away from fundamentalism or understatement. A field study reported that school principals called Imam-Hatip schools a barrier to some extremist interpretations of Islam (Sevinç, 2018). Furthermore, they also supposed that Imam-Hatip schools are an important model to hinder members of extremist movements, such as Hasan Sabbah who is a famous terrorist in history.

As Pak (2002) clearly explained, an ordinary Imam-Hatip school student has to deal with a complicated environment in which fundamental cultural value necessitates the presence of opposing worldviews. In other words, when the Imam-Hatip schools’ socialisation process transmits a dual cultural orientation of secularism and Islamism, a persistent negotiation process is required.

## **Organisational structure and leadership practices in Imam-Hatip schools**

### ***Organisational structure***

Before the Republic of Türkiye, Madrasas were the leading institutions providing religious education, and these institutions were affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Foundations (Şer'îye ve Evkaf Vekâleti) under the Ottoman Empire administration (Güçlüoğlu, 1983). However, Madrasas became a matter of debate, especially in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, with claims that they did not play their role correctly (Okutan, 1983). In the early periods of the Republic, these institutions were closed. Although the secularisation process has been carried out enormously in the new period, the role of Islam as an influential force in Türkiye has not been wholly denied (Nor & Ibrahim, 2020). In the republican period, the Imam-Hatip schools affiliated with the Ministry of Education were opened for a short time. There was a need for imams (prayer leaders) who pray in mosques and hatips (preachers) who preach during Friday prayers and religious holidays. These schools were vocational schools that gave spiritual education courses at the primary school level (Okutan, 1983).

With the closure of the Imam-Hatip schools, religious education and training were not carried out in public schools from the early 1930s to the 1950s. During this period, religious citizens met their children's religious education needs with informal institutions that provided education irregularly and had no legal basis. Okutan (1983) stated that this state's attitude was met with disappointment by many religious citizens who adopted Atatürk's revolutions. In the face of increasing reactions, the Imam-Hatip courses were opened in 1948, which provided ten months of training. The activities of these courses were organised and controlled by the General Directorate of Primary Education, a unit of the Ministry of National Education. In the early 1950s, these courses were converted back to the Imam-Hatip schools, as in the early periods of the Republic, and their management was connected to the Directorate of Private Schools. Later, these schools were related to the General Directorate of Secondary Education. As a result of the rapid increase in the number of Imam-Hatip schools, the General Directorate of Religious Education was established in 1964. The Imam-Hatip schools were connected to this unit (Okutan, 1983).

Despite the military coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980, these schools continued to grow due to the demands of parents who wanted their children to receive religious education in these schools, where general curriculum courses were also taught. However, the development of the Imam-Hatip schools was affected by the military intervention in 1997 and the introduction of the new schooling system. With the transition to eight years of compulsory education, the Imam-Hatip schools providing secondary school education were closed. With the restructuring of the schooling system in 2012 (commonly known as 4 + 4 + 4), these schools were opened again at the secondary school level (Nor & Ibrahim, 2020).

Currently, Imam-Hatip schools carry out their activities at the secondary and high school levels under the General Directorate of Religious Education, a basic

unit of the Ministry of National Education. The Ministry of Education classifies the Imam-Hatip high schools as the Anadolu (Anatolian) Imam-Hatip high schools, emphasising the acquisition of foreign language skills, and the Imam-Hatip high schools (Pak, 2004). In these schools, which are included in general education, issues such as the establishment of education policies and their implementation, the selection and appointment of administrators and teachers are carried out centrally as in other schools (Öğretimi Genel Müdürlü, 2019). All kinds of educational activities and processes in these schools are inspected and controlled by the Ministry of National Education. The state provides the state's financing from the budget allocated for education (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017).

The school administrators carry out administrative activities in the Imam-Hatip schools. According to the Ministry of National Education legislation on assignment, these schools are assigned a school principal or a deputy school principal. The primary profession of all administrators appointed both in these schools and in all other public schools is teaching. School administrators, whose terms of office expire, may apply to become administrators again or return to the teaching profession. For those who will be appointed as the principal of the Imam-Hatip high schools, there is a particular condition of being a teacher of the Imam-Hatip high schools and giving religious courses. An additional score is given to those among the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers who request to be appointed as principals in Imam-Hatip secondary schools. At least one of the vice principals of the Imam-Hatip secondary schools is selected among the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye, 2021).

### ***Leadership practices***

Although it is seen that the studies on Imam-Hatip schools in Türkiye do not focus on leadership practices, it can be claimed that there are essential leadership practices in these schools. Leadership themes such as ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, moral leadership and servant leadership can be widely discussed when it comes to religious schools. Considering the Islamic context, although examples of immoral leadership have emerged on a global scale, it can be claimed that moral values such as good counsel (nasiha) and sincere conduct (ikhlas), consultation (shura), dissent (ikhtilaf), public interest (maslaha), encouraging right and discouraging wrong (amr bi'l ma'ruf wa al nahi an al munkar), accountability (hisba) and reflection (tafakkur) are often emphasised in leadership in the teachings of the Quran and Hadiths (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), and this teaching could be claimed to be disseminated in the Imam-Hatip schools that provide religious education.

It is possible to say that the administrators of the Imam-Hatip schools are also important people who lead the school. Because in schools that provide religious education, principals are seen as symbolic and cultural leaders who keep the values of that school alive, protect the religious heritage and determine the quality and future of religious education (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009). In a study dealing with leadership in the Imam-Hatip schools in Türkiye, it was stated that there is a high level of transformational leadership in these schools (Kalkan, 2020). In other words, teachers who contributed to this study have a perception that administrators

in their schools provide individual support for them, create intellectual stimulation and inspire them with their motivation. Although it is stated that leadership has an essential effect on the culture and value systems and achievements of these schools, another study conducted on this subject in Türkiye reveals different results. In this study, in which the interview technique was used, school administrators stated that they performed more transactional leadership. In this study, some school administrators said they could not stand up to bureaucratic affairs and could not fulfil their leadership roles properly (Sevinç, 2018).

The administrators in the Imam-Hatip schools face different problems while managing their schools. Considering the administration of the Imam-Hatip schools on a macro level, the rapid increase in the number of these schools has brought about quality-related problems. In the early times when there was a quantitative increase, administrators, including teachers who did not know the requirements of religious education and had no religious formation, were appointed to these schools. Still, considering the problems experienced in the administration of these schools, the criteria for selecting administrators for the Imam-Hatip schools were changed (Baltacı, 2019).

### **The reason for preferring Imam-Hatip schools**

Many people in Türkiye see these schools as unique places where their children can take general curriculum courses and religious and moral courses. In addition, these schools are considered places that produce religious services. Therefore, many families in Türkiye support these schools by sending their children to such schools (Öcal, 2007). These schools have become particularly popular with conservative and religious families across the country. Pak (2004) stated that parents' preferences determine sending their children to the Imam-Hatip schools. Mainly, families' desire to raise Muslim children devoted to their religion is effective in this preference.

According to a study conducted on the reasons for choosing the Imam-Hatip schools, the most influential factor among the guiding reasons for these schools was "family, personal preference and high school preference score". It has been determined that the most effective motivation for choosing the Imam-Hatip high schools is the "religious education" factor. However, it has also been determined that the quality of education is more effective in selecting these schools by students studying at the Project Imam-Hatip high schools (Özdemir & Karateke, 2018).

Although the Imam-Hatip schools aim to train imams or preachers, it is difficult to claim that all students studying in these schools have the same purpose. Since the number of Imam-Hatip school graduates far exceeds the number of civil servants required to work in mosques and other religious sectors, today, many Imam-Hatip graduates, both male and female, prefer to go to universities and find jobs there. They try to continue their business in many non-religious sectors, including political parties, state institutions, media and financial institutions (Pak, 2004).

Public institutions in Türkiye are highly organised centrally. Therefore, at first glance, similar features are striking in all public schools. Consequently, it is

impossible to distinguish the Imam-Hatip schools from other schools in terms of the school building, the buildings around them, the school's garden, the desks in the school and the equipment used in the school. When we look at the school administrators and teachers, there is not much difference. However, it stands out as a distinct difference that students, especially female students, usually wear headscarves. In addition, a distinct difference can be observed in the way teachers or students greet each other in these schools. The practice of greeting can be done in these schools through the Islamic tradition. Therefore, it is possible to claim that these schools have a unique structure in terms of culture and other organisational dynamics, not human resources or physical systems. Pak (2004, p. 330) similarly used these expressions for an Imam-Hatip school:

At first glance, the Mamak Imam-Hatip School looks no different than any regular secondary school found in the suburbs. The cream-coloured, four-story building that accommodated 3,061 students and 103 teachers occupied a relatively spacious area compared to other houses, apartments, and shops that were lined up in close proximity. Only at the end of the day, when students pour out of the school gates, does a stranger to the area realise that this is an Imam-Hatip school. Always visibly striking were the sights of boys in their indigo blazers and girls wearing light pink headscarves to cover their heads scurrying onto the train station or the bus stop.

### **Perspectives of the administrators working in the Imam-Hatip schools on religious education**

Studies show that administrators working in the Imam-Hatip schools have different perspectives on religious education. In one of these studies, a school administrator stated that religious education was given in a more authoritarian manner in the past. Still, more permanent learning about religious education was obtained. Education is provided with similar content today, but the same understanding cannot be achieved due to the changing social structure. According to this school administrator, today's students use technology extensively, and their interests are quite different. In religious education, education should be carried out by taking their wishes and tendencies into consideration. He stated that especially today's students are pretty indifferent to purely theoretical knowledge and should be allowed to practice. In the same study, another school administrator claimed that the school has an essential function in religious education, but this need that has not been met in the family is reflected in the school as a lack of interest and motivation that the family is the main force that determines the perspective of religious education in today's students. Again in the same study, another school administrator expressed an opposing view and stated that he opposed religious education given at an early age. According to this school administrator, religious education is not just about teaching the letters of the Quran, and a false doctrine for religious education can drag the individual into moral dilemmas. Therefore, religious education should be given by professionals in professional settings. The most suitable place for this is educational institutions (Sevinç, 2018).



## **The Imam-Hatip schools and the global context**

Imam-Hatip schools, where religious education is given, also have goals for opening up to the world. There is the fact that Islam is a universal religion and people belonging to this religion in many countries create a motivation to bring these schools together with the world. Behind the desire to carry the influence of the Imam-Hatip schools beyond national borders in Türkiye, it is to train Turkish and Muslim citizens living in many countries of the world and give them the religious education they need and the human resource that can provide this education. The first initiative in this regard took place when the German-language-intensive Anatolian Imam-Hatip school was established in Beykoz, Istanbul, in 1985 to meet the need for religious education and religious officials of the Turks living in Germany (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017).

While the importance of education in different languages in Imam-Hatip schools is emphasised, schools have also been opened under International Imam-Hatip to impact a global scale significantly. Firstly, three ‘International Anatolian Imam-Hatip high schools’ were opened in Kayseri in 2006, in Istanbul in 2011, and in Konya in 2012. In the 2014–2015 academic year, 1,110 students from 76 countries, who are expected to have above-average success in their own countries and do not exceed the age limit of 17, received education in these schools. Secondly, Türkiye, through the Turkish Religious Foundation and the Ministry of National Education, has opened schools of the Imam-Hatip school type in many countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Belgium, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, responding to the support and cooperation demands of the Turks or Muslim people in these countries (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017).

The General Directorate of Religious Education explains the purpose of these schools in a booklet prepared as follows: International Anatolian Imam-Hatip high schools aim to contribute to the training of religious officials and religious education personnel in Muslim countries and other countries where Muslims live, to support students who want to receive religious education before higher education, and to develop cooperation in education and culture. Twelve schools with international status are project schools, and students from more than 70 countries study in these schools (General Directorate of Religious Education, 2019).

## **Discussion**

There is a constant tension between freedom of religion and secularism in Türkiye. Those who define themselves as religious state that laicism practices have an obstructive function on religious beliefs and practices, while those who define themselves as “secular” describe the visibility of religious beliefs and practices in social life, politics or public opinion as an anti-secular situation (Başdemir, 2011). One of the areas where discussions on religion and secularism are intense is education. Although the current Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye includes the statement “Everyone has the freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction”, the limits of this have been determined with the statement “Religious and moral education and training is carried out under the supervision and control of

the State". With this, it was aimed to prevent the abuse and misuse of religious feelings of individuals. On the other hand, the policies and practices in education in Türkiye have increased the discussions on religious education, especially with the last Constitution that came into force in 1982, making religious classes compulsory (Buyruk, 2020; Selçuk & Valk, 2012). It has been claimed by some researchers that religious education is incompatible with the principle of secularism and has been turned into a hegemony tool because of the compulsory religious classes in schools (Buyruk, 2020), and it has been stated that it puts pressure on religious groups such as Alevism (Hendek & Fancourt, 2021). Some researchers, on the other hand, stated that religious education practices were limited or completely abolished during periods when secularism practices were exclusionary in Türkiye, and there was an increase and encouragement in religious education practices in periods when there was a passive secularism understanding (Uçar & Sayın, 2017).

Pak's (2002) well-known study entitled "At the Crossroads of Secularism and Islamism" clearly revealed the position of Imam-Hatip schools during a very interesting relationship between ideologies. This relationship is associated with not only secularism but also democracy and modernity theory. Despite being among the most democratic countries in the Islamic world, neither Indonesia nor Türkiye is a fully consolidated democracy (Schneier, 2016). The relationships between education and religion occupy an important position in developing a democracy. In the history of Turkish education, religious education has always been given great importance. Especially after the adoption of Islam by the Turks, families focused on the education of their children. They sent their children to institutions where religious instruction was given to adapt social life to Islamic thought. Madrasas came first among these institutions. During the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, the state administration was carried out with an understanding that centred on the religion of Islam, and religious education was given importance. The Republic of Türkiye, which is the continuation of these states, built its founding philosophy on the principle of secularism and significantly changed the educational heritage of the past. While the state has accepted the separation of religion and administration since the Republic's foundation, it has played a significant role in supervision and intervention that does not allow autonomous religious organisations and activities to coexist (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017).

As a result of this social and political conflict area, there are mainly two opposite explanations of the current situation of Imam-Hatip schools. Some of the people perceived these schools as a threat to the revolutionary principles of the modern Turkish Republic, especially the principle of secularism (Öcal, 2007). It has also been claimed that the Imam-Hatip school acts as a "factory" in the recruitment of "Islamist staff" (Nor & Ibrahim, 2020). These two different approaches have led to the periodic development of these schools. In some periods, these schools were closed entirely; in others, these schools were expanded throughout the country. In some periods, the access of these schools' graduates to higher education was prevented. In some periods, a public bureaucracy was attempting to be established with these schools' graduates.

Imam-Hatip schools, which are at the centre of political discussions and considered vocational schools, differ significantly from other schools that provide formal education regarding their content, historical and cultural heritage and organisational structure. This difference positions the Imam-Hatip schools as having a different place ideologically and makes it necessary to manage these schools with varying leadership practices. For example, two-factor leadership practices (task orientation-human orientation) that are traditionally widely accepted in these schools and the transformational or distributive leadership practices, which are later put forward as more modern leadership approaches, make them inadequate, leading these schools to turn to moral leadership. According to Owens and Valesky (2015), the highest level of leadership is moral leadership. In moral leadership, there is a shared vision and desires that stimulate emotional impulses around the common values intertwined with everyday life and practices of ordinary people to promote a high level of commitment and participation.

Imam-Hatip schools as a unique religious school model in a secular country have great potential to transform the Muslim community all over the world. However, leadership practices are not yet sufficiently understood. On one hand, it is a result of an “academic apartheid” that makes it hard to understand and explore these social phenomena. On the other hand, there is a lack of combining academic and practical realities. Understanding the way of organising and leading these religious schools may create a great potential to know and develop Muslim societies.

## **Conclusion**

The Imam-Hatip schools are occupying multiple positions, including very complicated roles. The historical development process of Imam-Hatip schools in Türkiye, how ideology is processed in these schools, what kind of management and leadership practices are present, the reasons for choosing these schools and what kind of mission these schools have on a global scale are discussed. In the first years of the Republic of Türkiye, when all public education institutions decided to continue their activities around a single organisational structure, Madrasas providing religious education were closed, and Imam-Hatip schools were opened to meet the needs of the society for imams and preachers. These schools, which have a history of nearly a century, have sometimes been less exciting and sometimes quite powerful depending on the country’s politics and the current state administration. The importance of these schools to Islamic teaching and the fact that Islam is a universal religion have assigned a different mission to these schools (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017). Recently, transnational initiatives have been initiated and Imam-Hatip schools providing education in international status have been opened. In the Republic of Türkiye, where secularism was adopted as a principle, religious education, and therefore Imam-Hatip schools, have always been at the centre of discussions. It is difficult to foresee how these schools, which sometimes find strong support, will develop in the future, as they have in recent years.

The subject of education has reinforced the conflict between secularists and Islamists. While secularists think that the state has the right to regulate the path of education from a secular standpoint, Islamists argue that such a position implies

that families and religious groups are not free to raise their children as they see fit (Pak, 2004). Imam-Hatip schools have the potential to transform the educational practices of Türkiye and the rest of the Islamic world.

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# 9 Islamic educational leadership

## Southeast Asia perspectives

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### Introduction

The study of leadership is abundant and informs that contextual conditions are essential to form its style and characteristics. A comprehensive bibliometric study conducted by Hallinger and Kovacevic (2019), for instance, shows that educational leadership, as a subset of educational administration, is developed progressively. Based on more than 22,000 journal articles as a corpus of literature in the span of 58 years, ideas of educational leadership have been changing dynamically. The discussion of educational leadership was highly dominated by researchers from a Western context, and its constructs were derived from North America and Europe. The knowledge base underwent a bit of a change in the 2000s in terms of the origin of empirical research studies, such as from Asia, Africa and Latin America, but they were still mostly adopted from Western concepts. One perspective that started to emerge in the 2000s was original research on the topic of educational leadership from the Islamic view that offered a different understanding of the body of knowledge. As Shah (2017) shows because education consists of cultural activities that involve values and beliefs in each society, the notion of Islamic educational leadership is unavoidable since approximately a quarter of the world's population are Muslims. Such an Islamic notion views education as not only to make people smart, to increase their knowledge and skills, but it plays as an act of worship and manifestation of good deeds as well (Othman et al., 2017). However, the face of Islam itself is not merely monolithic, even the teaching that comes from the same source of the Quran and the *Sunnah*,<sup>1</sup> but it also interacts with local tradition, geography and its history to make the manifestation itself salient in every region.

This chapter explores ideas and practices of Islamic educational leadership in the Southeast Asia context. The efforts to incorporate Islamic values and principles in terms of leading school management and administration are shown in peer-reviewed journal articles that are discussed from Southeast Asia perspectives. The first section will provide a brief history of the school system in the Southeast Asia region. This section informs colonial experiences as well as Islamic revivalism. This is then followed by discussion about Islamic conceptualization in regard to educational leadership. After that, theoretical and empirical perspectives of the growing corpus of Southeast Asia's Islamic educational leadership are explored. The chapter will close with discussion about the future direction of the issue.

### **Brief information on Islam in the Southeast Asian context**

The expansion of Islam since the 7th century from the Arab Peninsula up to now has been showing differences in terms of races, locations, cultural norms, languages and traditions which are also syncretic and amalgamated with many other aspects in different civilizations. It is something common that similar concepts and procedures in Islam can have slightly different perceptions in meaning and understanding. As a result, such meaning and understanding lead us to know the conceptual and practical aspects of Islamic educational leadership perspectives in each education system better, being a worthwhile endeavor to pursue (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2017).

Southeast Asia has the largest share of Muslims in the world, making up more than 240 million people or nearly 25% of the total Muslim population in the world (Aljunied, 2019; Feener, 2004). Having the largest adherents of Islam, Southeast Asia, which is a unique topographical and strategic location lying between two oceans and two continents, with so many islands, is usually called the Muslim archipelago (Yusuf, 2021). In Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, Islam is an officially recognized religion; whereas, in Malaysia and Brunei, Islam is the official religion. Even Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world, reaching to estimated 230 million Muslim people or 87% of the country's population (Arifin et al., 2018; Brooks et al., 2020; Weintraub, 2011). Muslims in the Southeast Asia region come from different ethnic groups in their respective countries. They speak different local languages; however, it is also regarded as an ethnic identity. For instance, Malays are Muslims who either resided in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, South Thailand or South Philippines. Unlike in the Middle East, most Muslims in Southeast Asia are Sunni sect<sup>2</sup> and follow predominantly Shafi'i madhhab<sup>3</sup> (Yusuf, 2021) among the four major Sunni madhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali).

Historically, Southeast Asians were estimated firstly to know Islam in the 12th century. It was brought by the merchants from south India and China and then continued by another wave up to the 17th century directly from the Arabian Peninsula (Lambourn, 2008; Shamsul, 2005). The adoption of Islam made traditional religious teachings in the community smoothly change from prior Hindu or Buddhist teachings to Islam, which was initially introduced by Sufi mysticisms being familiar with the locals (Johns, 1993; Ricklefs, 2006). Islamic teachings were mostly conducted traditionally in informal institutions known as *pondoks* or *pesantrens*<sup>4</sup> which were managed locally by local Muslim scholars with classical Islamic textbooks (Hefner, 2008). Later, with the availability of steamships, Southeast Asia Muslims could travel for Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca; many of them stayed longer and studied Islam in the Middle East. When they returned home, other movements such as puritanical Wahabism and Islamic modernism emerged (Yusuf, 2021).

In addition to traditionally managed Islamic institutions, modern school education was introduced by colonial governments from Europe (British, Spanish, Portuguese and the Netherlands) in the Southeast Asia region and it grew widely in the 19th century. However, the colonial governments mostly practiced secular and segregated education systems between elite European and local people with the intention based on their interests. Islamic teachings were mostly conducted in

a traditional way across the archipelago. Countries in Southeast Asia gained independence in the 20th century. Then the states and communities built and developed their schools and education systems, firstly mirroring practices from their previous colonial governments usually for public school systems, but gradually searching for practices based on their own values and philosophies, including the religion they practiced.

The current education situation in each country in this region is unique. For example, the two Muslim-majority countries in Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Malaysia, have very diverse school types, including public and private school systems that provide both secular education and Madrasas (Parker & Raihani, 2011). The latter combines Islamic teachings and secular subjects. However, typically, private institutions continue the legacy of providing traditional Islamic teachings with *pondoks* or *pesantrens* which mostly offer religious/*dinniyyah* (Islamic) subjects such as *fiqh*,<sup>5</sup> *syariah*<sup>6</sup> and Arabic language in a residential learning type directed by a Muslim scholar (Ahmad & Salamun, 2017). In the case of Indonesia, Islamic schools or Madrasas originated and evolved from *pesantrens* which show Islamic education transformation (Mutohar, 2020) and are nearly similar to those in Thailand (Raihani, 2017). This dualism between the religious and the academic system is always the biggest challenge for countries in Southeast Asia (Othman et al., 2017). Further, Ahmad and Jory (2011) asserted that the development of Islamic education can be seen from a historical context, and each country in Southeast Asia has its unique history. For instance, Indonesia experienced a hard struggle for Islamic education during the secular nationalism period under Sukarno's Old Order regime (1950–1965) and a highly political control period under Suharto's New Order regime (ended in 1998).

In Malaysia, the struggle for the development of Islamic studies has been about integrating Islamic studies into the university system. The implementation of knowledge Islamization has also been underway due to dissatisfaction with knowledge Westernization. In Brunei, like in Malaysia, knowledge Islamization has been integrated into all education levels and Islamic studies have become a state agenda (Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

Meanwhile, Islamic schools in Thailand and the Philippines where Muslims are the minority tell a different story. They have a very challenging situation because of the continuing history of ethno-religious conflict between Muslim groups and the central government (Al-Qurtuby, 2013). In Thailand, Muslims mostly live in its southern provinces. Another influential aspect in southern Thailand is that Islamic education has been in a struggle against national assimilation projects initiated by the Thai state since the 1940s. Whereas, in the southern Philippines, Muslims have also become minorities and have been in a long struggle due to their minority status, where the state is reluctant to provide the Muslims with more autonomy in education, in addition to limited resources (Ahmad & Jory, 2011).

### **Theoretical aspect: Islamic educational leadership**

Leadership as well as educational leadership has been defined and theorized in various ways (Shah, 2010). For instance, based on its components, Northouse (2021) defines it as a process where a leader influences his/her followers in the



pursuit of a shared goal. It takes place in a context, and “no single form of leadership is effective for all contexts, particularly when the contexts are differently characterized” (Raihani, 2017, p. 273). Most of the leadership theories and models on leaders’ personal perspectives and their influence on their leadership practices are Western-based and their applicability in a non-Western context remains arguable (Qian et al., 2017) as leadership is context-specific in nature (Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Pan et al., 2017). Such contexts as societies, cultures, ethnics and religious beliefs result in different interpretations of leadership (Shah, 2006)—that is, certain leadership is appropriate for a certain context. For example, in the context of Muslim society or organization, Islamic leadership is claimed to be appropriate (Egel & Fry, 2017). Even more is that educational leadership is differently conceptualized across and even within societies and cultures. This is then people differently interpreting leadership, reflecting how they look at leadership as well as how they philosophically and theoretically assume it (Shah, 2017).

However, in fact, it is an imbalance that leadership has been so far discussed from Western researchers’ perspectives, with many perspectives focusing mainly on Western contexts and constructs (Davies, 2005). This is because “[e]thnocentric concepts, theories and practices in education, predominantly embedded in western philosophy and values, tend to ignore the growing multicultural nature of educational institutions” (Shah, 2017, p. 363).

The difference in leadership, as aforementioned due to its different interpretations, also takes place in a geographical context. To illustrate, Irawanto et al. (2011) compare how leadership is defined in the Western context and Eastern context. In the Western context, scholars tend to define leadership by looking at the functions of leaders in organizations and classifying leadership into leadership styles, with little consideration of cultural value effects despite influencing the effectiveness of leadership. In the Eastern context, such cultural values are much considered, and thus paternalistic leadership is more appropriate to be applied. This phenomenon can also apply to the context of Southeast Asian countries. However, Islamic educational leadership remains a question of whether it varies across and within countries in the Southeast Asia region.

Specifically, in terms of educational leadership, Islam views educational leadership as raising teaching and learning to a holy responsibility of the uppermost command created from the links between knowledge, education and religion. These links lead to the model of Islamic educational leadership (Shah, 2006) and such a model lies in three dimensions: parent (caring, commitment and responsibility), educator (teaching with knowledge and understanding) and prophet/leader (guiding with values and wisdom). Caring, teaching and guiding are intertwined activities, with a broader responsibility (Shah, 2006). Such educational leadership in Islam is educational leadership which is elevated to the level of holy and religious responsibility. Such responsibility is an internal drive of the leaders to provide the best they can do for the communities, and this is devoted merely to Allah and for the sake of Allah (Shah, 2017).

Another interesting concept of Islamic educational leadership is proposed by Brooks and Mutohar (2018), where the second author is Indonesian, completed with sources from other scholars. They outline that the Islamic educational

leadership framework consists of an inner ring and an outer ring. The inner ring of the framework consists of four leadership belief domains: Islam, education, culture and leadership. Such domains influence the worldview of leaders practiced routinely. Further, elaboration about this is provided next.

**Firstly**, Islam means submitting to God's will and commandments to obtain His favor for life in both the world and hereafter. For this to happen, Muslims need to reach *taqwa* (God-fearing), which can be gained with knowledge or *ilm*. Thus, knowledge acquisition is obligatory for every Muslim. There is no dichotomy between intellect (*al-aql*) and spirit (*al-ruh*), but they are closely linked for knowledge creation with implications for Islamic ontology (what is knowledge) and for epistemology (how knowledge is acquired) leading to a religious activity as previously explained. Supreme spiritual, moral and intellectual values must be practiced in the world. The primary sources of knowledge which are used to guide Muslims in their life are the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Almoharby & Neal, 2013). This concept of knowledge shapes the Islamic philosophy of education (Shah, 2017).

**Secondly**, education, as a process of obtaining knowledge in Islam, is aimed at providing Muslims with knowledge not only to develop individually, to get employed and to gain economic benefits but also, and more importantly, to gain knowledge on how to worship Allah or how to do a religious activity. Shah (2017) asserts that, based on the Quran, the Islamic philosophy of education highlights the role of education not only for the individual but also for the society to seek a happy life from this world to the hereafter. Such education comprises three types: *tarbiyah* (nurturing), *ta'lim* (learning) and *ta'dib* (goodness). The first term, *tarbiyah*, broadly means to increase and grow, underlining the elements of nurturing and care. The second is *ta'lim*, which means *to know*, with an emphasis on learning. The third term is *ta'dib*, which is drawn from the Hadith, and it means disciplining the mind, body and soul; its root word is *adab*, which implies the teaching of good manners, ethics and politeness (Shah, 2008). Each of these terms has been debated by Muslim scholars to support specific views of Islamic education. These three terms, *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim* and *ta'dib*, have been most commonly used to define education in Islamic thought, which taken together might convey the meaning and scope of education in Islam, both formal and non-formal (Iqbal, 1996). However, scholars have interpreted each term according to their own understandings and views, using them separately or in combination to emphasize their preferred interpretations of Islamic education (Shah, 2017). In essence, the educational concepts of Islam as noted by Shah (2017) include the command of learning (*iqra*), compulsory education, education for all and lifelong learning.

**Thirdly**, cultures, as well as societies and communities, contribute to different interpretations of leadership, including educational leadership (Shah, 2006). For example, in Malaysia, as Islam becomes its state religion, the cultures are dominated by Islamic traditions and sources (Shah, 2020). In an Islamic school in Thailand, Raihani (2017, p. 281) conducted observations and found "the Islamic schools' rituals, ceremonies, day-to-day interactions, and events that can be inferred as typical of the Islamic school culture". Another illustration, in their interview,

Khalil and DeCuir (2018, p. 101) found that an assistant principal has conducted spiritual leadership as described as Islamic culture, where a leader is required “to be honest and ... to be forgiving, and ... to be compassionate and merciful, even when nobody is watching it ... [because even] if nobody saw it, then Allah [Almighty] has seen it”.

**Fourthly**, leadership including educational leadership as noted by Shah (2017) is influenced by culture and there is the interplay, as well as the relationship, between leadership and culture. In Islam, it is emphasized that “Muslim culture represents the worldview of faith” (p. 41). Muslims and other people from faith backgrounds have different conceptions and perceptions of educational leadership. The differences result in the ways educational leaders exercise and practice educational leadership in their faith communities. Members of such communities join in activities associated with their cultural and ideological knowledge (Shah, 2006).

There is an interplay between these four domains and the outer ring (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018), which are the beliefs of the leaders hold about, and these domains encircle Islamic values in the outer ring in the context of the Islamic educational leadership framework. The outer ring of the framework includes eight values: *nasiha* (good counsel), *ikhlas* (sincere conduct), consultation (*shura*), *ikhtilaf* (dissent), *maslaha* (public interest), *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* (encouraging right and discouraging wrong), *hisba* (accountability) and *tafakkur* (reflection) (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

To practice good counsel/*nasiha*, Muslim leaders need to have good knowledge and information about the problems to be solved, search for the best course of action and act with others in mind. In terms of sincerity/*ikhlas*, Muslim leaders, when making decisions, need to act sincerely to result in the greatest results for all. For the effective practice of good counsel/*nasiha* and sincerity/*ikhlas*, Muslim leaders need to have such attributes as just, principle and moral (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). To practice *shura*/consultation, Muslim leaders need to do consultations with well-informed people to attain an agreement to achieve a resolution and make a balance between individual and community needs. It promotes the democracy and justice mandate because *shura* encourages involvement and serves dissent (*ikhtilaf*). When practicing *ikhtilaf*, Muslim leaders need to be flexible in making a decision and try to make ummah in agreement. All these efforts are intended for *maslaha*.

*Maslaha*, also called public interest, is an Islamic concept that necessitates Muslim leaders to determine decision-making to achieve the common good for all community members. In schools, such leaders should apply any appropriate leadership, for example, democratic school leadership, to fulfill student needs—that is, the common good (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

The next value is *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar*, which means enjoining the right/honorable and forbidding the wrong/dishonorable. This concept is used in the Quran nine times, referring to the collective duty of the Muslim community to encourage righteous behavior and discourage immorality, as recognized by reason and the Islamic moral and legal system. It aims to remove oppression from society and instead establish justice. It is applied to moral, social, political and economic facets of life. It is, ideally, the distinguishing trait of the Muslim

nation (Esposito, 2004). For Muslims, this concept is mandatory because Islamic law lists it at the mandatory level of law (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

The next value is *hisbah*. It is an endeavor used to make sure that everything related to human life is accountable or on the right track, leading to doing the right and avoiding misdeeds. This is a way of implementing *al-amr bi al-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* following the command of Allah, to ensure human life well-being in both the world and hereafter (Ibrahim, 2015).

Finally, *tafakkur* is one of the eight values in the outer ring of the Islamic educational leadership framework. *Tafakkur* is a way to self-reflect on what Allah has created and to improve knowledge and faith in Allah. It is a value that can stimulate students not only to acquire knowledge but also to think outside the box toward a higher thinking level. Also, teachers can use the *tafakkur* approach to promote higher-order thinking skills (Jamil et al., 2018).

This section depicts Islamic educational leadership that is possibly similar to as well as, of course, different from that of non-Islamic educational leadership. However, it is clearly noted by Shah (2017) that leadership works in any context in which two or more people are engaged; leaders are responsible for their followers. However, in the Islamic educational perspective, leaders' responsibility is not only to the followers but also to Allah, the Only God, aimed to obtain His favor for life in both the world and hereafter. The following section explains research evidence of the Islamic educational leadership perspectives in Southeast Asia.

### **Southeast Asia perspective: Research evidence**

One Indonesian Islamic intellectual stated that there are two faces of Islam: conceptual Islam and actual Islam (Rakhmat, 1991). The former is an ideal thing based on Islamic knowledge sources as elaborated in the previous section, where ideas of Islamic educational leadership are discussed. On the other hand, the latter is something that is manifested and conducted by the Muslims to develop the society and civilization, where in this context it is actualization of Islamic educational leadership in Southeast Asia. As Shah (2017) put it, that leadership is the product of social interaction in certain cultural contexts and is influenced by location and geographical elements. Then, understanding Southeast Asia perspectives of Islamic educational leadership requires one to see it as a work in progress based on empirical study of a larger knowledge corpus about the field.

The corpus of literature on Southeast Asia's perspectives on Islamic educational leadership is limited for the time being (year 2021). We have tried to gather empirical research papers from many available databases such as ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar with specific keywords like "Islamic educational leadership", as well as with more general keywords like "educational leadership", but not many articles appeared in the context of Southeast Asia. For instance, using ERIC, there were 48 articles, while in the Scopus database, document search using multiple field methods, such as in using the fields "article title, abstract and keywords" and "affiliation country" in Southeast Asian countries with the aforementioned keywords, a total of 113 publications were generated. The number of papers became fewer when we sorted to remove non-education field publications or

practicing other religions of educational leadership. Next, selections were based on better publication quality (e.g., peer-reviewed and non-predatory journal manuscripts). After this screening process, 19 publications remained. Another illustration of this, Adams et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive bibliometric study about educational leadership and management in Malaysia but only identified five articles (1.5% of the total) that focus on Islamic leadership, where three of them are written in English. So far, four Southeast Asian countries that published in this category, respectively, in terms of the number of papers, come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines.

The approaches that were used by the prior authors are various. Few of them used a literature review method on the concept of Islamic educational leadership (see Jaffar et al., 2019; Othman et al., 2018; Salleh, 2018); several used a quantitative approach (for instance, Abdullah & Kassim, 2012; Othman & Wanlabeh, 2012; Salemad et al., 2012; Taib et al., 2016); some used a mixed-method approach (see Ahmad & Salamun, 2017; Ail & Abdullah, 2016; Salamun & Shah, 2012; Salamun, 2015). However, studies that used fully a qualitative paradigm provide more insights into the issue and show interesting findings about Islamic educational leadership in the Southeast Asian context (see Arifin et al., 2018; Abbas & Tan, 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Milligan, 2010; Mutohar, 2020; Raihani, 2007, 2017; Shulhan, 2018). The following section discusses these approaches and their findings further.

### ***Conceptual papers***

Salleh (2018) points out that, based on his perspective, Islamic educational leadership can be explained by the acronym LEADERSHIP, for which he elaborates each letter (where *L* stands for *leading*, *E* for *education*, *A* for *aims*, *D* for *delivery*, *E* for *empowerment*, *R* for *resilience*, *S* for *style*, *H* for *humbleness and humility*, *I* for *integrity* and *P* for *piety*). This informs about the Muslim competency based on guidance from verses in the Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) words and practices. For instance, when discussing the first letter L for leading, Salleh (2018) explained traits possessed by a leader such as intelligence and good cognitive ability. In Islam, the task of a leader is doing good deeds for the society for the sake of Allah as instructed in the Quran. The exception is letter S (style), which explains various leadership patterns of behavior; ideas that are borrowed from Western research.

In addition, Jaffar et al. (2019) analyzed 16 Quranic verses about *ulul albab* theme, which simply means gifted individual, and proposed the concept of *ulul albab* principal leadership. They found that this type of leadership has three dimensions: Quranic, encyclopedic, and *ijthadic*. The first dimension means that Quran is the only and absolute preference for a leader as well as a way of life; the second dimension portrays an educational leader's intelligence and knowledge quality; the last dimension context is an effort to do continuous improvement and consistently commit toward perfection (Jaffar et al., 2019). As can be shown, this is an effort to try an approach to characterizing ideal educational leadership based on Quran verses.

While Othman et al. (2018) proposed to relate a collegial model in the educational institution context to Islamic approaches. They emphasized that effective

Muslim educational leaders are those who practice shared decision-making where the Quran and Sunnah are common values of the educators. This is similar to the concept of *Jamaah*, not only as it is a genuine Muslim identity but it is also a basic condition of Islamic faith (*iman*). Othman et al. (2018) identified three relevant leadership models for the collegial model in Islamic educational institutions: transformational, participative and interpersonal leadership, all reflecting the leadership attributes of the Prophet (PBUH). The classical text mentions that characteristics possessed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are *shiddiq* (honesty), *amanah* (trustworthy), *fathanah* (wisdom) and *tabligh* (conveying messages), where these attributes are articulated when practicing collegiality in Islamic educational institutions.

### Quantitative approach

One distinctive feature from the Malaysian authors is that they use Islamic terms such as Rabbani, Murabbi, and Ulul Albab addressed to the Islamic educational leadership compared to others. For example, they use terms like Rabbani leadership (Ahmad & Salamun, 2017; Salamun & Shah, 2012; Salamun, 2013; Salamun, 2015), Murabbi leadership (Ail & Abdullah, 2016) and Ulul Albab leadership (Jaffar et al., 2019; Taib et al., 2016) to articulate values from Quran and Sunnah in terms of practices of educational leadership. This type of leader is “someone whose mission and vision in life are solely for the divine path, to be acceptable in the eyes of the Creator” (Ahmad & Salamun, 2017, p. 43). The basic thing from these three concepts is to explore school leadership practices based on Islamic values and influenced by moral judgment according to God’s divine acceptance.

These three leadership terms also offer specific research instruments to measure Islamic educational leadership’s latent traits. Rabbani leadership has 3 constructs with 15 items using a 5-point rating scale of frequency (Ahmad & Salamun, 2017). Similarly, Ulul Albab leadership has also three constructs with a total of 73 items using a 9-point rating scale of agreement (Taib et al., 2016). Lastly, Murrabi leadership is developed from a qualitative study in order to identify important constructs from experts and has 13 constructs with a total of 132 items (Ail & Abdullah, 2016). There are similarities in terms of constructs used in these three instruments in terms of attitude/perception toward Islamic faith and knowledge, learning and skills and educational leadership practices. All the articles examined the research instruments using the classical test theory approach. The Rabbani leadership research also provides descriptive statistics information, and the other two proposed a structural model that emphasizes the relationship between constructs. All the instruments have been used in the secondary school context, where all respondents were Muslims. The findings show that the education leaders have the attributes of Islamic educational leadership.

The influence of Western leadership models and their instruments are also salient from publications in this region, and they adapted and modified such instruments, for example, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale or PIRMS (Abdullah & Kassim, 2012) from Malaysia, and Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire or MLQ (Othman & Wanlabe, 2012) and Leadership Practices

or LP (Saleemad et al., 2012) in Thailand. Interesting findings are reported from the studies. Research that used PIMRS found that the perception of promoting the learning environment is higher at Islamic religious schools compared to schools that have government assistance (Abdullah & Kassim, 2012). While the research that used adapted LP indicates that in Islamic schools, leaders perceived practices more often in all leadership dimensions compared to general schools' leaders (Saleemad et al., 2012). The study by Othman and Wanlabeih (2012) reported that principals in Islamic private schools tend to practice transformational more than transactional leadership, whereas their teachers also perceive that idealized influence and inspirational motivation are more salient in their school leaders.

As such, the results of these typical studies show that Islamic school leaders' traits are also confirmed by Western leadership theories and their research instruments. Although the researchers have used the available models and instruments, they could not capture all the realities that happen in the schools in Southeast Asia since cultural and social variations are so wide. When using the quantitative approach in this area, some limitations emerged from the studies, for example, not applying accurate and precise measurements to the latent traits, and relying on group-centered statistics. When implementing a different approach, Item Response Theory (IRT) is needed because it can reveal more important information and at the same time provides complete psychometric attributes of the instruments (see Salleh et al., 2017). Thus, it is evident that applying this modern measurement model, for instance, can better inform latent traits measured to provide crucial constructs. Also, further testing of the instrument is needed to confirm its qualities in terms of validity, reliability and usability to be like other well-established leadership scales (e.g., Halinger's PIMRS, Bass & Avolio's MLQ) to be used in future research. Thus, possibly due to a lack of these qualities, the instruments measuring the three leadership styles (Rabbani, Murrabi and Ulul Albab leadership) have not been used by other researchers yet (Adams et al., 2021).

### **Qualitative approach**

Research of Islamic educational leadership in Southeast Asia that applies qualitative method provides more rich findings and shows essential information. It reveals a big picture of social realities and surroundings faced by the schools and how the education leaders adapt to challenging situations. Research findings from Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines clearly indicate that principals' leadership practices are based on their personal set of Islamic beliefs and values that represent their moral purposes for the students and school institution (Abbas & Tan, 2020; Brooks, 2015; Brooks et al., 2020; Milligan, 2010; Mutohar, 2020a; Raihani, 2007, 2017; Shulhan, 2018). Studies from Indonesia (Brooks et al., 2020; Raihani, 2007), Thailand (Raihani, 2017) and the Philippines (Milligan, 2010), for instance, have applied a bottom-up grounded approach when analyzing the phenomena that provide distinctive perspectives, while other researchers borrow a Western framework, such as transformational leadership used in their studies in Singapore (Abbas & Tan, 2020) and in Indonesia (Shulhan, 2018).

Muslim school leaders in all of the empirical studies clearly show religious belief. This is the core of their leadership practices as well as the basis of the ways they view education. Interestingly, each study showing unique types of values comes up as salient findings, such as *amanah* or entrusted leadership in Indonesia (Raihani, 2007), *shura* (mutual consultation) and *ihsan* (compassion) in Singapore (Abbas & Tan, 2020), trust and building cohesion in Thailand (Brooks, 2015; Raihani, 2017) and the Philippines (Milligan, 2010). The findings actually somehow reflect social and political situations in their respective countries that make Muslim educational leaders have to make strategic decisions for the good of students, schools and the Muslim community in general.

Raihani's (2007) study found that Islamic belief and values of the three Muslim principals from public secondary schools in Indonesia, which were secular schools, really underpinned their leadership style and practice. The notion of *amanah* in the school context has been actually reflected in the Indonesian situation since the beginning of democracy in the reform era, where rampant corruption became top news (Sumintono et al., 2014, 2015). So, the statement that the struggle to become accountable as leaders in public institutions is supported by religious belief is a wise statement. The principals also state clearly that apart from *amanah*, the most important thing for them is IMTAQ (short for the words *Iman* and *Taqwa*, meaning faith and piety). This is like a declaration of self-identity that put them also as religious leaders, whereas another study conducted Brooks et al. (2020) in Indonesia also mentions it specifically but in the form of education leaders as socio-religious.

Furthermore, studies by Brooks et al. (2020) and Mutohar (2020) show more current situations in Indonesia that Islamic schools' identity is related to radicalism. For Muslim education leaders, Brooks et al. (2020) found that there was tension between two continua, which are progressive and conservative school leadership. Interestingly, whatever the choice of the principal, the "decision based on their interpretation of Islam that was manifest in the policies, practices and procedures in their school" (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 13). On one hand, the principals' socio-religious beliefs and behaviors put them in the category of open, inclusive and plural; on the other hand, they can choose to be in a closed, exclusive and unitary position. In line with that, Mutohar's (2020) study found that leading with diversity in Islamic schools shows a similar spectrum where one end is the choice to embrace local identities and respect various expressions of Islam, compared to a more exclusive view. The choice of Muslim educational leaders in this case is very strategic because the impact directly leads to school culture and students' understanding, attitudes and behaviors.

Interestingly, Indonesia's local flavor emerges in these studies. Raihani's (2007) found that *kekeluargaan* values (family-like relationship) stated by the Muslim principals are considered "uniquely important to help foster effective school teamwork, which creates the cultures of togetherness and collaboration" (p. 487). Whereas, Mutohar (2020) writes that traditional Islamic locals seldom practice in other countries such as "praying at the grave and reciting surah Yassin for a family member who passed away" (p. 3), as an indication of tolerance and implementation of diversity by Muslim educational leaders, embracing many faces of Islam even in the same country.



In addition, a study of Islamic school principals in Indonesia as informed by Shulhan (2018) and Arifin et al. (2018) has to be seen in the context of an effort to improve educational quality. While research by Cardozo and Sri Mulyani (2018) fills in the gap in the context of the gender role of educational leadership role. In his study, Shulhan (2018) found that Islamic educational leaders rely on managerialism in order to improve school quality by improving performance of the teachers, whereas Arifin et al. (2018) found that principals at Islamic primary schools apply a traditional approach (known as Islamic crash course), which is usually practiced in *pesantrens* in order to improve their school organizational culture, leadership and application of Islamic value.

The only study in Singapore about Islamic school leadership conducted by Abbas and Tan (2020) found that the situation of schools typical in a developed country situation clearly pursues improvement of quality educational services. They conducted a case study of a Singaporean Madrasa (Islamic school) using interviews, observations and artifacts to collect the data. They revealed that school leaders of the Madrasa exhibited the four transformational leadership domains (inspirational motivation, individual consideration, idealized influence and intellectual stimulation). The leaders behaved by articulating a vision, consulting, motivating, supporting, and exemplary manners, following behaviors of the Prophet Muhammad. The salient Islamic principles and values from the research are *shura* and *ihsan*. *Shura* (consultation) reflects common democratic practice in a stable society, and *ihsan* (compassion) actually shows practice of improvement and commitment to benefit others, a kind of significant contribution in a competitive society.

Studies from the southern areas of Thailand and the Philippines, where ethno-religious conflict has been going on for years (Al-Qurtuby, 2013; Brooks & Sungtong, 2014, 2016; Brooks, 2017; Brooks & Brooks, 2019), inform different perspectives about Muslim educational leaders in Southeast Asia. Raihani (2017) used a multiple-case study in three selected Islamic schools in three provinces in Thailand, with such participants as students, teachers and principals to explore how principals in the schools practice their leadership. Research results suggest that building trust is the top priority for school improvement (Raihani, 2017), whereas Milligan (2010) conducted an ethnographic study on the island of Mindanao southern Philippines and found that combining religious authority and technological competencies aspiration is more effective in developing schools by the Muslim education leaders in the form that he called pragmatic prophetic leadership. The principals from both countries made their school progress in very difficult and challenging situations, showing that their leadership qualities and characteristics fit the local context with appropriate strategies in place.

Milligan (2010) and Raihani (2017) have noted that Muslim educational leaders were keen to collaborate with the central government and abandon their traditional and kinship-based leadership, accepting general (non-Islamic) curriculum as well as non-Muslim teachers who teach those subjects in their schools. The principals at the same time establish this compromise by involving school stakeholders to provide the community with services from their students and teachers and by building trust so that they are supported by all parties (Brooks, 2015). The

principals whose schools are in the conflict zone see themselves as being accountable, with resources to be fulfilled based on their religious belief, and providing educational services that make parents believe and choose Islamic schools for their children. This shows that leadership improvisation really works for the greater good of society.

## Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, we have explained Southeast Asian perspectives of Islamic educational leadership. We see that the knowledge corpus of this area starts to grow and provides some unique but limited contributions.

The conceptual papers offer, differentiate identity and present Islamic elements to the issue of Islamic educational leadership. Something that is salient from the articles is directly related to sacred text (Quran and *Sunnah*) and educational leadership context (see Jaffar et al., 2019; Othman et al., 2018; Salleh, 2018). Other writers (e.g., Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2006, 2017) have crafted their arguments, which are more adequate and comprehensive in nature despite explaining mostly the same thing. The limitation of its explanation can be seen when trying to justify sacred text in order to make the English word ‘leadership’ fit to the discussion (Salleh, 2018), or fulfilling *ulul albab* theme from an educational leadership perspective (Jaffar et al., 2019). When seen closely, one of the restrictions of the articles in this approach does not rely on comprehensive sources that can guide and expand the available research arguments presented. Promoting more publication in this kind of study is a good priority to elaborate the Islamic educational leadership ideas since few samples and locations have been represented so far.

Meanwhile, developing a new educational leadership research instrument is a huge task that needs certain expertise. The three research instruments discussed in this chapter that measure Islamic educational leadership’s latent traits—Rabbani leadership (Ahmad & Salamun, 2017), Ulul Albab leadership (Taib et al., 2016) and Murrabi leadership (Ail & Abdullah, 2016)—have used the analyses of the scales using the classical test theory approach that, unfortunately, does not provide accurate and precise measurements of the empirical data collected. The validation only confirms at the variable level, which does not provide individual-centered statistic information, and it will be more interesting to know if comprehensive validation uses other approaches like IRT (see, for example, Hallinger & Wang, 2015).

Nevertheless, the studies conducted in this Southeast Asia context have a close intersection in terms of ideas, arguments and perspectives presented in the theoretical aspects of Islamic educational leadership in this chapter. As shown from the findings of the qualitative research studies, the researchers emphasize that some Islamic values from educational leaders are more salient compared to others as suggested by the framework presented previously (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Shah, 2017).

Interestingly, the research findings also reflect each country’s situation and issues faced by the Muslim educational leaders in the region. The condition of Madrasas in Singapore (a developed country) makes the Muslim school leaders focus more on their democratic process and continuous improvement for the society in terms

of the choice of Islamic values they pursue. In the southern area of Thailand and the Philippines, it is about survival and finding the best way to reconcile, requiring Muslim principals to invest much in terms of trust building and connection to the community. Meanwhile in Malaysia, producing a unique instrument for Islamic educational leadership traits shows they want to emphasize their identity as a modern Muslim country. Whereas in Indonesia, tension in regard to accountability, radicalism and educational quality makes Muslim educational leaders express their religious beliefs and values differently. All of this research evidence in Southeast Asia shows that different contexts need different types of Islamic educational leadership, where the contexts themselves are differently portrayed.

## Notes

- 1 Sunnah in Islamic term refers to Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions, and approvals recommended to follow.
- 2 Sunni sect comprises Muslims who follow Prophet Muhammad's closest companion (Abu Bakr) as the first caliph and the other three caliphs (Umar, Ustman and Ali), accept Quran, Hadith and five pillars of Islam, as well as follow the four major madhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali).
- 3 A madhab is a method on how scripture is interpreted by a school of scholars thought to be used as guideline in practicing the teachings of Islam.
- 4 Pondok or pesantrens, and also called pondok pesantrens, are Islamic education institutions where students reside to learn and practice the teachings of Islam.
- 5 Fiqh is a set of rules concerning human understanding and practices of Islamic law, particularly on how to worship and to carry out *muamalah*, based on the Quran and Sunnah.
- 6 Shari'a is a set of Islamic law regulating religious rituals and human life aspects, including solutions to human problems.

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**Part III**

**Models, voices, and new  
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# 10 UAE school reforms and leadership

## What can be learned from Muslim scholars' perspectives and contemporary insights?

*Rida Blaik, David Litz and Nagla Ali*

### Introduction

The medieval Muslim world included West Arabia, North Africa and Southern Europe. It came into existence by the end of the 10th century in Baghdad, Cairo and Cordoba. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Muslim world was integrated into three great empires, those of Safavids (Persian), Mughals and Ottomans. Eventually, Islam was associated with the Arabs, the Persians, Turks and Indians. Divergent thoughts were characterized by a multi-ethnic unity of Muslim culture. Medieval Islamic era witnessed educational and scientific renaissance and knowledge enlightenment. The Ottoman administration of the Levant region which includes Greater Syria and North African Arab countries (excluding Morocco) lasted from the 1500s to 1918. The Ottoman Empire's sovereignty in Europe, the Levant and North Africa came to an end after the Ottoman Empire's loss in World War One. A new era of Western colonialism commenced. The Levant was subject to British and French mandates. Nevertheless, the Arabian Peninsula provinces continued to be British protectorates; they became independent states starting from the mid-1960s (Khalidi, 1997; Hourani, 2003).

Since 1892, the British established the 'Trucial Sheikhdoms' with the tribal sheikhs who exist in the current United Arab Emirates (UAE). When the British-Trucial Sheikhdoms treaty expired on 1 December 1971, the sheikhdoms that comprise the seven emirates (of the UAE) became fully independent. A constitution was signed, and eventually a union called the United Arab Emirates was formed in December 1971 (Al-Fahim, 2008).

The UAE is a federation that is constituted of seven emirates situated in the southeast of the Arabian Peninsula. Islam is the official religion, and Arabic is the official language. The total population is 9.2 million people: 1.4 million are Emiratis and the rest of the 7.8 million are expatriates. In an attempt to minimize the dependency on the oil sector, a knowledge-based economy was prioritized, and the UAE underwent a period of modernization and marked considerable changes in education, pedagogies and curriculum; hence, education was gradually Westernized in preparation for transformation (Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019).

This chapter features two UAE school reform directives: (a) moral education and (b) English as a medium of instruction (EMI). These reforms are within the

scope of educational policymakers, as well as instructional and transformational school leaders, who are expected to mobilize educational changes.

### **Context of the chapter**

Many contemporary educational changes are shaped by postmodern instructional and transformational leadership perspectives. Instructional leaders are considered a primary source of knowledge, innovation and developing educational programs. They are expected to adopt notions of multi-ethnic education, coexistence and social justice, thus embracing global concepts of a timeless curriculum, especially in terms of the teaching-learning of social sciences and humanities (Giroux, 2003; Zevin, 2007).

Moreover, in times of educational reform, transformational leadership assumes importance, and school leaders take responsibility for initiating, facilitating, monitoring and implementing changes. Burdens characterized by the absence of policies, systemic constraints, sociocultural barriers and pressure from the need for economic-based knowledge may impact the dynamics, trajectories and essence of change. Nevertheless, transformational leaders are anticipated to galvanize required changes despite the contextual limitations and hindrances (Hallinger, 2018; Bush & Glover, 2014).

Although education in the UAE has seen tremendous development since 2005, the context of educational management and leadership is still characterized as a top-down and hierarchical system that needs to be deconstructed to allow instructional and transformational leaders to adopt changes within the ethos of postmodern education (Litz & Scott, 2017; Blaik Hourani et al., 2020).

### **Conceptual framework**

In this chapter, we conceptualize two key features of UAE reforms within the realm of medieval Muslim scholars' perspectives and contemporary educational trends. These include the adoption of moral education (ME) and EMI.

ME will be conceptualized in terms of critical pedagogy (CP) and the principle of social justice. Because of the wide spectrum that CP examines, the authors will identify its parameters, which will frame the discussion. Kessing-Styles (2006) describes CP as an educational response to inequalities and the absence of social justice. Likewise, according to Kincheloe (2005), CP is concerned about oppressive acts and is perceived as an approach that utilizes language arts, social sciences and humanities as tools for liberation and a means to humanize and empower learners and ensure that social justice, coexistence and ethno-cultural tolerance prevail. CP deals with the idea of a just society and equity, as well as emancipating and empowering the oppressed. Giroux (2003), Kincheloe (2005) and Zevin (2007) note that CP also tackles the welfare of people by criticizing schooling in capitalist societies and offering an emancipatory vision of educational systems. Gor (2005) reiterates that the major goal of CP is relevant to raising awareness and the rejection of violations and discrimination against people. Freire (1998) suggested

that CP is an educational means to transform oppressed people and save them from being objects of education to subjects of their own autonomy and emancipation. From this perspective, students are enabled to transform their societies through emancipatory education.

Effective leadership is often described in educational institutions as being indispensable in producing desired results and positive student outcomes. Literature has favored several leadership types, including participatory, instructional and transformational, with many research studies linking them to improved teaching and learning (e.g., Robinson et al., 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Nevertheless, theorists such as Gümüş et al. (2020) and Blaik Hourani et al. (2020) argue that school leadership is also a key factor in promoting social justice and equity in education. Consequently, Gümüş et al. (2020) and Blaik Hourani et al. (2020) suggest that school leaders and leadership models, such as instructional and transformational, should strive to reduce inequalities, foster social change and provide all students, regardless of their background and context, with equal opportunities in terms of both access to and quality of education.

For the purpose of this chapter, the political and socioeconomic implications of CP are excluded. Therefore, ME will be discussed in terms of these CP connotations: social justice, equity, non-discrimination, raising awareness, rejection of violence, prevailing coexistence and acceptance of the “Other”. More specifically, the conceptual framework is derived from Giroux’s (2003) and Zevin’s (2007) constructs of CP.

Regarding EMI, it will be conceptualized with the views of Al-Issa (2017), who said it has been given the upper hand over Arabic as the native language. Al-Issa (2017) also indicated that in the current context of the UAE, EMI has encroached and/or been forced upon almost all school subject areas. This has resulted in linguistic, social and cultural estrangement of the Arabic language. Al-Issa (2017) agrees with linguistic theories put forward by theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996) who see language as a social concept that is developed through social interactions.

In alignment with the aforementioned realms of ME and EMI, the perspectives of medieval Muslim scholars such as Ibn-Khaldun (an Arab sociologist and theologian), Al-Farabi (an Islamic philosopher and political-sociologist), Al-Ghazi (a Sufi philosopher and theologian), Ibn-Rushd (Latinized as Averroes, a philosopher) and Avicenna (Muslim philosopher and theologian) are rendered significant and will also be within the conceptual framework that endorses the two features of UAE school reforms (i.e., ME and EMI).

## UAE educational reforms

The UAE’s education system began with *Kuttabs*, the first non-government coeducational Muslim schools. *Kuttabs* focused on reading, writing and the precepts of Islam; courses were religious and moral in content. Arithmetic was later added to the curriculum (Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Fortna (2000) and Kimmerling (2000) note that the moral element was introduced through *Kuttab*’s teaching across the Arab-Muslim world, including the

UAE. The moral teachings imbued Islamic texts from the Quran and the Hadith (sayings or narrations of Prophet Muhammad, PBUH).

The UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) along with regional educational authorities such as the Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge Department (ADEK) and Knowledge and Human Development Authority take the lead in educational transformation (Litz & Scott, 2017). In 2006, a reform agenda known as the New School Model was adopted to address the following weaknesses:

- Unsuitable curricula
- Rote learning and assessment, as opposed to problem-solving and critical thinking
- Few learning technology applications
- Poor libraries, rigid texts, and few learning labs
- Poor school culture with weak discipline and high absenteeism
- Poor physical surroundings, low-quality buildings and few opportunities for sports or other activities
- Lack of teachers' professionalism
- Poor budgets in terms of developing programs and curricula

(Macpherson et al., 2007; Litz & Scott, 2017)

Within the scope of instructional and transformational leadership and Vision 2020 (followed by Vision 2030), more recent public school reforms' initiatives have focused on (a) the development of a new curriculum that ensures the robustness of math, sciences and technology programs; (b) student-centered learning; (c) bilingual education; (d) the employment of EMI; (e) the emphasis on innovative learning and critical thinking; (f) intervention strategies for at risk students; and (g) educational inclusion (Langton, 2017). These reforms have necessitated the hiring of expatriate Western teachers who are native speakers of English. The reason was that most of the public school teachers were close to retirement or poorly trained. Furthermore, the core constituent of the school reforms stipulated that English would be the medium of instruction.

Consequently, the English medium of instruction teachers (EMTs) were hired from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa (Raven, 2011). In 2017, the UAE MoE announced a nationwide standardized curriculum known as the new "Emirati School Model" (ESM), with the aim of further improving standards, producing better overall results, elevating the rate of graduation from secondary schools to international standards and accommodating a knowledge-based economy. As a part of the ESM initiative, Education 2020 was developed, and structural, administrative and curricular reorganization was to be introduced (Zaman, 2017). Further reforms were initiated by means of the Education 2020 policy initiative and its instructional and transformational directives that encompassed the following:

- a Smart education and computer-based teaching-learning
- b State-of-the-art schools
- c Moral education

- d Integrated social studies
- e All gender classes/schools
- f Vocational learning

(Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019)

## **UAE school reforms: The intersection with contemporary and Muslim scholars**

### ***Parallelism from a Muslim scholarly perspective: EMI and the teachings of social sciences***

Since 2005, EMI has been a major focus of educational reforms in the UAE. The ESM adopted EMI to meet current global and market needs in addition to meeting the demands of a modern knowledge-based economy (Soderman, 2010; Litz & Hourani, 2016; Al-Issa, 2017).

While the deployment of EMI has been well-intentioned, it has also caused significant language learning/pedagogic, as well as operational difficulties. Ultimately, this has hindered Emirati students from comprehending concepts and inhibits them from processing and constructing knowledge. One feature of the reforms stipulates the introduction of critical thinking, problem-solving and innovation skills. This poses a conundrum: how can Emirati students think critically and innovatively if they are unable to learn math and sciences due to their inability to comprehend English, which is now the instructional language used to deliver the content? Consequently, this has impeded the aims of critical thinking endorsed within the school reform agenda (Blaik Hourani et al., 2012; Al-Issa, 2017).

The recruitment of EMI in UAE public schools generated another problem pertaining to culture and pedagogy. The deployment of EMTs and EMI has created sociocultural learning challenges for both parents and students, especially as the presence of the teachers has created communication problems between parents and students and the EMTs, as they are not bilingual. Consequently, this has initiated further problems at the pedagogical, operational and curricular levels. The EMTs were expected to improve curriculum delivery and facilitate the changes by promoting innovation in math, science and technology. However, they have created a cultural barrier and have not adapted to the social milieu of students and their parents. The recruitment of EMTs and the use of EMI have caused multifaceted educational issues, hampering the promotion of academic achievement and scholastic innovation (Al Amiri, 2012; Al-Issa, 2017; Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019).

This argument brings Ibn-Khaldun into perspective, as he viewed the marginalization of the mother tongue as a constraint in terms of educational innovation and critical thinking. Ibn-Khaldun advocated for the preservation of the mother tongue and stressed that the native language was a vehicle for discourse between civilizations and for cross-cultural exchange (Kadi & Billeh, 2006; Darling, 2007). In this way, EMI serves to act as a cultural detachment between the learner and his/her social environment, thus leading to societal regression and the mitigation of achievements and innovations, as well as to societal deterioration (Alatas, 2013). To reiterate, within the scope of pre-modern and contemporary educators,

Vygotsky's (1978) and Bruner's (1996) perspectives are grounded in the reality that learning is a social activity that takes place through an organic social-learning setting and that students learn better if they are immersed within their sociocultural environment, mother tongue usage inclusive. This is also in agreement with Kozulin et al. (2003) and Ashencaen-Crabtree (2010).

An additional element that pertains to EMI is in terms of the UAE postcolonial dichotomy and the controversy of "East/West" education. Thus, the following question needs to be addressed: how much should be adopted from the Western model of education in times of change?

Ironically, during the medieval era, Muslim scholars were initiators of knowledge and intellect, as well as receptors. But the UAE continues to practice one-way borrowing from the West in educational reformation because it sees the West as a source of prestige. This includes the adoption of a foreign language as a medium of instruction (Mills, 2008; Al-Issa, 2017). Kadi and Billeh (2006) have illustrated that not only did the medieval Islamic era (and regions) witness an age of intellectualism, but Muslim scholars have also contributed a great deal to the "West". For example, although Muslim scholars such as Averroes, Avicenna and Ibn-Khaldun have borrowed from the "West", they have also simultaneously contributed to it in terms of knowledge, its deconstruction and Arabic language acquisition. As indicated by Kadi and Billeh (2006), leaders of the Muslim *Umah* (community) during the *Umayyad*, *Abbasid* and *Andalusian* times witnessed two-channelled borrowing of knowledge and language among the Islamic, Greek and Byzantine cultures. Furthermore, philosophical and mathematical knowledge and those related to natural and social sciences were also exchanged between Eastern/Western cultures. For example, Averroes and Avicenna have been considered pioneers in terms of their work on critical thinking, cognitivism, constructivism, scientific analogy and testing realities of the natural and social sciences. Their work has been highlighted by many proponents of CP, as well as by other Western and Oriental scholars (Günther, 2006; Darling, 2007).

As a result of their scientific and intellectual contributions, as well as the various paths that Muslim scholars paved, Günther (2006) noted that since the 7th century A.D., Muslim natural and social sciences learning grew exponentially. This led to acquiring knowledge related to secular, scientific, literary and humanities subjects. Eventually, this promoted the spread of knowledge and innovation in and out of the Muslim world, the Near East, Greek and Byzantine empires. Günther (2006) and Kadi and Billeh (2006) noted that during the 9th century, Muslim intellectuals and scholars were pivotal in discussing educational theory, pedagogy, didactics and social sciences (including moral advocacy and education) that flourished since the 10th century. Avicenna and Al-Ghazali were proactive in terms of using logical and scientific didactic arguments, mind tools and cognitive analogy to discuss theological matters, moral and ethical notions and concepts, as well as communal and worldly matters that are within the humanities and social sciences arena.

Comparatively speaking, in our contemporary time, Haque (2004), Panjwani (2004) and Blaik Hourani (2011) pointed out that in addition to the inorganic role and one-channelled cultural borrowing that EMI and EMTs contribute toward current educational reform in the Arab-Muslim world (UAE inclusive), these

practices are also less progressive in terms of their intellectual and critical nature and result in shallow teachings of humanities, social sciences and other subjects. However, an attempt to revamp the social studies curriculum and a newly introduced ME program have been made in the UAE.

*ME and CP: instructional and transformational considerations*

ME is a new addition to the UAE school curricula. ME focuses on four pillars: (a) character and morality, (b) individual and community, (c) civic studies and (d) cultural studies (Al-Hosani, 2017). ME goals include the following:

- Reinforcing ethical values among UAE school students
- Promoting tolerance, respect and community participation
- Developing a spirit of entrepreneurship, positive interaction and responsibility
- Encouraging love for learning, creativity, innovation and proficiency, as well as developing ambition among students
- Inclusion of ME in the daily school schedule
- Delivering ME once a week across all public and private schools, covering students from grades 1 to 12

(Hosani, 2017)

Al-Hosani (2017) and Litz and Blaik Hourani (2019) have acknowledged that the UAE has been a pioneer in launching the ME initiative to create a principled generation with sound moral values that will have a positive influence both locally and internationally. Nevertheless, Al-Hosani (2017) questions whether UAE teachers were prepared to teach ME as part of the newly introduced curriculum. Rissanen (2017) noted that ME teaching-learning material had not been provided to teachers and that they were unprepared to teach ME. Rissanen (2017) remarked that teachers with lower workloads had been given the task of teaching ME, thereby marginalizing it as a school subject.

Additionally, while ME coordinators were trained and assigned by the schools, further training was required to include subject coordinators and other teachers. ME is expected to be at the higher taxonomy of value characterization (Rissanen, 2017).

Within the scope of ME, the deployment of CP indicates that students should conscientiously and practically build skills in how to deconstruct racist (mis)representations of others, as these are found in the political, social and cultural discourses (Giroux, 2003).

Initially, CP within the realm of the teaching-learning of social sciences and ME should stem from the works of medieval Muslim scholars such as Al-Farabi and Ibn-Khaldun, whose directions were to enhance analogy, cognitivism, constructivism and innovation (Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Having said this, one of the problems that has emerged with respect to the teaching-learning of social sciences and humanities (including ME) in UAE public schools is that many students have never had to “learn to learn” because most of the responsibilities for teaching these subjects have traditionally been teacher-centered



and based on rote learning. Traditionally, little emphasis was placed on discourse or knowledge construction and deconstruction (Ashencaen-Crabtree, 2010; Blaik Hourani, 2011).

As indicated by Zevin (2007), and Blaik Hourani (2017), utilizing a modernized CP in social sciences and humanities is expected to allow for the expansion of cognitivism, constructivism and cross-cultural understanding.

Giroux (2003) and Zevin (2007), as contemporary educators, identify CP as a way of enhancing the acceptance of the “other”, as well as the principles of social justice and coexistence. To these authors, CP ensures that learners take full advantage of their abilities by engaging in a process of discovering and analyzing facts presented on multiple levels, which involves higher thinking. Thus, social sciences are taught in a reflective manner, where the learning process revolves around questioning, making assumptions, engaging in creative problem-solving and continuously questioning and interpreting facts and evidence in light of their own experiences.

Giroux’s (2003), Günther’s (2006) and Zevin’s (2007) CP endeavors are in alignment with Muslim medieval scholars’ thoughts on knowledge acquisition and learning. Nevertheless, despite the introduction of ME, the elements of a CP such as reflective practice, cognitive analogy, and constructivist teaching-learning continue to be minimal in the UAE (Blaik Hourani, 2011; Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019). In comparison, during the medieval Muslim period, humanities and social sciences were taught critically and metacognitively, whereby the ultimate goal was to eradicate injustices, ensure human truth prevails and improve life conditions in terms of moral and ethical conduct (Günther, 2006; Kadi & Billeh, 2006).

### ***Muslim philosophers’ views on knowledge and learning and the current context of UAE school reforms***

In Islam, knowledge or “al Maarifah” is pivotal not only as a path of worship but also as a guide for conduct and characterization of attitudinal morality and ethics, regardless of the indefinite elements of space and time (Haque, 2004).

In the early modern and modern eras, constructivist education in Muslim countries has drifted away from the Muslim scholars’ concepts and notions of “al Maarifah” and teaching-learning that prevailed during the medieval period. Although contemporary reforms in the UAE adopt modern trends in education, some of these are not a novelty. Indeed, they resemble many of the thoughts that originated from medieval Islamic times, though in the UAE scenario, inquisitive and constructivist approaches and content of capturing social justice have not been mentored in the praxis of ME (Kadi & Billeh, 2006; Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Badi and Tajdin (2004) reiterated that Islam as a religion focused on seeking knowledge to discover facts and promote the welfare of humankind by scrutinizing reality from different perspectives. According to Blaik Hourani et al. (2011), the works of Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi focus on the significance of morality and ethical conduct where dialog, inquisition and cognitive analogy are activated to construct knowledge, deconstruct facts and analyze views from different perspectives, and to reach social coexistence and accepting the “other”. Darling (2007) cited

Ibn-Khaldun, who said that social cohesion and coexistence materialize by rejecting fanaticism and prejudice toward one's own race, ethnicity and social structure. Darling (2007) added that Ibn-Khaldun's work (*Muqaddimah/The Introduction*) stresses social justice in terms of eradicating inequalities that exist due to blood ties, *Asabiyya*, race, color, religion and social status. In *Muqaddima*, Ibn-Khaldun discusses that societies cannot move toward civilization and scientific, educational and literary innovations until they overcome *Asabiyya*. Ibn-Khaldun claims that overcoming *Asabiyya* is the gateway for social justice that paves the way for achievements on all levels, worldly and heavenly.

According to Wagner and Lotfi (1980) and Panjwani (2004), CP was emphasized in Islamic medieval times, where the main goal of learning revolved around *tafakkur*, which stems from analyzing various perspectives. According to Ibn-Khaldun, there are many types of learning in Islam: *ulum al-Sharia* (science of Shar'ia/religious law), *ulum al-Aqliya* (science of reason), *ulum al-marzula* (harmful science) and *ulum-mahmooda* (praiseworthy science). ME falls within the CPs of *ulum al-Aqliya* (science of reason) and *ulum-mahmooda* (praiseworthy science); hence, knowledge relevant to these sciences was embraced and in practice during the medieval Islamic era (Blaik Hourani et al., 2011). Since then, ME and its ethos were advocated under the umbrella of social sciences and endorsed within the *ulum-mahmooda* and the *ulum al-Aqliya* (Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Subsequently, Muslim scholars' thoughts on CP pertaining to ME were exercised in the medieval era. Unfortunately, CP in relation to ME was marginalized or not considered within the context of UAE educational reforms, though Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn-Khaldun were proactive in constructing elements of logical reasoning, scientific thinking, and didactic arguments to discuss abstract thoughts related to theology, moral and ethical concepts (Butterworth, 1983; Haque, 2004). Additionally, according to Günther (2006), Al-Ghazali's view of education is characterized by a deep spirituality coupled with human reasoning and logical processing. Günther (2006) and Kadi and Billeh (2006) reiterate that diverse thinking styles and the deployment of reasoning existed since the 10th century during the medieval Muslim dynasties and were applicable to the pedagogical framework of education, which reflected the process of thinking and knowledge acquisition and deconstruction.

In summation, CP, as advocated by contemporary theorists and Muslim medieval scholars, should be considered by UAE instructional and transformational leaders as a pivotal component that will revamp the praxis of ME as intended by its recent school reform agenda. Moreover, from a contemporary perspective, authors such as Giroux (2003), Zevin (2007) and Kozulin et al. (2003) intersect with Muslim scholars' views about the significance of employing CPs in the teaching-learning of moral education, which seems to be beyond the parameter of current educational praxis within the context of UAE school reforms; particularly as far as the teaching-learning of ME.

In alignment with Muslim scholars' views and contemporary theories, the value characterization of a border pedagogy should be modeled through the ME curriculum. Therefore, UAE instructional and transformational leaders need to revitalize the works of Al-Farabi, Ibn-Khaldun and Al-Ghazali in terms of the tools of the

mind that are used for the teaching and learning of ME. This is also in harmony with Stripling and Hughes-Hassell (2003), Zevin (2007), and Giroux (2003) who recommend the deployment of a CP within the scope of neo-conservative and neo-liberal views of teaching-learning of ME, which is anticipated to endorse a holistic educational transformation that is galvanized by means of the manifestation of multifaceted notions of social justice.

Conclusively, the previous discussion represents the trajectories that UAE leaders need to consider in order to bring forward CP in ME.

### **UAE school reforms at the intersection of modernism and medieval Muslim philosophy: New directions for instructional and transformational leaders**

During the postcolonial era, the UAE has witnessed polarization and estrangement from the organic means of knowledge transmission and learning that prevailed in the medieval Islamic era. Instead, the pursuit of a neo-liberal education and economic-based knowledge has been sought (Mills, 2008).

In the Islamic medieval era and from a linguistic perspective, Arabic as a mother tongue was the medium of instruction, in addition to Greek and other Western ones that were taught as second languages. Nevertheless, in contemporary times, the UAE has deployed English as a prestigious medium of instruction as a part of its educational modernization and to cater to the economic needs and labor market (Mills, 2008; Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Litz and Blaik Hourani (2019) discussed how postcolonial, economic-based knowledge education mandated the inorganic introduction of bilingual instruction (Arabic/English) and EMI in the UAE. This aligns with the views of theorists such as Al-Issa (2017), Carroll et al. (2017) and Vygotsky (1978), who advocated a social-constructivist theory for learning and language acquisition, whereby the medium of instruction needs to be in the mother tongue. These ideas on the social-constructivist theory of knowledge, language acquisition and learning coincide with Ibn-Khaldun's perspectives and epistemology, which emphasizes the significant aspects of an education that is not only culturally relevant in its form and shape but also galvanizes the continuous progression of innovations and scientific and social achievements. Although Ibn-Khaldun argued in favor of linguistic transmission for cross-cultural learning, he advocated that the absence of an education that was not hinged on cultural elements (language inclusive) would ultimately lead new generations astray from innovations and achievements (Alatas, 2013).

According to Ibn-Khaldun, the native language is a channel to distinguish the achievement of a society, and it enhances positive and better communication among individuals. Ibn-Khaldun recalled that Arabic is a language that should not be surpassed, and mastery of it as a native language should be consolidated in teaching-learning to ensure society can remain in touch with cultural elements and move forward (Alatas, 2013). His views on language preservation and its significance as a medium of instruction were also emphasized by contemporary linguists such as Al-Issa (2017), Carroll et al. (2017) and Thorne (2011).

Ironically, and keeping in mind the thoughts of Ibn-Khaldun as referenced by Alatas (2013) and Vygotsky (1978), the UAE school reform agenda has prioritized using EMI for all subjects except social studies, ME and Islamic studies. Consequently, this has caused sociocultural endangerment, hindered communication and comprehension of school subject concepts, and ultimately hampered critical thinking, creativity and innovation in subject areas taught in English (Raven, 2011; Al-Issa, 2017).

Another curricular feature of ESM is the introduction of ME. It is worth mentioning that moral teaching and ethics were emphasized since the time of the *Kuttab*s (Fortna, 2000; Kimmerling, 2000). Al-Farabi viewed social justice as the main dimension of ME (Alatas, 2013). Al-Farabi stressed that the perfect city of virtue, *Al Madina al Fadelah*, will not exist without cooperation and coexistence, where social justice is a core element. For him, social justice features human understanding, collaboration and actualizing one's potential to support and respect others. This is attained by what he called 'active intellect'. According to Al-Farabi, happiness can be attained through active intellect and social justice will prevail. Therefore, to advocate the interwoven constituents of social justice and ME, we need to endow the individual with active intellect that underpins tools of the mind, such as critical thinking, inquiry, cognitivism and problem-solving (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016).

Referring to ME in the UAE, Hosani (2017) expressed her concern in that its abstract and non-tangible nature as a school subject adds to the complexity of teaching-learning. This brings into perspective whether ME has conformed with the scope of CP that had been advocated by medieval Muslim scholars who emphasized the pivotal role that mind tools and active intellect play in the process of teaching ME.

Teaching social sciences and ME embodies the utilization of mind tools. According to Badi and Tajdin (2004), medieval learning in an Islamic context included *ijtihad* and *qiyas* (cognitive-analogical reasoning in Islamic law). Additionally, teaching social sciences and ME requires secular thinking, such as being inquisitive, hypothetical, rational, reflective/contemplative, metaphorical/analogical and constructivist. These mind tools were the fundamental for a CP enhancement that occurred during medieval Muslim times, and they were also highlighted by Averroes and Avicenna. Therefore, the means for CP existed in the medieval Islamic context of teaching and learning. These have also been theoretically revitalized now when school reforms are taking place in the UAE. Nevertheless, the true practice and realization of CP have not been achieved yet (Blaik Hourani et al., 2011; Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019).

### ***Limitations hindering the embracement of a CP in ME***

According to Melikian (1980) and in relevance to social sciences and humanities (ME inclusive), sociocultural constraints imposed upon learners are so entrenched that they hinder the promotion of a CP in the teaching-learning of these subjects. New values and opinions can be developed if they fit within the established and shared social and cultural norms, while personal autonomy or independent

thoughts are given little or no space. In addition, in the UAE, opinions and values are collectively (i.e., socially) shared rather than individually constructed or internalized (Melikian, 1980; Barakat, 1993; Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Blaik Hourani (2017) and Kadi and Billeh (2006), concur that due to social constraints, CP can sometimes be challenging to execute in ethnocentric and conservative societies.

Pedagogies and teaching practices that involve constructing opinions and values through inquiry-based learning, self-learning and student-centered learning remain significant challenges in the UAE because teaching strategies that promote constructivist approaches and CPs are not in practice, especially in the domains of social studies and culturally loaded subjects. Consequently, the utilization of CPs in the UAE is hindered (Alazzi & Khawaldeh, 2008; Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

### **Why the option of EMI?**

Thorne (2011) indicated that many schools had reported challenges in adopting EMI. This is due to inadequate transition preparation, lack of alignment and continuity between subject content and textbooks and the perseverance of a disjointed bi-educational system where EMI is only being used in some grades/subjects. Al-Issa (2017) adds that the use of EMI breaches social-constructivist advocacy for effective teaching-learning and constrains the development of critical and innovative thinking. While these limitations have been acknowledged by the UAE educational system and macro-level policymakers, a remedy is not yet forthcoming, as English “constitutes a key part of the vanguard of globalization” (May 2001, p. 201). Due to the rapid integration of the Gulf economies into “global markets and the massive influx of expatriates to staff all sectors of the economy”, English has become the language of communication (Badry & Willoughby, 2016, p. 194). As a result, EMI has been prioritized and co-opted because it is the medium of instruction in higher education and required in the local and globalized labor market (Crystal, 2002, p. ix; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Cullinon, 2016).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The UAE school reforms introduced in 2005 incorporate ME, which is not a novelty. ME has been in existence since the medieval Islamic renaissance. Moral teaching-learning had been presented in a robust manner through the mind tools employed to consolidate the praxis of such teachings, where cognitivism and critical thinking were the foundation of social sciences teaching, including ME (Litz & Blaik Hourani, 2019). In the medieval Islamic era, the individual’s intellect, cognitive and metacognitive development were emphasized; hence, education was more directed toward individualized intellectual and critical cognitivism rather than as a means for economic-based knowledge, as is the case in terms of the manifestation of the UAE school reforms (Kadi & Billeh, 2006; Blaik Hourani et al., 2011).

Cultural transmission and monolingualism were emphasized during the Islamic medieval era. Therefore, Arabic as a mother tongue was once employed as a cultural transmission agent and as a medium of instruction, but EMI has been

employed as a part of recent educational reforms to galvanize labor market needs and accommodate globalization (Al-Issa, 2017). This has undoubtedly had a detrimental impact on Arabic literacy and the culture of Emirati students (Cullinon, 2016; Carroll et al., 2017). Muslim scholars have historically been regarded as initiators and transmitters of knowledge and culture rather than mere receptors and/or adopters of inorganic knowledge. During Islamic medieval times, there was reciprocal knowledge and cultural transmission, although Arabic as a native language was not subject to disintegration, deterioration and endangerment due to the inorganic usage of a foreign language as a medium of instruction (Badi, & Tajdin, 2004, Haque, 2004; Blaik Hourani et al. 2011).

In summation, the authors suggest the following paths:

- Revamp the road map for school reforms that are shaped by a bottom-up structure
- Revive the Muslim scholar paradigms pertained to teaching-learning and CPs

Subsequently, in alignment with the advocacy presented by Zevin (2007) and Blaik Hourani (2017), instructional and transformational leaders need to consider the following:

- Reorganize a value-centered curriculum that focuses on empathy and universal commonalities. This will help learners envisage positive and constructive aspects of human relationships and issues pertaining to social justice, coexistence and sociocultural inclusion. Accordingly, this will cement the grounds for teaching-learning of ME in terms of creating a desire for repentance and vigilance against violence racism and prejudice.
- Emphasize inquiry-centered learning, where knowledge processing occurs through document analysis, accounts from oral social-history, empathy texts, poetry and case studies, as well as pedagogic materials that are used to scrutinize multi-perspective realities and consolidate social-ethnic cohesion and cross-cultural understanding. Teaching ME requires the endorsement of “post-conflict situations...which act as a therapeutic technique in bringing the nation together” (Blaik Hourani, 2017, p. 275).
- Promote a national affiliation and traits for global citizenry.
- Enhance interactive, mind tools and metacognitive methodologies with problem-based learning strategies that require the active mobilization of learners’ knowledge, skills, values and attitudes toward finding solutions.

With regard to language, based on Carroll et al. (2017), Al-Issa (2017) and Ashencaen-Crabbtree (2010) views, instructional and transformational leaders need to consider the following:

- Construct a language policy in order to give Arabic its educational and cultural role in schools and at the wider societal and global levels.
- Preserve the Arabic language and its cultural implications through the modification of language arts in UAE schools. This comprises the introduction of

triglossia policy, which consists of a combination of colloquial Arabic in the early years, where children's literature can be used to promote it, while Modern Standard Arabic (and English should be used for instruction in the later years).

- Stress the value, significance and deployment of L1 (i.e., Arabic) as a heuristic teaching-learning tool.

It is essential that UAE school instructional and transformational leaders and policymakers revisit and construct policies and trajectories that integrate Muslim scholars' perspectives and contemporary educational trends that intersect with the reform's agenda. This requires an open, progressive and participatory/bottom-up leadership and management that genuinely believes in social justice, equity and an organic educational vision for all.

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# 11 Islamic educational leadership and a model Islamic high school

Insights from Türkiye

*Muhammet Emin Türkoğlu, Hanifi Parlar and Ramazan Cansoy*

## Introduction

The educational leadership and management literature points out the social, cultural, and political impacts on school leadership (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Hallinger, 2018; Shah, 2006; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Owing to the Western origins of many theories in the field of educational leadership, researchers have begun to examine perceptions of leadership in different societies (e.g., Hallinger et al., 2017; Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021). In recent years, efforts to understand Islamic educational leadership have shown a noticeable increase (e.g., Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Hammad & Shah, 2019; Shah, 2006; Sellami et al., 2019).

Johnson (2005) remarks, “[T]oday, faith schools attract an immense amount of attention from within and outside the field of education and in many national contexts” (p. 115). As faith schools, Imam Hatip schools (IHSs) in Türkiye have changed significantly over the last 20 years. They strive to instill an identity that is both Islamic and modern in their students. From this perspective, these schools provide education that applies art, language, and natural and social science programs (e.g., Göver & Yavuzer, 2015).

Therefore, in this study, the research questions are as follows:

- 1 What are the school principal’s perception and practice of Islamic educational leadership?
- 2 What are the good practices in this Islamic school?

## The education system in Türkiye

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the previous education system based on the Madrasa (Islamic college) from the Ottoman period was abolished with the Unification Law on 3 March 1924. This law dictated that all schools were to be governed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). Following the additional laws enacted in 1926, emphasis was placed on secularism in education. Accordingly, curricula and school types began to be structured within this framework. In addition, efforts to modernize and nationalize education were increased during this period (Güven, 2018, p. 213).

The Turkish national education system organizes both formal and non-formal education under the National Education Basic Law. The main objectives of this law are to raise individuals who are committed to national values, love their homeland, and know and fulfill their responsibilities to the state. Furthermore, it emphasizes the training of individuals according to age-specific skills and adherence to the founding values of the country. Thus, the Turkish education system outlines both general and specific learning objectives. For example, several principles, such as equality, scientificity, planning, and the right to education, underlie curriculum and instruction (Resmi Gazete, 1973). Educational programs are carried out according to frameworks prepared for certain age groups and proficiency levels, and they are divided into two areas: formal and non-formal education. On the one hand, formal education is carried out in preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Non-formal education, on the other hand, includes all other types of training and programs. The main purpose of non-formal education is to develop the skills of individuals who do not have the opportunity to continue formal education. Primary and secondary education is each four years long and compulsory. There are different types of secondary schools in Türkiye, including Imam Hatip secondary schools. Thus, there is a total of 12 years of compulsory education nationwide. On the other hand, higher education includes institutions that provide education for at least two years. Approximately 18 million students pursue formal education in Türkiye (MEB, 2020a).

Türkiye's national education system has a centralized and bureaucratic structure. All regulations, processes, and administrative affairs in schools are managed according to the frameworks specified by the MoNE. Therefore, the activities carried out in schools depend on the central organization. The MoNE carries out its plans and programs according to the political, moral, and cultural values of the Turkish nation, following policies that promote equality for all. Moreover, it maintains and reforms the education system in accordance with current events and social changes (Arar et al., 2017). Consequently, Turkish national education operates under the basic principles of generality and equality, needs of the individual and society, orientation, right to education, equality of opportunity, continuity, obeying Atatürk nationalism and its principles, democracy education, secularism, scientificity, planning, coeducation, school and family cooperation, and universal learning (Akyüz, 2020, p. 335). The organizational structure of the MoNE consists of three major divisions: central, provincial, and foreign. The central organization consists of the minister, deputy minister, and select presidencies and senior management levels. The provincial organization consists of the provincial and district national education directorates. The foreign organization consists of 54 representative education consultancy and attaché offices in 32 different countries (Şişman, 2020).

## **History of IHSs**

Islam is the most practiced religion in Türkiye, where the state controls religious education. Accordingly, religious education is carried out in line with a certain curriculum. In this regard, such schools were established to train religious officials

called *imams* and *preachers*. In these schools, on the one hand, vocational courses that focus on the basic teachings of Islam are intensively followed. On the other hand, students in these schools also take secular lessons. These schools are called IHSs (Buyruk, 2020).

Aşlamacı and Kaymakcan (2017) explain,

The Imam-Hatip schools are the deepest-rooted educational institutions in Turkish educational history. These schools date back to the beginning of the *Nizamiya* Madrasa, which continued the line of traditional Islamic education represented by the historical evolution of the Saljuki-Ottoman-Türkiye experience.

(p. 280)

After the foundation of the Republic in 1923, the idea of providing Western-style education with a national and secular structure was adopted. In line with this, the Law of Union of Education was enacted in 1924 (Arı, 2002).

In accordance with the provisions of the 1924 law, four-year IHSs were opened at the primary school level. Therefore, Madrasa education was continued with IHSs with the foundation of the modern Turkish Republic (Çakmak, 2009). However, IHSs were deprived of state support at the beginning of the Republican period. Therefore, these schools could not provide effective education in accordance with national policies until 1950, when the Democratic Party came to power (Öcal, 2007).

The Democratic Party opened new schools in Ankara, Adana, Istanbul, Isparta, Maraş, Konya, and Kayseri between 1951 and 1952. Later, hundreds of IHSs were opened in several other Turkish cities (Öcal, 2007). Today, under the General Directorate of Religious Education, there are four major types of IHSs: (i) Imam Hatip Secondary Schools, (ii) Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools, (iii) Project IHSs, and (iv) Program IHSs (MEB, 2020b).

The aim of IHSs is to prepare imams and preachers to meet the religious needs of the Turkish Muslim community (Çakmak, 2009; Ozgur, 2012). Thus, IHSs train qualified personnel for employment in various institutions of the Presidency of Religious Affairs. There are some basic features of IHSs that distinguish them from other Islamic education experiences: (i) these schools are under the control and supervision of the state; (ii) they are part of the general Turkish education system; (iii) they offer religious and secular courses together in the curriculum, following a modern educational style (Aşlamacı, 2014, p. 270). Like all Turkish schools, IHSs are overseen by the MoNE, which determines their curricula. However, unlike other Turkish schools, the IHS curriculum is quite extensive as it also covers religious subjects (Ozgur, 2012, p. 2).

Religious and modern lessons are carried out together in the IHS context. While students take lessons from the Madrasa tradition, they also take secular science lessons. Classes in both fields are included in compulsory courses. During the Republican period, 60% of the curricula of IHSs comprised secular courses, while 40% were religious courses (Aşlamacı, 2014; Öcal, 2007). Although students socialize by experiencing secularism and Islamic culture together (Pak, 2004),

IHSs are seen as institutions that are reviving Islamic teaching and thought in the 21st century (Buyruk, 2020).

IHSs are different from other faith schools that have a curriculum that includes only religious lessons, in that their curriculum consists of religious *and* secular lessons. For citizens who want to read the Quran, learn its meaning, become a hafiz, and receive religious education, Quran courses are available to provide these forms of training. There are Quran courses for the 4–6 age group, Summer Quran courses, Quran teaching in mosques, and Hafızlık courses (DiB, 2021).

According to the 2019–2020 data, there are 3,437 lower secondary IHSs in Türkiye. A total of 777,439 students receive education in Imam Hatip lower secondary schools. However, there are 1,651 upper secondary IHSs nationally, serving 610,007 students (MEB, 2020c).

Since their establishment, IHSs have been the subject of debate over their objectives and student profiles. These disputes are grouped into two camps: *critical* and *defensive*. The *critical discourse* argues that the schools pose a threat to the current regime and the gains of the Turkish Republic, while the *defensive discourse* states that these schools create a barrier to religious extremism and serve to spread Turkish–Islamic ideals and Islamization (Kaymakcan & Aşlamacı, 2011, p. 79). These schools remain part of political debates across the country, with critical and defensive discussions continuing in different institutions and organizations (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017). Moreover, academic scholars in the fields of religious education, secularism, and politics have also engaged in these conversations (e.g., Çakmak, 2009; Ozgur, 2012; Tank, 2005). Such schools have also been discussed in international forums, especially after the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, bringing global attention to Islam (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017). Considering all these discussions, it becomes clear that IHSs will continue to be a topic of political and social debate for years to come.

## **Islamic school leadership**

The philosophy of Islamic educational leadership originates from the Quran and the words (Ahadith) of the Prophet Muhammad (Shah, 2006).

The Qur'an is Islam's sacred text, as revealed by Allah to Muhammad (pbuh) over a span of 22 years. Muslims believe that it offers complete guidance for humanity to live a life in accordance with the will of Allah. The *Ahadith* were written after Muhammad's (pbuh) death and comprise Muhammad's (pbuh) words, actions, and deeds. It is also viewed as a major source of guidance for Muslims.

(Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, p. 56)

An Islamic educational leader helps students develop their intellectual, moral, and individual qualities. The close relationship between religion and education enables the identification of these features. Teaching and learning are holy responsibilities for an educational leader according to Islamic beliefs (Shah, 2006). An educational leader in Islam is an educator, “teaching with knowledge and understanding”,

prophet/leader, “guiding with wisdom and values”, and parent, “caring with responsibility and commitment” (Shah, 2006, p. 370).

Islamic school leaders have different values. These values are good counsel (nasiha) and sincere conduct (ikhlas), consultation (shura) and dissent (ikhtilaf), public interest (maslaha), encouragement of right and discouragement of wrong (amr bi'l ma'ruf wa al nahl an al munkar), accountability (hisba), and reflection (tafakkur) (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, pp. 57–61):

A Muslim leader tries to do what is best for others. It is honest and sincere. He acts with the consent of the Creator. He always thinks that Allah sees him and that he will be held accountable for his decisions (Nasiha, Ikhlas); Muslim leaders work collaboratively and consult knowledgeable people. They prefer the dialogue path in their decision-making processes. They accept conflict as normal. They view conflict as an opportunity for constructive decision-making (shura; İkhtilaf). When necessary, Muslim leaders can change their decisions in order to achieve spiritual and physical, worldly and otherworldly, individual and social well-being. They prefer what is good, convenient and useful (maslaha). Muslim leaders try to do and spread the truths commanded by the Islamic moral and legal system. They make an effort to correct any wrongdoing. They encourage behavior that is dignified and respected (amr bi'l ma'ruf wa al nahl an al munkar); They think that they will be held accountable to God and society for everything they do (hisba): The Muslim leader has the ability to think deeply. Thinking is about divine laws, existence, knowledge in accordance with divine laws, and whether it behaves in accordance with the requirements of right action (tafakkur).

Therefore, Islamic education leaders refer to the requirements of the Islamic faith in all their education and training activities. The basis of all these activities is the idea that doing good deeds for people will earn Allah's love. It is possible to see this situation in many Quranic verses and Hadiths.

## **Methodical analysis**

The present research employed a case study methodology to conduct an in-depth analysis of leadership practices at Türkiye's most successful Imam Hatip high school. The case study method is a very common approach in qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 77), as it provides an in-depth examination of a limited phenomenon to obtain deeper meanings (Merriam, 1988).

In a case study, researchers often ask “how” and “why” questions about a current situation that they are somewhat or entirely removed from (Yin, 2003, p. 9). The purpose of the case studies is to reveal the results related to the situation. This study comprehensively examines leadership practices in an Imam Hatip high school. The status of IHSs in Türkiye has attracted the attention of researchers; thus, this study is conducted to investigate a successful Imam Hatip institution and its administrators more closely. We chose this school for several reasons. The first and most important of these is that the school has a religious identity and educates the

clergy. Second, this school is a well-established Imam Hatip high school that provides multilingual education, stands out with its projects in the fields of science and social sciences, and national and international achievements in these projects. Third, this school, which provides predominantly Islamic education, is preferred by students with very high scores and it has an extraordinary success rate in university entrance examinations. The fourth is the appointment of school principals with an Islamic identity as the director of this school by the MoNE. Thus, the perception of leadership can be affected by the environment, religious beliefs, and cultural structure of the individual. The study conducted in this school is envisaged to facilitate the examination of Islamic leadership; to qualify a research as a case study, researchers should start by identifying a focal example of a certain situation (Lune & Berg, 2017). Such situations can emerge in a variety of ways; an individual, an institution, a group, or an environment can provide an example of a situation to work with. Case studies can be conducted using either quantitative or qualitative approaches. The most basic feature of the qualitative case study is the in-depth investigation of one or more cases (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 77).

This research relied on data from interviews conducted with the principal and assistant principal of the Imam Hatip high school under study. In addition, the researchers accessed some important documents belonging to the institution and took photographs to present examples of the work done in the institution and introduce its facilities. The official website of the school was also used for the analysis. Case studies make it possible to evaluate a complex and unique situation within its own conditions. Therefore, a holistic approach was adopted and validity was increased by drawing upon different data sources, especially by using the triangulation technique. Generally, more than one data collection method is used in case studies. In this way, we aimed to obtain a rich variety of data that could confirm each other (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). As case studies generally employ more than one data collection method, we used interviews and document analysis to conduct this study.

In this study, one researcher visited the school to conduct interviews with the school principal. When necessary, the school principal sought help from the assistant principal in answering the questions (e.g., number of students, school projects)

There are several methodological recommendations for the case studies like this one. First, the researcher(s) should describe the situation in a rich context. Events should be presented in chronological order, with researchers focusing on the main events. Finally, the researcher(s) should also be involved in the event as a participant(s) (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2013). With the research questions, we tried to understand the school principal's perceptions and practices of Islamic educational leadership and the good practices in this Islamic school. Some of the questions asked in this research are as follows:

“What are the general goals of your school?” “How do you make decisions at school?” (For example: Making different decisions concerning teachers, students, or parents) “Can you give an example?” “Can you tell us about the features that distinguish your school from other schools?” “What are the



qualities that make your school an Islamic school?” “In your opinion, what are the characteristics that education should bring to people?” “Do you cooperate with families?”

In this study, the research data were subjected to content analysis after the interviews were conducted at the institution. Strategies used to ensure the validity of the research included the incorporation of direct quotations whenever possible, as well as the use of different sources of data and perspectives, including interviews and document analysis. Furthermore, we performed participant validation to increase validity. We reached out to the participants and received feedback. In addition, we provided intense descriptions. These are among the most important methods for ensuring validity and reliability (Merriam, 2013).

### **General information about the school**

Founded in 1985, the school is located in Kartal, a district of Istanbul. The school does not accept students from its own environment but accepts students from all over Türkiye based on the results of the high school entrance examinations. Therefore, the school environment and demographic structure of the region do not have any effect on the school. Currently, 843 students are enrolled in the school.

The school's advanced infrastructure and equipment support qualified education and training activities. Kartal Anatolian Imam Hatip School (KAIHS) has two main education buildings with a total of 48 classrooms, independent dormitories for girls and boys, a gymnasium, a conference hall, a practice mosque, and a large library with 60,000 books. In addition to physical chemistry and biology laboratories, there are STEM, robotics, research and development and information technology laboratories. Additional specially designated places within the school exist for music, art, ceramics, theology, social sciences, International Baccalaureate (IB), and conversation club rooms. Finally, KAIHS has an innovation center, which the principal has often highlighted in interviews.

The KAIHS staff includes a school principal, four assistant principals, a coordinator for three different areas, and approximately 90 teachers organized in different branches. On average, 180 students are admitted to the school each year. The current KAIHS principal graduated from the school years ago, taught at different schools, and earned master's and doctorate degrees. In addition to being KAIHS' principal, he also lectures at a university. Former school principals had a very important influence on the development of the school as well. The previous school principal had also completed his doctorate and worked at the school for many years. Moreover, one of the assistant principals, who participated in the interviews for this project, also worked at different levels in the same school for many years. Therefore, the school administrators are very familiar with the school, and they are highly qualified given their educational credentials and previous experience.

The school staff places great importance on the quality of teachers to educate students in the best possible way. Therefore, common characteristics shared among KAIHS teachers include dedication, effort, expertise in the field, prudence, and versatility. To create such a teacher profile, the school benefits from a different

application provided by the MoNE for project schools. Accordingly, successful teachers from different state schools are interviewed for positions at KAIHS. The school principal expressed this situation as follows:

If we are sure of the quality of a teacher, we take him to our school; of course, with the approval of the Ministry.

Approximately 90 teachers work at KAIHS. Of these teachers, 16 are enrolled in a master's program and 8 are enrolled in a doctoral program. These teachers care about their own academic success as well as that of their students. Moreover, the teachers excel in social aspects beyond academic studies.

### **The school principal's leadership practices and perceptions**

The principal stated that the school attached special importance to the quality of learning outcomes when teaching religious sciences. In this respect, he stated that religious courses, such as *Hadith*, *kalam*, and *siyer*, are taught in the school and that traditional *hafiz* practices represent a distinctive education approach:

As an Imam Hatip school, we have a curriculum specific to this school. In this curriculum, there are courses that are not available in other schools, such as *hadith*, *kalam*, and *siyer*. Our students take these courses. However, we expect quality learning outcomes when teaching the courses to our students. For example, we created a project class for our students to memorize the Quran. We have about 30 students in this project.

The school principal states with examples that the Islamic tradition is kept alive in the implementation of the daily program at the school. To emphasize that the flow of a Muslim's life is in a certain order, he especially emphasizes that the time to start the day is the morning prayer:

In line with our annual plan, we look at our agenda for that week, the next day, and follow those agendas. In the morning, life starts very early here. For example, we have students who memorize the Quran in our dormitory very early in the morning. Also, all our students start to study after the morning prayer, and our day begins.

The school principal emphasizes the awareness of unity in the understanding of education. Unity represents the Creator's unity. He emphasized the importance of unity in the school as a reflection of the Creator's unity with the following words:

I mean, there is no other. As soon as the *other* is, we fall into an uncanny environment. Then, we split into two separate parts: me and the other, which creates insecurity. You and I are not separate here. If we are going to work together here, there should be no duality here. That is, I mean, a form of unity.

The school principal believes that religious knowledge is decisive for living Islam. Accordingly, Islam should always be at the center of life. However, putting Islam in the center should pave the way for activities that can be done in the halal (without deviating from Islamic principles). The school principal expressed this using the metaphor of the compass. In other words, the fixed leg of the compass represents Islam, and the other leg points to what can be done within the legitimate circle of Islam:

At this point, we strive to train our students who have talents in every field. There is a metaphor we call the compass metaphor. One end of the compass should be in religious sciences and the other end in modern sciences. Religious and modern sciences should be provided without separating them. By reconciling them.

The school principal states that he does his duty for the sake of Allah without expecting anything in return (Ikhlas). In this understanding, he refers to loyalty to the Creator. He sincerely stated that this situation was reflected by all teachers:

Yes, I am trying to be able to build a common will at this school. This is not a will of necessity. It is something that comes from the heart and is done for the sake of Allah. For this reason, we leave beautiful traces and memories in this school. I just expressed it. In other words, our teachers make many sacrifices for our students without expecting anything in return. For example, our students do not leave school immediately after classes are over; our teachers continue to teach them. In fact, our graduates are still in contact with our students here. Therefore, I can say, sake of Allah is hoped for.

Nonetheless, consultations with teachers and students are of great importance. Meetings with stakeholders in decision-making processes show that *the shura in Islam* is considered:

There is also governance in our school. This includes our students. Of course, on matters that are relevant. It is not in our school regulations at the moment, but for years we have formed a student council every year with a title called Kartal Council here, and in the form of a weekly meeting with the representative of each class.

Certainly, the aim of the school is to work for the common good (maslaha) of the school community (Kartal Council, Mothers Union). The school principal also mentioned the works carried out for this purpose:

Our parent-teacher association strives to reach benevolent people, collect various incomes and contribute to our school. In this way, we can provide scholarships to students in need. Moreover, our parent-teacher association also meets the general needs of the school. Similar activities are carried out in our Mothers union. They also help needy students. But it is the Kartal Education

Foundation and our Alumni Association that assumes the greatest responsibility and gives us all kinds of support.

The school principal interprets what makes the school Islamic, especially in terms of his Muslim identity. Accordingly, he expressed in a single sentence that he tried to center the moral and social ideals envisaged by Islam for the society on his works:

If there's anything that makes this place Islamic, it's my being Muslim.

The school principal expects students to demonstrate morally correct behavior within the framework of Islamic foundations at school and in their lives after graduation. He stated that the students are not only equipped with knowledge at school but also brought up in a way that reflects a certain tradition to the society (*emri bil maruf*):

Not just skills and knowledge, but behaviors too. Skills and behaviors don't mean anything by themselves. I think we talked about knowledge earlier. Knowledge should reach action, skill and good deeds so that it can contribute to society. The behavior of our students should be an example to the society.

The education at KAIHS aims to reveal the potential of children, rewards of success, support provided to students and teachers, espousal of Islamic ethics and values, and fostering of critical thinking and character development. The school principal explained the goals of instruction as follows: "We want to raise a student who is aware of his/her own talents and abilities and has a controlled ego". These goals were expressed by the assistant principal in a similar way:

[T]here is no conception of being successful only in the academic field. In every field we want them to be successful. We try to train our students who have abilities at this point. It actually diverges. There is a metaphor that we call the compass metaphor. Actually, to carry out these works by reconciling with each other without being separated from each other, with one end of the compasses we apply in religious sciences and the other in natural sciences.

As is evident from the aforementioned statements, the school carries out serious studies for both academic and religious education. The principal of the school explained this dual focus, saying, "This is an IHS. Therefore, we are doing something to shape the personalities of children with religious education. We also want them to succeed in the culture, arts, and academic fields". Different projects have been developed to increase the quality of the school's religious education, as described by the principal in the following terms:

Memorization of the Holy Quran is in our classical curriculum. The school presents Quran classes, but there is also such a thing as a *hafiz* project. Although we do not have such an aim, four to five students complete their

memorization of the Holy Quran every year. In addition, there is a lesson called *Hadith*. At our school, there is such a thing as *hadith* memorization. In other words, my students work for *hadith* memorization every year. The minimum requirement for participating in this contest is to memorize 40 *hadiths*.

The school principal believes in an education model suitable for students' nature. He points out the importance of realizing and revealing the potential of students. He states that education that is not carried out in accordance with the nature of the student will lead to meaningless results:

In other words, it is extremely important in education to reveal the talents of a student and the ore that is unique to him. To do the opposite is ironic. So it's a ridiculous thing. We cannot get a good sheep by cutting off a camel's ears and legs. That is, we cannot acquire talent in unnatural ways.

The school principal said that mistakes made in the past were not made in his school. In particular, he explained that the student was *not oppressed* so that students' talents could be revealed and processed more easily:

So our egos were crushed when we were students. "Do you know who I am?" They used such arrogant words a lot. Those words really hurt a lot. They hurt our soul. Education is a long-term business. It requires fine workmanship and effort without hurting people. My vision as a principal here is to facilitate the cultivation of essence in my students.

Notably, the school principal openly declares the negative consequences of the displacement of the fixed leg of the compass:

Of course, if we make a mistake in applying that compass metaphor to life, we can cause great losses. There are many examples of this negative situation. In other words, our students, who are far from religious sciences, may unfortunately be under the influence of different ideologies.

The leadership mentality in the school is based on governance maintained within the framework of a common mind map, centered on innovation, and underscoring the importance of staying active. Instead of positioning himself hierarchically, the principal emphasized teamwork and collaboration. He expressed his understanding of collaboration in the school as follows:

[W]e create a mind pool out. That pool of mind feeds everyone, our teachers. In other words, this collective pool of mind is something that only opens up the domains to each other. For example, every department strives for continuous improvement. Let's say the English Department collaborates with the Arabic Department. The Arabic Department, if necessary, collaborates with the Science Department. Our teachers are trying to create such a serious cooperation and opportunities for our students.

However, the principal described the environment wherein students could discover themselves using an interesting metaphor. Students can participate in various activities at this school. These are social, scientific, and religious studies. Therefore, students use the metaphor because they can meet all their intellectual needs:

There is a name given by the children here. They call this school “wonderland castle”.

### **Good education practices in the school**

The education and training practices of the school vary widely. Notably, KAIHS is a five-year school. In the first year, a foreign language preparation program is applied, whereby students receive both English and Arabic language education starting from the preparatory class. In addition, they can enroll in natural and social sciences high school courses if they wish or study English within the IB and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) programs. Students who desire international programs are offered the IGCSE program in the 9th grade and the IB program in the 10th and 11th grades, after the preparatory class. After completing the IGCSE program in the 9th grade, students can continue on to the optional IB program. Moreover, KAIHS teachers and administrators are appointed by the MoNE, as it is among the project schools managed by the ministry. The school was the first public school to receive Cambridge IGCSE accreditation in Türkiye. In 2016, the school was the second state school in Türkiye to implement the IB Diploma Program. Furthermore, KAIHS graduated its first IB students in 2018. Students in the school can prepare for university examinations with a special program from the 11th to 12th grades. In addition, KAIHS students undertake intensive studies to prepare for national standard examinations. The vast majority of students from the school actually pursue medicine or engineering at the university, earning degrees at the national level. If necessary, students are provided with study materials during summer breaks to prepare for these examinations. The assistant principal expressed the following:

[H]aving finished language preparatory classes here, they go to universities, such as Boğaziçi, Sabancı, Koç Universities, students can easily pass the preparatory class and move to the next level.

Moreover, the school staff place great importance on language education. Qualified teaching activities develop each student’s skills to speak and write in at least two languages. This emphasis on language education is expressed by the assistant principal as follows:

Our students study Arabic at two schools in Jordan. We are in contact with them. We always take our students to those schools for language education. We have become more professional now. The schools we take our students to are actually modern language centers. Students frequently participate in scientific competitions, which are seen as a dynamic part of the education at

KAIHS. Some of the students prepare for these competitions in special groups, which has led to many successes.

The assistant principal described the school's achievements in this area:

Our students participate in many international competitions where they have the opportunity to showcase their talents. All students here in Türkiye and abroad participate in these qualifiers. For two years, all of our students passed these qualifiers and won the right to compete in America. Of course, they could not go last year due to the pandemic. For example, we had students there who won gold medals by participating in competitions held by different universities in Bahrain or America, in different branches. Besides, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye [TUBİTAK] competitions are at the forefront in our school. In physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and geography, our students have achieved success in TUBİTAK. They became the champions in Türkiye. Our students received gold medals. The number of students who are successful in TUBİTAK is quite high. On the other hand, we have successes in the fields of literature, arts and sports.

This evidence demonstrates that KAIHS' instructional practices enable students to focus on a variety of studies alongside religious education. In this context, the implementation of many internationally accepted educational programs, the improvement of the quality of students and teachers, language learning, and successful participation in national and international competitions all create a strong learning climate in the school. It is noteworthy that KAIHS is among the most successful schools in Türkiye when considering student placement at qualified universities in national examinations. Moreover, graduates of the school have been accepted by universities worldwide. While still in secondary education, students at the school have achieved great success in national and international competitions in diverse fields, such as art, technology, letters, and sports. For example, KAIHS students won the world Robochallenge robotics championship in Romania in 2018. In addition, students have achieved degrees in the National Science Olympics.

Extracurricular activities at school fall into four basic categories: student clubs, community service, courses, and school magazines. Each student is required to join a club and engage in at least 15 hours of community service per year. In addition, students at the school publish ten different magazines and can take courses from expert instructors in fields, such as language and music. Many activities are carried out in the school along with the aforementioned, including fairs, teacher events, lectures, seminars, professional meetings, reading groups, author readings and performances, opinion talks, and workshops. The teachers in the school teach the students not only in their branches but also in different fields. The school principal explained how the teachers contributed to the school as a living space by facilitating and participating in lessons:

Each of our teachers here has a versatile personality, and apart from their work, some of our teachers enter their classes and then do a writing workshop with the children. Some of our teachers give Arabic lessons; some of them teach Ottoman Turkish as extra-curricular lessons outside school hours-school. For example, one of our teachers takes a math class but then in the evening they play and sing.

The school principal states that he attaches great importance to this and that they conduct serious studies vis-à-vis community participation. In fact, the statements of the school principal on this subject are as follows:

The school parent association is one of them. It strives to collect various incomes and to receive the contributions of benevolent people. The Parent-Teacher Association can get involved in issues such as providing scholarships to students or making up for any shortcomings of the school. In addition, we also have a school mothers' union to support students. Our mothers association also works actively.

The school collaborates with the community and stakeholders in different fields. These collaborations contribute to school development at KAIHS: the parent-teacher association, the mothers' union, the alumni and members association, and the Kartal Education Foundation. The most important tasks of the parent-teacher association involve contributing to the development of the school, facilitating cooperation between students and parents, supporting school activities, and collecting suggestions for the promotion of the school. However, the mothers' union coordinates school helpers and provides financial contributions to the school and its students. Providing assistance to needy students is the most critical role of this group, which has also contributed to the establishment of the conference hall, mosque, library, computer laboratory, and Quran rooms. The association also organizes dinner parties and bazaars.

## **Limitations**

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it should be considered that education and training activities were paused during this time period. Students could not be observed in classrooms because face-to-face education had not resumed at the time of data collection. These limitations should be considered by readers when interpreting and applying the study results. This study was conducted in a single school. Therefore, it is recommended to expand the research to a wider group of participants and similar school types to obtain more inclusive results regarding Islamic educational leadership.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

In this section, the school principal's perceptions and practices of Islamic educational leadership and the good practices in this Islamic school are discussed.



### ***Some Insights for Islamic Educational Leadership***

This study showed that the behavior of the school principal was generally affected by the values of Islam. The school principal's reference to the Muslim identity with the statement: "If there's anything that makes this place Islamic, it's my identity being a Muslim" can be considered as an indicator of how Islam directs the values and behaviors of individuals. Notably, Muslims' values, morality, and leadership are characterized by their religious identity (Shah, 2006). For example, the school principal's emphasis on doing things for the sake of Allah as the ultimate goal for himself and the teachers at the school (*ikhlas*) can be seen as proof of this. Similarly, Striepe (2016) states that the beliefs and values of school leaders working in Islamic schools are important factors in their practices.

In this study, the perceptions and practices of the school principal are similar to the conceptual framework of Islamic educational leadership, as determined by Brooks and Mutohar (2018). The school principal's decision-making in conjunction with the stakeholders (*shura*), thereby trying to maximize the benefit of the school community (*maslaha*) can be shown as examples. For instance, distribution is among the most prominent features of the school. The school principal shows a pattern of behavior that transfers responsibility and authority to others and includes stakeholders in the decision-making processes. Moreover, promoting good values (*amr bi'l maruf*) and an individual's commitment to Islamic values can be given as examples. Brooks and Mutohar (2018) state that executive thoughts about Islam, education, and leadership are effective in carrying out Islamic educational leadership practices. In fact, the perceptions of the school principal examined in this study were effective in the school's practices. Therefore, the school principal believes that every student has significant potential. He also believes that if one lives according to the tenets of Islam, he will be able to easily deal with various life situations. The school principal thinks that students should be educated in a versatile way. Therefore, he frequently emphasizes that combining religious and modern sciences is vital for students to understand the world. When all these are considered together, it can be interpreted that the Islamic beliefs and values of Muslims are important guides in the emergence of behaviors toward Islamic educational leadership. Furthermore, the school principal believes that community participation is highly critical for the school. Therefore, community participation is among the most important indicators of collaboration in schools. The graduates of the school, community-supported associations, and the school's foundation make serious material and moral contributions to education in the school.

### ***Some Insights from Examples of Good Practices***

Sharing leadership and strong vision are among the most prominent features of the school principal. The school staff pursue a vocation in education and training, seek continued certification and credentials in their areas of expertise, and have high expectations of their students. Therefore, they are constantly pursuing innovation,

aiming for quality and high teaching standards. The implementation of internationally accredited programs in the school can be considered an indicator of this. Consequently, quality in both academic and religious education is one of the main objectives of the school. While accomplishing these aims, the school principal shares leadership as much as possible within a central education system and sees teachers as subject matter experts in their profession. The school principal shows a pattern of behavior that transfers responsibility and authority to others and includes staff in decision-making processes.

Quality education is another strength of the school. Students' needs and development are placed at the center of education, with a particular focus on cognitive and emotional growth. The diversity of the school's programs in parallel with religious education can also be considered a result of this. The fact that students carry out many activities in the school and can meet with school administrators and communicate their needs when necessary shows that the environment ensures the development of student leadership. In other words, the students are provided with an education that emphasizes Islamic ethics and values while gaining a modern identity that allows them to better understand the world around them.

Teacher commitment and capability are important factors that increase the quality of education. Teachers support students and school management not only in their own departments but also in varying areas where they are competent. The fact that the school is successful in many different areas may increase this commitment. In addition, the teachers at KAIHS constantly add value to themselves, as evidenced by the number of faculties with postgraduate degrees. Moreover, the implementation of different international programs at the school also requires teachers to continuously pursue professional development.

Community participation is among the most important indicators of collaboration in schools. The graduates of the school, community-supported associations, and the school's foundation make significant material and moral contributions to education in the school, particularly to underserved students. Such contributions also help to meet the different needs of the school, such as providing funds for new facilities or volunteers for school events. In this respect, there is clearly a strong cooperation between the school and its surrounding community and society. Moreover, there is a strong group culture among graduates who continue to support the school socially or economically. These rich resources help to constantly develop the physical conditions of the school to increase students' learning and upgrade the school's infrastructure. For example, the school's own independent library building and innovation center show the importance of creating such conditions for rich, multidisciplinary learning.

In conclusion, this research revealed that KAIHS might be a model for other religious schools in Türkiye, as well as in different national contexts. On the one hand, the school serves as an example of how religious and secular/modern education can be integrated. On the other hand, Islamic beliefs and values have a guiding feature in the leadership perception and practices of the school principal.

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# 12 An untold narrative of a female Muslim educational leader

*Tasneem Amatullah*

## Introduction

Qatar, an Islamic nation with Shar'ia as its legislative law, is also very progressive in its way of practicing Islam. For example, the education system emphasizes and incorporates Islamic values and teaching as a part of the curriculum, with a specific emphasis on critical thinking and preparation for the workforce. Higher education and K–12 education are a part of the national (public) education system, which is governed by the Ministry of Education. Established in 1973, the pioneer higher education institution funded by the government is Qatar University. Initially, starting with the College of Education, the university now hosts ten other colleges of various specializations (Qatar University, 2021). Additionally, Qatar also hosts a higher education hub called Qatar Foundation's (QF) Education city which includes several international universities offering a variety of degrees. The education city was established by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Her Highness Moza bint Nasser Al-Misned in 1995. It includes Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Weill Cornell Medical College, Carnegie Mellon University, and Texas A&M to name a few (Amatullah, 2018). The QF strives to support the Qatar National Vision 2030 to develop and sustain human capacity in the nation for economic prosperity and support the transition of Qatar into a knowledge-based economy (Qatar Foundation, 2021).

Female participation in the workforce contributes drastically to the economic growth of Qatar. Access to modern education and progressive leadership in Qatar are key to changing the position of women in Qatari society. Although this participation may be low in comparison to some of the Western nations, women are most active in the field of education in the Gulf Cooperation Council<sup>1</sup> countries. Much has been written about women in leadership positions in the Middle East and Gulf Countries, including their participation in the workforce (Willen et al., 2016). Highlight that there has been a 33% increase in female participation in the workforce from 1993 to 2013, with a 19% increase in Qatar alone. Furthermore, 51% of women in Qatar who are economically active are over the age of 15, out of which 88% of women work in the education field. However, women still hold few leadership positions.

Challenges faced by female leaders include the difficulty in making a difference in their workplace due to the way society perceives them. This is majorly

attributed to society being male dominated. Even more so, men in the society find it hard to accept the notion of women being in senior levels. To overcome these challenges, gender-role stereotypes need to be abolished; women should be allowed to make decisions the same way males do in an educational environment; support should be given to women politically, socially, and psychologically; women should be educated about their rights and potential in society (Almaki et al., 2016). As per the Ministry of Development and Statistics (MDPS, 2015), although there is a drastic increase in women in the workforce, they still comprise only 12% of the total labor force.<sup>2</sup> To bridge this gender inequality gap, the nation requires a collaborative effort from different stakeholders, including policymakers, businesses, and the community itself (Willen et al., 2016). Undoubtedly, one of the major fields that women contribute to is educational leadership. Hence, this chapter presents *a narrative of a female Qatari educational leader in higher education, highlighting how she maneuvers her leadership role in the light of the Islamic leadership framework*. In what follows, the first section focuses on the background and context of the chapter. The next section explains the conceptual framework following which the narrative of one female leader is presented considering the Islamic educational leadership theory and practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations.

### **Islamic educational leadership theory and practice**

Several studies have explored Islamic leadership from an educational perspective (Aabed, 2006; Jabnoun, 1994; Jubran, 2015; Padela, 2015; Saleemad et al., 2012). Al Sarhi et al. (2014) unpack the similarities and differences in Western and Islamic leadership perspectives. They argue that there is a lack of literature on Islamic leadership and unfortunately this leads many Muslim nations to adopt Western leadership theories and practices. Further, Mahazan et al. (2015) identified 25 themes that form an Islamic leadership inventory based on Quran and Hadith, managerial and servant leadership, contemporary Islamic leadership literature, and classical texts of Islamic leadership. These themes require a leader to be trustworthy and conduct themselves with integrity, have employee orientation, be able to self-evaluate, be patient, have an outcome orientation, be empowered, have social responsibility, and also be flexible. Moreover, leaders are required to be non-calculative, spiritual, have religiousness and piety, esprit de corps, be brave, seek justice and equity, be self-reliant with self-esteem. Modesty and shyness, impartiality, moderation and balance, good communication, being free from environmental constraints, earnestness, cheerfulness, feared when angry, empowering intelligence, wisdom, and synergy, be role models, and avoiding conflict are also some required traits of leaders (as cited in Amatullah, 2018). Most importantly, these themes have been validated and justified with Quranic and Hadith citations (Mahazan et al., 2015).

For instance, the theme trustworthiness and integrity were framed based on inventory items such as “I strive to fulfill the organization’s trust; I lead by following the guideline set by the organization” (Mahazan et al., 2015, p. 726) is stressed upon in Quran as “Not to betray the trust” (Quran; A’raf: 27).

Another theme, empowerment was a derivative of the inventory items such as “I have to be fair and give my trust in delegating tasks to my employees, irrespective of their gender; I introspect the situation and make thorough decision. Scale of parity is what I use to avoid any partiality” (2014, p. 726). The idea of empowerment is emphasized in the Holy Quran as “being fair to all” (An-Nisa: 1). Furthermore, the scholars justified that these themes are aligned with Maqasid Al-Shariah; the higher level of Islamic Shariah perspective.

(Mahazan et al., 2015; as cited in Amatullah, 2018, p. 26)

In this chapter, two definitions of leadership are utilized to analyze the female leader’s narrative. First, Aabed (2006) draws from Rost (1991) and defines educational leadership as “a process of interaction between the leader, the followers, and the situation because leadership effectiveness is dependent on the leader, the followers, and the situation” (p. 44). Second, Beekun and Badawi’s understanding of Islamic leadership is that “[l]eadership is a trust (Amaanah). It represents a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them, and to treat them justly” (1999, p. vii). The common thread in Islamic leadership is that a leader performs their roles and responsibilities on the basis of Quran and Sunnah<sup>3</sup> of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Likewise, Padela (2015) puts forward that humans’ existence is for the purpose of worshipping God (Al-Attas, 1993; Beekun & Badawi, 1999), so any role we play needs to conform to the Islamic law, which in turn is a form of worship. Hence, leadership from this perspective translates to a form of worship. Mir (2010) elaborates further stating that Islamic leadership has a dual nature that requires a leader to fulfill “a) Haqooq Allah- the rights of God over humanity; b) Haqooq Al- Abad- the rights of humanity over each other” (Amatullah, 2018, p. 28). Likewise, several scholars have derived a theory or framework based on Islamic perspectives (Aabed, 2006; Brooks, 2018; Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Padela, 2015). For this chapter, Padela’s (2015) Islamic educational leadership theory and practice framework is used, as it explicitly aligns the model to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and presents a comprehensive framework.

## **Conceptual framework**

Utilizing a grounded theory lens, Padela (2015) develops the themes of Islamic leadership based on the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). He analyzes the Western leadership theories such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and situational leadership in the light of Islamic leadership and clarifies that these models offer valuable insights to the leadership literature and “do not necessarily conflict with any Islamic teachings”, but “they are not rooted in the Islamic tradition and may not have the same credibility as a leadership theory that is grounded within the Islamic tradition and the Prophet Muhammed’s Sunnah” (Amatullah, 2018; Padela, 2015, p. 6). Padela (2015) analyzes a standard textbook of Hadith, *Riyad al-Salihin*, which includes 1,896 teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that have been studied for several centuries until now by Muslims. Padela concludes two main categories demonstrating Islamic leadership, modeling and directing behaviors and motivating followers to a theocentric worldview.

**1 Modeling and directing behaviors**

The first core category highlighted the modeling and directing behaviors of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) leading to four main themes called leadership behaviors: personalized leadership, relationship with God and humanity, treatment of people, and adaptive leadership. Furthermore, each of these themes led to notable leadership properties of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) as listed in Table 12.1. For instance, personalized leadership focused on the leadership roles that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) played along with the role modeling characteristics. The second theme relationship with God and humanity reminds leaders of the dual role to be devoted to God while also obeying their obligation toward the followers. The third theme stressed treating people with gentleness, being just, and promoting welfare for the weak. Finally, the fourth theme focused on the adaptive leadership approach, where the abilities of the followers are borne in mind when they are assigned tasks. The first three themes lean toward a leader-centered theory model while the final theme is a follower-context model (Padela, 2015).

Modeling should also be based on spiritual leadership. For this to occur, they are to make a vision for the workers and leaders combined to experience a calling and drive that provides them with meaning and purpose. Even more so, they are to set the foundation of the organization as one with altruistic love and values to promote a feeling of belongingness (Egel & Fry, 2017).

**2 Developing a theocentric worldview**

The second category was specifically developed by Padela (2015) to frame an Islamic educational leadership model to guide school leaders within K-12 Islamic schools in the United States. However, this model has been adapted to the field of higher education in this study. Table 12.2 exhibits the themes and properties to develop a theocentric worldview or, in Islamic terms, a Tawhid-centered model (Padela, 2015; as cited in Amatullah, 2018). There are two main themes in this conceptual category: fidelity to God and His Prophet, which entail active reflection and belief in life after death as the two core properties. The main idea driving this theme is that the leader is reminded of God and the accountability for all leadership actions and decisions as

Table 12.1 Leadership behaviours of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Conceptual category	Themes (leadership behaviors)	Properties
Modeling and directing behaviors	Personalized leadership	Leadership roles Role modeling
	Relationship with god and humanity	Devotion to god Concern for followers
	Treatment of people	Promoting gentleness Promoting justice Promoting welfare of the weak
	Adaptive leadership	Follower potential

Note: From Padela, A. I. (2015). A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership behaviors: A Model for Islamic School Principals. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243, p. 64.



*Table 12.2* Islamic educational leadership model based on leadership behaviours of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Conceptual category	Themes (leadership behaviors)	Properties
Developing a theocentric worldview	Fidelity to God and His Prophet	Active reflection Precedence of the afterlife
	Developing a faith-based identity	Ummah Familial ties Social responsibility Preventing harm

*Note:* From Padela, A. I. (2015). *A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership behaviors: A model for Islamic school principals*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243, p. 77.

accountable in the life after death. The second theme reiterates the need to develop a faith-based identity by serving the ummah, maintaining familial ties, exhibiting social responsibility, and avoiding harm to anyone through their actions.

The two tables exhibit Padela's educational theory and practice framework, which is used to analyze the female leader's narrative in this chapter. With this framework, it is obvious that Islamic educational leadership theory thus has a lot to say about how educational leadership can change the current practices to create an educational system that is a more collaborative effort from all stakeholders (Amatullah, 2018).

In addition to this, certain Quranic values that influence Muslim leadership include their belief about Islam, education, culture, and leadership. They are then required to conduct themselves with reflection (*tafakkur*), good counsel (*nasiha*), sincere conduct (*ikhlas*), consultation (*shura*), dissent (*ikhtilaf*), public interest (*maslaha*), encourage right and discourage wrong (*amr bil maruf wa al nahi an al munkar*), and accountability (*hisba*). This demonstrates that there is an Islamic base to their performance as leaders (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018).

## **Female leadership narrative**

### ***Methodological analysis***

The present study explored female leadership experiences in Qatar and specifically to understand how a female leader narrates her experiences of leadership in higher education in Qatar, an interpretivist discourse (Benton & Craib, 2010) coupled with narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was used. Narrative inquiry is a way of "understanding experience" through the telling of stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20; as cited in Amatullah, 2018). More importantly, I drew upon what the leader narrates as her experiences or how she interprets the meaning of her experiences rather than what her actual experiences are from an

outsider's lens. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further clarify that "experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of [studying] narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (p. 19). Hence, narrative inquiry is best suited for this study to understand the experiences of the women in leadership positions in the education sector. Narrative as a method highlights the narrations of research participants as the "lived" and "told" stories (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). It further helps the participant and the researcher to work collaboratively enhancing the lived stories and add "multidimensional meanings" to the data (Leavy, 2008, p. 27).

Bold (2012) argues that the number of research participants must not be of concern, as the core of the narrative inquiry "focuses on deep explorations of a small number of cases in a particular context" (Bold, 2012, p. 57). She further explains that the idea of generalization is not of focus in qualitative research; rather, it is on the "transformation of the practice in a specific context" (p. 57). Hence, in this study, I utilized a case study approach (Stake, 1995) to present the narrative of one Qatari female leader in higher education to reveal her lived Islamic educational leadership story. Using a convenience sampling, a leader with more than five years of leadership experience was recruited. Through conducting a case study, an in-depth look at the Qatari female leader's perspectives and experiences can be gauged. There were three one-one interviews conducted and each meeting lasted between 60–90 minutes. Riessman (2008, p. 23) stresses interviews as "narrative occasions" and that "the narrative inquirer may note stories but more often records actions, doings and happenings, all of which are narrative expressions" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 79) which helped develop a detailed narrative of the leader. Furthermore, three non-participant observations were conducted to triangulate the data. The questions asked were focused on understanding the leader's leadership experiences such as to understand the definition of educational leadership; what it means to be a female leader with supporting examples; influence of Qatari Islamic context in her leadership role, specifically in decision-making and leadership style; some examples from her leadership experiences that complemented her as a female leader; some examples where being a female leader was challenging; and finally completing a statement that discusses what being a female leader in Qatar in higher education is like. These questions were posed in a semi-structured interview format, hence many probing questions helped develop a detailed account of this female leader's experience.

A thematic analysis is used to develop the themes from the leader's story. Bold (2012) elaborates, "[T]hematic experience analysis encompasses two ideas that the researcher is often seeking and identifying themes (or not) within the narratives; and that experiences usually involve relationships between people and contexts" (2012, p. 129). The interviews were transcribed and analyzed for codes manually. Preliminary coding was done following which a secondary set of coding was carried out that merged some of the themes under larger themes. This narrative is developed in a meticulously sincere way, remaining as close as possible to the participant's own voice while simultaneously reflecting on my own insider/outsider perspectives given my status as a female Muslim myself residing in Qatar.

## Findings<sup>4</sup>

### *Sara – “An ambitious leader communicating with minds”<sup>5</sup>*

Sara works in a research organization in Qatar, Al Zaki, and has over 19 years of professional experience of which 12 years have been in a leadership position. Sara was a friendly, smart, and polite leader. After our initial conversations via email, I scheduled a one-one meeting with Sara. Sara’s office was located in one of the busiest places in Doha. We met in a café, and after our initial introductions, I began our interview discussion. To explain her understanding of educational leadership, Sara stated, “[T]hose people cannot lead because they do not know what they really want, and all experience and talent will do no good here”. Sara argued that a leader ought to know what he/she really desires in his/her leadership role. Without a clear vision, leadership becomes blurry, she added. Specifically, she relates herself as a leader who communicates with the “minds of the people”. She elaborated that as a leader, she aims to understand the minds of the people trying to understand their abilities and tasks they could perform. When asked about what it means to be a female leader, Sara exclaimed, “I believe it is much stronger than male leadership”. She added that women have the ability to multi-task, relating it to her childhood stories and her upbringing in Qatar. She argued that girls in this society are brought up so that they are equipped with many skills and talents such as sewing, baking, and cooking, but on the contrary, that is not of emphasis for boys. She rightfully believes gender has its influence not only in her upbringing but in the Qatari society itself. However, on a positive note, these skills for girls early in their lives encourage them, making them feel powerful and independent.

Sara was not only clear in her thoughts and ambitions, but she was also a reflexive person. When asked how her leadership has changed since she began in her recent role, she took a short pause and then began to narrate her experiences. She stated,

I have learnt a lot from my mistakes. I have learnt a lot from the obstacles that I’ve faced. I was promoted in my leadership position in a very short time frame. Some of my friends are still in the same position they started. I believe that if you do not have any obstacles, you will not refine your personality.

She further reiterated that all individuals must find ways to enhance their skills and make ways for personal and professional development. She argued that she does not pave way for her success, rather, Sara said, “I seek for opportunities and I try to find what will help for my growth as well as for the organization”. She further added that she has faced many obstacles in her leadership journey; however, she has learned a great deal from those experiences. To the question of the influence of Qatar’s Islamic context on her leadership style, Sara argued that “we have more of cultural influences, rather than Islam itself”. To explain the influence of Islam in her professional practices she elaborated,

Once you are following halal and haram, there is nothing further to do. I can be very good in my work. I am just working under the Islamic ruler. But once the culture interacts with Islam, this becomes an issue.

Sara shared an example elaborating her perspectives on cultural and Islamic contexts. She narrated that in the past, it was challenging for her to travel alone for her business trips. She clarified that it was about five years ago, but now it is gradually changing. Sara continued that she is witnessing a change in the community's perspectives in this regard. Yet, she argues that there is a lot more to change. Sara argued,

In our country, still there is no female minister, I think long back there was one female leader. But she did not have the true leadership authority to execute leadership actions, and this is because of our culture, not Islam.

(Amatullah, 2018)

Finally, for Sara, culture itself was a huge barrier to female leadership because she argued, "Culture operates under the disguise of Islam, and that's not the truth". Contrary, Sara clarified that Islam actually empowers and supports her to do her best. Sara argued that Islam teaches her to perform her leadership roles. She quoted some Islamic leaders' names such as Ibn Khaldoun and Ibn Batuta who were great leaders and said that many leaders irrespective of their religion have inspired her. She also quoted Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King to name a few. Her leadership approach was to advocate for your rights but never clash with other people (Amatullah, 2018).

In response to narrating her complimentary leadership experiences, Sara believes that most of her experiences are challenging; however, she perceives those in a complementary fashion. She acknowledged that Qatar as a nation has supported women in recent years in their education a lot. Many years ago, when she wanted to pursue a master's degree, she faced cultural restraints but now many opportunities have been created to support Qatari citizens to meet the Qatar National Vision 2030. When talking about the challenges, Sara reflected back on her experiences when she initially began working at Al Zaki. She explained that there were no clear guidelines when she accepted the leadership role and things were very unorganized. She elaborated,

That time it was very hard to start my leadership role without any clear idea of how the department is functioning. I decided to frame the guidelines and procedures, which is a time-consuming job, but I achieved it with the help of my team members collaboratively. It was setting up guidelines that match our work. It was making the daily routines accurate.

Sara's thoughts reflected her personality to seek perfection in the tasks she carries out. She emphasized the importance of collaboration and having a clear vision in her leadership role. She further narrated one of her leadership strategies, reiterating the significance of seeking input from all her team members and empowering

them in their roles. She deployed problem-solving strategies by finding out the core cause and then seeking viable solutions. Finally, when asked to complete the statement, “Being a female leader in Qatar in the field of higher education is like...” After a short pause, Sara uttered, “[I]t is to have non-stop ambitions for me” and “fighting for reliable changes”. Ultimately, Sara was clearly a visionary leader who believes in communicating with minds, having clear guidelines and procedures, empowering her team members, and collaborating with her team to achieve set targets.

Although observations were determined to be a means of data collection, due to the restructuring of the organization, she was unable to schedule the observations. Hence, I specifically designed a few interview questions that focus on enhancing her told narrative of her leadership experiences. The questions asked were to describe a typical meeting scenario, who leads the meeting, what is the structure, and the discussions that take place. Sara narrated several scenarios from her meetings explaining the way she leads her team. Sara explained that she delegates tasks to her team members as it empowers them and always communicates the expectations very clearly for them. She does not arrive at a decision herself, but rather she presents the task or an issue at hand to the whole team and asks for suggestions to carry out that task following which the voting process takes place and a decision is made. Sara reiterated that communication, empowerment, and accountability are the three key strategies in her leadership.

## **Discussion: Application of Islamic leadership theory and practice**

The purpose of this study was to examine Sara’s higher education leadership experience in a natural context and then analyze it within the framework of Islamic leadership. Utilizing the literature on Islamic leadership and Padela’s Islamic leadership theory as a lens, several themes emerged such as communication, being a visionary leader, assigning tasks based on followers’ capacity, teamwork, and support. However, in the second round of analysis, some of the themes were merged under one larger theme; for example, teamwork and support were categorized as collaboration. The two main overarching themes are (1) female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar and (2) leadership support system and challenges. Unlike Padela’s framework of splitting the model into two main conceptual categories with properties and behaviors categorized under “modeling and directing behaviors” and “developing a theocentric worldview”, I present one comprehensive chart as shown in Table 12.3 detailing the findings about one of the female leaders in Qatar.

### **1 Female Islamic educational leadership in higher education in Qatar**

According to Padela (2015), the personalized leadership theme focused on two main properties of role modeling and leadership roles. Under this theme, from the analysis of Sara’s narrative, being a visionary leader, delegating tasks to her subordinates, being task-oriented, and taking up responsibility stood out as sub-themes. For instance, Sara noted,

Table 12.3 Female Islamic leadership in higher education in Qatar (created by author)

Main themes (from Padela, 2015)	Sub-themes (from Sara's narrative)
1 Personalized leadership	Visionary Delegation Emphasis on task Responsibility
2 Treatment of people	Empowerment Culture of respect
3 Adaptive leadership	Follower capacity
4 Relationship with god and humanity	Collaboration Communication Consultation
5 Fidelity to God and His Prophet	Concept of Halal and Haram
6 Developing a faith-based identity	Empowerment Community leadership

Note: Adapted and modified from Padela, A. I. (2015). A grounded theory study of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership behaviors: A model for Islamic school principals. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Fisher Digital Publications. Education Doctoral, Paper 243.

Each year on 31st December, I meet with my friends and set the objectives for next year. At that time, we also open up the envelopes of our previous years objectives and evaluate what and how we achieved. It may be only half of it I achieved, but still it is a success for me and I carry forward my remaining goals to the next year.

Islam emphasizes a leader to be visionary (Ahmad & Fontaine, 2011). Beekun and Badawi (1999) extend this by saying that a leader has the ability to see beyond assumed boundaries and come up with solutions (Amatullah, 2018). However, the core tenet in Islamic leadership is to follow the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Summarizing a verse from the Holy Quran, Ahmad and Fontaine stress that in Islam “a leader is not free to act as he or she chooses, nor must he submit to the wishes of any group, he or she must act only to implement God’s commands on earth” (2011, p. 125; as cited in Amatullah, 2018).

Likewise, when addressing her emphasis on the accomplishment of tasks and being goal oriented, reiterating the overarching theme of being visionary goal oriented as highlighted by Mahazan and colleagues in their study (2015), Sara remarked,

I can lead with one leadership style. I can communicate well with you. But what is more important for me is to achieve...it is not just the person's ability and the situation that I adapt to, for me, leadership is to achieve.

Finally, on responsibility, Padela (2015) reminds us of a Hadith confirming the importance of being a responsible leader: “You will covet leadership, but it will be a source of regret on the day of rising” (Riyad al-salihin, Hadith 677).

For Sara, responsibility means her team members should be capable of making their own decisions, not relying completely on their senior management.

The second theme focused on treatment of people, promoting gentleness, justice, and welfare of the weak (Padela, 2015). The idea of promoting justice and equity is reiterated in Islamic leadership literature abundantly (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Mahazan et al., 2015). From my analysis, empowerment was a key theme in Sara's leadership along with creating and maintaining a culture of respect among her team. Sara's idea of connecting with minds was her key strategy in empowering her team members (Mahazan et al., 2015). She reiterated that in both personal and professional settings, she believes that she needs to know the minds of the people to identify their skills and capabilities so that as a leader she can empower them based on their needs. She went on to say, "[I]n order to empower my team members, my focus is to hone their skills at work". She highlighted the need for leaders to empower their team members so that the end goal is achieved efficiently. As posited by Almaki (2016), women also need to be given equal importance in the society. There is an urgent need to empower women and enlighten them of their existing rights.

The third theme focused on adaptive leadership highlighting the follower potential (Padela, 2015). Likewise, Sara's narration of her leadership style reflected that she pays close attention to the abilities of her team members when assigning tasks. Her focus is more on empowerment and transformational leadership skills rather than adapting herself to the skill set of the team. For example, she narrated an instance where she explained that everybody can perform well and argued that more than the ability of a person, it is the perspective of the individual that enables a person to either succeed or lose in a particular task (Amatullah, 2018).

The fourth theme, paying fidelity to God and humanity, was of great significance in Padela's framework. Under this theme, the notion of collaboration, consultation, and communication aligned well as Sara was implementing these strategies in her leadership role keeping in mind the concern for her followers/team members. Shah (2006) highlights that "similarities can be perceived across certain dimensions of Islamic notions of educational leadership and the leadership concepts such as reflective, transformational, ethical/moral, collaborative, dialogical and 'servant leadership'" (p. 373) as Sara reflects in her leadership role. For example, in terms of consultation, "Shura", Sara shared in her narratives that she does not individually derive at a decision, rather she seeks suggestions from her team members, conducts a voting process, and then comes to a final decision. It should be noted that there was no direct connection made in Sara's narrative about devotion to God; however, utterances such as "Alhamdulillah" meaning "All praise is due to Allah" and "SubhanAllah" meaning "May He be glorified and exalted" could be taken as a gesture toward her devotion to God in her leadership role. Sara is a communicative leader and argued that it is communication that will help bridge the gap between people, knowledge, and even communities (Amatullah, 2018). She elaborated, "[I]f there is no communication, you will not get anything. There will not be any development".

The fifth theme fidelity to God and His Prophet (PBUH) has two main properties such as one engaging in active reflection on their deed and actions

and having faith in the life after death (Padela, 2015; Shah, 2006). One main theme that aligned well here is Sara’s belief in practicing what is halal and refraining from haram acts in her leadership role. For this particular theme, not many instances were revealed from my analysis where Sara reflected a theocentric worldview. However, it should be noted that my study is not evaluative in nature; rather, it is exploratory and does not aim to assess their leadership or faith-based practices.

In the final theme, Padela (2015) highlighted the need of developing a faith-based identity by taking care of the ummah, maintaining familial ties, social responsibility, and preventing harm. Sara’s leadership highlighted the notion of empowerment and community leadership, which falls under the category of taking care of the ummah. Sara emphasized that in addition to her leadership role in Al Zaki, she plays a role as a community leader where she implements her leadership strategies of communicating with minds and offering support to her community. For instance, she offers counseling to teens and other women in need. She believes that her way of communicating with minds and empowering people helps individuals to identify their own strengths and redefine their purpose in life.

**2. Support and challenges**

In addition to identifying the Islamic leadership themes with Padela’s (2015) conceptual framework, Sara’s narrative also highlighted the support system and challenges she faced as a female leader in higher education in Qatar (Table 12.4).

Sara in many instances was thankful for the support system she has around her in performing the best in her leadership role. She recognized the support she received from her family, especially her husband to pursue her graduate degree. Likewise, Sara acknowledged the support she received from Qatar as a country in terms of supporting her graduate studies by funding her studies. She argued that the development of the country on the whole has helped her accomplish her dreams. She explained that even before a decade or so, Qatar was not very progressive in its goals. There were many hurdles, and Qatar as a country was exploring ways to overcome these challenges. She believes that once Qatar began to progress, the culture itself progressed and fought against traditional stereotypes against women (Amatullah, 2018). She argued that “society is adamant to change and come out of cultural restrains. But when the country develops, they notice the change and are willing to accept change for good”.

*Table 12.4* Supports and challenges female leaders face in Qatar (created by author)

Main themes	Sub-themes
1 Support system	Family Supervisors Qatar as a country
2 Challenges	Femaleness Workload Culture vs. Islam



The challenges highlighted in Sara's narrative are not unique to a woman, as the study by the American Association of University Women revealed some of the barriers women face in the classroom, workplace, and politics, such as the persistent pipeline problem, sex discrimination, balancing work and family, lack of effective networks and mentors, and negative impact of stereotypes and bias (2016; Amatullah, 2018). Therefore, it should be noted that the challenges revealed in Sara's study are not just evident among Muslim women or women in Qatar, as such challenges have existed worldwide for decades, as has been validated in the literature.

One of the challenges that stood out in Sara's narrative was "femaleness", which reinforced the idea of gender-defined roles and stereotypes associated with Qatari female leaders. However, according to Sara, as an optimistic individual, she believed some of these roles make women multi-tasking and more efficient as compared to men. Sara also narrated the barrier to traveling alone due to cultural restraints. Another challenge highlighted in her narrative was the workload, where Sara mentioned that it is a lack of clarity and clear direction that adds extra workload. She also added that there are bureaucratic policies that complicate the tasks rather than making them simpler for employees. She clarified,

As a leader, I focus on effectiveness of task. So, it is my responsibility to have clear guidelines so that there is no work duplication and to make sure that we do not fall into the trap of unnecessary work.

Culture versus Islam was one of the connecting themes throughout Sara's narrative. She argued that, unfortunately, Islam is misconceived for cultural practices, and women are perceived as oppressed. Rather, it is Islam that empowers women. In Sara's own words,

There is a lot of freedom for women in Islam, but it is not allowed in our culture/country and it usually presents the opposite of Islam. I am working under an Islamic emperor. As far as I follow, what is halal and haram in my leadership position, I need not think further. But, once the culture interacts with Islam, it becomes problematic. Islam supports me to do better in my role.

Sara was cognizant of the negative cultural representation of Islam and the ways it influences her as a female leader. Probably that is why she was hesitant to respond to the prompt on how the Islamic context of Qatar influences her leadership style (Amatullah, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

As Willen et al. (2016) emphasize the need for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders including the businesses, policymakers, academic institutions, and the community itself to bridge the gender inequality gap, this study unveils Sara's leadership narrative and ways she maneuvers her leadership role being a female

leader in higher education in Qatar. Upon analyzing Sara's narrative in the light of Islamic leadership theory and practice, it is evident that this theory offers great insights into leadership theories in general and has the potential to be extended to the field of higher education in addition to extensive studies conducted in the field of K-12 education (Aabed, 2006; Padela, 2015). Therefore, the all-encompassing nature of Islam in community life emphasizes that these leadership behaviors and practices are not restricted to Muslims alone to practice; rather, all communities can embrace them (Amatullah, 2018, p. 153).

This study offers insights and implications in three capacities: for leaders, for professional development organizers, and for researchers.

- 1 **Leaders:** The implications of this study are not defined for just female leaders but for all leaders irrespective of gender, worldwide. Leadership research is continually growing however; several scholars echo that leadership is still a complex phenomenon (Harshman & Harshman, 2008). Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) acknowledge that research on leadership began in Europe moving on to the United States; hence, it lacks the "cultural and religious heritage of other civilizations" (Padela, 2015). Likewise, this holds good for educational leadership, as Padela posits, "[L]eadership models that are grounded in the Western intellectual tradition pose a problem for Muslim educational leaders trying to practice their faith" (2015, p. 87). Islamic intellectual traditions do not follow secularism; hence, there is a need for faith-based leadership that integrates Muslims' religious beliefs with leadership roles (Nasr, 2002). From Sara's narrative, it is evident that she engaged in Islamic leadership perspectives either consciously or unconsciously, as the interview prompts were focused on exploring her leadership in higher education in Qatar following which the Islamic leadership lens was applied in the analysis stage. However, it will be ideal for leaders to consciously engage in Islamic leadership practices. Educational leaders need to follow the traditions and draw from the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by engaging in active reflection of their leadership practices.
- 2 **Professional Development:** Qatar as a nation hosts many professional development programs for educational leaders such as the initiative of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in collaboration with The Hague Institute for Global Justice by the Qatar leadership center. However, it would be beneficial for the professional development organizers to reflect on the context of Qatar and integrate the Islamic leadership framework as part of the professional development and integrate it into their curriculum. The findings from this study can serve foundations for designing professional development plans for educators from an Islamic leadership lens.
- 3 **Research:** This study was based on one leader's narrative; hence, including insights from more leaders will offer an opportunity for a cross-case analysis. Second, a holistic analysis including all Hadith textbooks will add value to the development of the Islamic leadership framework. Finally, reflecting on the biographical literature will offer rich insights into the leadership practices of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that may help guide leaders in their leadership roles (Amatullah, 2018, p. 157).

## Notes

- 1 22-Gulf Cooperation Council includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.
- 2 Number of persons of working age (15 years and above) who are either working or not working but looking for work and unemployed people in Qatar.
- 3 Sunnah is an Arabic word that means a path or a way. It is a primary source of law taken from the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). (<http://www.islamnet.com/whatisunnah.html#2>).
- 4 The institution's and the participant's names are anonymized to protect the identity of the research participant.
- 5 This narrative is summarized from Amatullah, T. (2018). *Female leadership narratives in higher education in Qatar in the light of Islamic leadership framework*. (Electronic thesis or dissertation). Retrieved from <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>.

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# 13 Islamic humanocracy and educational leadership

## The story of a community school in Egypt

*Dina Hassan El Odessy*

### Introduction

The zeitgeist of the world we inhabit is being increasingly marked by its neoliberal, capitalist and industrialist temperament whereby the value-free market has marginalised and decentralised the presence of the human being. Against a hegemonic power-laden political and socio-economic backdrop, schools and educational institutions have become trapped in the woes and throes of the market and its needs. Correspondingly, as one of the pillars of the nation-state, the school has now become an indispensable tool for augmenting societal cohesion, cultural reproduction and political stability. Such a pivotal role necessitates that schools are, akin to factories, governed by hierarchical leadership models and standards-based management paradigms to regulate and control behaviour as well as mainstream rigorous performance of teachers and students alike. This model, seldom unchallenged, stands at variance with the Islamic worldview pertaining to education and educational leadership. In fact, the “*madrasa*”,<sup>1</sup> historically initiated through Islamic endowments and *waqf* trust funds, was a bottom-top communal and decentralised enterprise that was independently run. In times bygone, the participatory role of the community was accentuated in both the educational and communal landscape. The governing powers had particularly no power over *waqf*-funded educational institutions as learning and leadership choices were left to be taken by the professional community (Makdisi, 1981). But can history be reclaimed or reinvigorated for a better future?

Emanating from the nexus of such interrelated challenges, this chapter sheds light on how Islamic-based education leadership in one community school in Egypt, pseudonymised henceforth by the name of *Iqra*,<sup>3</sup> currently challenges and transforms the hierarchical and pyramidal management structures that permeate modern educational institutions. The term “community school” has different nuances and connotations that fluctuate from one context to another. In Egypt, community schools generally refer to the schools that target out-of-school and disadvantaged children who have no access to schooling opportunities. However, in this chapter, the more general definition is operationalised, as I define a community school as a “private”, “non-public”, and “independent” educational organisation (Bodine, 2005, p. 90), as well as “a place and a set of partnerships connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community” (Blank et al., 2012, p. 1).

By their very nature, community schools idiosyncratically incur a process of transformation in their societies as they promote a collective form of governance (Zaalouk, 2006). However, by advocating a compassionate community in lieu of the contractual model that reigns in contemporary institutions, the leaders of *Iqra'* seem to have developed what I call an Islamic model of *humanocracy*. I coined this latter term to designate a human-centred leadership paradigm that promotes a form of governance that is founded upon trust, empathy, freedom and an egalitarian ethos that redefines the rights of children as equal human beings, respects the potential of facilitators as titleholders rather than employees and reimagines parents as partners. As such, through narrating the story of *Iqra'*, an inspiring and alternative model of Islamic-based leadership will be unravelled in an opportune time when there is a longing for not only challenging the status quo but for also embracing a leadership paradigm that leads people to become who they were meant to become.

Drawing upon the findings of an ethnographic study, this chapter addresses the following research question: What are the idiosyncrasies of the leadership model in an Islamic community school in Egypt? I attempt to validate through evidence-based research the possibility of conceptualising an alternative model of Islamic-based leadership, harnessing attention towards the emancipatory nature of the Islamic holistic paradigm in education and its emphasis on freedom, collective participation and well-being. However, before divulging the particularities of such a model that advocates the humanisation of the individual and the society through equity and critical awareness, it is consequential first to explore the whys and wherefores that call for the emergence of a new and alternative leadership model, shedding light on the relevance of Islamic-based leadership models to Muslim populations and the globe at large.

### **The need for new Islamic leadership models**

Islamic leadership is, by definition, the process of leading, managing and motivating others by following the religious, moral and spiritual tenets of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011; Na'imah & Muhibbin, 2020; Shah, 2006). It could be described as the "social process in which the leader seeks to achieve certain organizational goals by garnering the support from relevant stakeholders—primarily followers—while fully complying to Islamic teachings and principles" (Toor, 2008, p. 26). Characteristically, Islamic leadership is distinguished by its dialogical nature and value-centred approach that capitalises on humanity and ethical behaviour (Shah, 2006). Many researchers and authors ascribed numerous principles and values to Islamic leadership. By way of example, Aabed (2006) acknowledged ten essential qualities: mutual consultation (*shura*), leniency (*leen*), justice (*adl*), patience (*saber*), humility (*taqwa*), conviction (*yaqin*), knowledge (*ma'rifah*), self-sacrifice (*tadhyah*), eloquence (*fasahah*), and enterprise (*iqdam*). In another study, Lukman (1995) "identified six general principles: sovereignty (*Al-Siyadah*), mutual consultation (*Al-shura*), justice (*Al-'Adalah*), equality (*Al-Musawat*), freedom (*Al-Hurriyyah*) and enjoining the right and forbidding the evil" (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011, p. 295).

In relation to its chronological origination, studies on Islamic leadership proliferated in the 1980s with the exception of a number of studies that appeared earlier. Such an expansion coincided with the emergence of the Islamisation of Knowledge project and a concurrent worldwide trend of disillusionment with Western paradigms, leading to a mounting mindfulness among non-Western cultures of their respective legacies and models (Kazmi, 2003). In such times, this realisation was meshed with an early phase of scepticism that seems to have regenerated itself more strongly in present times. Generally, and in particular reference to the educational field, the recent ruptures and disruptions of COVID-19 have awakened many to the gruesome dysfunctional reality of many of our normalised structures, practices, organisations and mental models. Such disruptions urgently call for a reimagining of a more humanised reality, one that departs from the terrains of the neoliberal iron cage. Such an urgency becomes more exacerbated in the globalised world of today wherein cultural and long-established pearls of wisdom in different realms and spaces are being rapidly and guiltlessly abandoned in favour of their Westernised counterparts.

Against such an inhibiting and fluctuating backdrop, the world remains in dire need of decolonised alternatives and complementary paradigms to reinvent a more diversely picturesque scenario for the future. The diverse cultures of the globe need and deserve a richer and more nuanced reality that is consistent with their worldview and aligned with the ideological and spiritual framework in which their people are deeply steeped. Faced with such a pressing need, Muslims should accordingly “commit themselves to building organizations that simulate the inspiring Islamic management model” (Abbasi et al., 2010, p. 1873). Presently, there seems to be a reawakening pertaining to the pivotal role of spiritual and Islamic-based leadership in enhancing institutional competency and efficiency (Egel & Fry, 2017).

As Kazmi (2003) proposes, there is a need for analytical research that tackles the large “number of varied issues particularly related to the operational aspects of management” and “the significance of the Islamic revealed knowledge as well as addressing the gaps and inadequacies in the conventional management literature” (p. 204). This chapter attempts to humbly contribute to the mounting efforts in relevant literature that accumulated over the last few decades to present the values, history, features and idiosyncrasies of Islamic leadership. In the next sections, I tell the story of *Iqra'* and its experimental Islamic-based model of leadership, unravelling its idiosyncrasies, strategies, strengths and limitations and shedding light on the practicality and applicability of its approaches to interrogate whether or not they could be transferrable to other workplaces and contexts across the globe.

### **Decolonising leadership in an Islamic community school**

Located in one of the least-populated middle-class gated cities of Greater Cairo, *Iqra'* emerged as a dream school of its founders and parents in their attempt to create an educational reality aligned with their worldviews. Diverging from the status quo, the school offers a different model of schooling that emanates from the Qur'anic paradigm, from which the vision, curriculum and outlook of the school have stemmed. *Iqra'* is a micro-community school that caters for 35 students and

was initiated by a group of like-minded friends in their endeavour to decolonise the prevalent model of schooling through bringing spirituality back to the lime-light, re-championing experiential learning, the role of the *murabi* (nurturer and mentor) and prioritising freedom and criticality among children.

Adopting a Qur'anic-based educational philosophy, the school founders created a uniquely designed concept-based curriculum that is based on the Islamic philosophy of interconnected holism and implemented through an innovative unification of religious and secular knowledge that is reminiscent of earlier Islamic learning models. In lieu of compartmentalising knowledge to disparate subjects, the school's curriculum framework gyrates around the most commonly repeated 500–1,000 words in the Qur'an (such as earth, moon, sun, sky, land, mountains, stars, trees, humans), spanning the cosmos and the human universe to cover a rich array of learning objectives in a totality of interrelated connections.

In accordance with a philosophy steeped in the Islamic characteristic linkage between '*ilm* (knowledge) and '*amal* (action or deeds), the facilitators only employ instructional methods that are rooted in learning through transformative experiences. Essentially, *Iqra'* idiosyncratically implements a pedagogy of *mu'ayasha* (the state of living, existing and experiencing) whereby children learn through experiential learning. Such an approach is epitomised in multifarious strategies such as narratives, play-based learning, discussions, hands-on activities and weekly learning journeys that amount to more than 40 yearlong field trips. Immersed in real-life experiences, the children accumulate a wealth of curricular and extracurricular knowledge.

On another note, a pedagogy of criticality unfolds in *Iqra'* as the facilitators espouse critical and reflexive thinking as a foundational practice in empowering students with the capacity to engage in critical readings of the word and the world: *Ketab Allah el Mastour w al Manzour* (the written book (Qur'an) and the observed book (the universe)). In line with the school's innovative and experimental approach, *Iqra'* puts into effect an emancipative pedagogy of freedom and dialogue that aims to empower its staff and students and inspire them to become leaders of their own selves.

## Methodological findings

The findings presented in this chapter are extracted from a broader doctoral study in which ethnography was employed as a qualitative method that aptly allows researchers to develop profound insights into experiences and perspectives that are often inaccessible by other means (Eckert, 1997). It also aids the researcher, by benefit of its immersive process, in presenting rich and "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973). The research process started by procuring informed consent in *Iqra'* due to its participatory culture being a collective process that engaged parents and administrators. They were all aware of my identity and of the focus of the research. The data collection phase was conducted through participant observation which not only allowed for an authentic, insider involvement in the field site but also presented "excellent opportunities to see experiences from the views of participants" (Creswell, 2012, p. 214). Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the school's different stakeholders: students,



facilitators, administrators and parents. By means of probing through open-ended questions, the interviews advantageously allowed the participants to “best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218).

In the data analysis phase, I conducted a verbatim transcription of all interviews and then proceeded with manually coding the interview transcripts and observational field notes to accurately capture emergent meanings and themes. I attempted to intentionally represent all divergent arguments with the aim of escaping any selective confirmatory bias and depicting an accurately nuanced representation of the school’s reality. In the final analysis phase, I conceptualised the school’s leadership model after thematically classifying the data. In the following sections, I explore and discuss these findings.

### **Islamic Humanocracy: *Shura*, shared leadership and distributing power**

The nature of power relations in *Iqra’* seems to be unlike other schools or organisational settings in view of the fact that the school does not only attempt to de-institutionalise the modern school-factory model and reinstate a community-based alternative, but it also contemporaneously disrupts and decolonises the hierarchical power structures upon which present-day educational institutions are based. In the following sections, I examine the ways through which *Iqra’* shuns away from normative disciplinary and penalising structures in management and instead makes use of an Islamic and human-based leadership model. Examining the space between the hypothesised and practiced, I interrogate the school’s reality through the vantage points of its staff members to trace the ways through which the espoused participatory ideals are enacted or refuted.

### **The polemics of power: Decentralisation and circularising the pyramid**

In a country known for its ancient pyramids, many Egyptians would causally, with their well-known sense of humour, crack jokes about the pyramidal structure of power and authority in the contemporary society. Eternised in the collective consciousness of human history as one of the most oppressive rulers of all time, the image of the modern-day Pharaoh is continuously conjured in workplace analogies, past-present projections and political denunciations of the vicious cycles of tyranny. “Al-Kursi” (the chair of authority) has been innumerable accused of being a catalyst-like provoker of iron-handed and Pharaoh-like authoritarianism, both in the public and private spheres. Schools are often conceptualised as micro-communities that contain and reproduce the macro-level dynamics of power within the environments in which they are situated.

In my conversations with the facilitators and parents of *Iqra’*, I have asked them if they thought the leadership style adopted in the school emulated or departed from the one practiced elsewhere. Dalia,<sup>4</sup> a manager of the lower primary division, laughed when I asked her whether the school’s leadership model followed a

circle-like and distributive model of leadership or the traditional pyramidal structure that dictated hierarchical power relations. She promptly said that she thought it was neither of them exclusively nor that it rather oscillated between both models. Being one of the leadership team, her candid opinion was of the utmost importance as she came to reflect upon her own practices and those of the head of school. She thoroughly explained,

The prevailing feature of the leadership model here is distributive and participatory in nature but there are moments when the Head of School takes a decision and, thus, we abide by that decision. I have no problem with that. ... I really feel that he genuinely consults us, asks for our opinions and that we do really participate. I feel that it is very likely that he may have a certain opinion, and that he would change it upon being convinced with someone else's viewpoint.

Many of the facilitators conceded that the school adopted collective decision-making processes in its distributive leadership model, although they concurrently referred to the fluctuating nature of that model in particular moments of time. Sama, the arts facilitator, for example, claimed that the school has a "circular" leadership model but simultaneously asserted that there were times when it leaned towards being pyramidal, explaining that they are trying to create that participatory culture. Hamza, a highly talented facilitator with a versatile set of skills and a passion for learning that was both inspiring and contagious, was one of the ardent enthusiasts of the school's leadership model. Having no tolerance for tyrannical managers, he described how he found his much sought-after niche and calling in *Iqra'*:

If other community schools were operating through a circular model of leadership, the circle here is so much wider and greater. I remember that before hiring anyone, Mr. Ahmed (the Head of School) first consults the opinion of the staff. I believe this is something really significant. I am able to express my opinion about my direct manager. I remember a time when I submitted my resignation last year because of some issues I felt were happening and could not change. Mr. Ahmed was so upset and heatedly told me: "How come you resign? This is not how we deal with one another". ... He told me that I should talk to him whenever I feel upset or frustrated.

In referring to the previous anecdote, Hamza was referring to how the school leader implemented and encouraged a skip-level approach that departed from the traditionally held decorum of following the pyramidal administrative structure. In his mind's eye, a traditional power structure would imply a more rigorous and structured manner in negotiation and conflict management. He professed that

the general and normal pattern in the school is that there is a collective decision-making process. However, sometimes, there are decisions that cannot be taken collectively, and it is in the best interest of the whole school that they would not be taken collectively. We all understand that and greatly believe in its importance.

When I asked him to exemplify these exceptional or occasional circumstances, Hamza referred to one of *Iqra's* watershed decisions and climacteric crises:

An example of such situations would be the relationship between the school's founders. They took a decision that one of them will no longer be involved in the school and will be more of a consultant. ... As far as I was concerned, this was an issue to be resolved between the founders and it was none of my business. ... I *trust* that the three founders will come to agree upon the decisions that are in the best interest of the school.

Despite such few random situations, the leadership practices in the school were characterised by their distributive and decentralised nature as explained by earlier accounts. During my immersed presence in the school, I observed how the daily school decisions were unremittingly taken in a collective manner; the school leaders consulted the facilitators, and the facilitators consulted the students. In such an ambience, power relations seemed to be quite balanced and mitigated. However, by capitalising on the value of trust as a rationale for delegating the decision-making process, Hamza, in the previous vignette, has unknowingly referred to another cornerstone in *Iqra's* leadership model. In the next section, the significance of relational trust in relation to the capacities and challenges of leadership will be further reconnoitred.

### **Relational trust and communal rapport as an invisible pillar of Islamic-based leadership**

When I first worked in the school, I was very surprised when I heard everyone saying *mojtama' Iqra'* (the community of *Iqra'*). ... When one of the school leaders asked me, in those early days, if I was ready to give the school more effort and time than what was already required, I honestly replied by saying: "Excuse me but this is a school like any other school for me I have worked in before". I have a particular *niyyah* (a sincere intention for the sake of God) that I want to maximise the knowledge of children, respect their childhood and simultaneously relate them to Allah; this is a *niyyah* that I fulfill here as well as in any other place I may work in. ... Nowadays, I have radically grown out of this opinion. *Iqra'* is a community and a society, it is not just about children or teachers, we engage and interact with the parents in such a beautiful way. ... It is a school created by the community, and it is in itself a real and genuine community that includes children, parents and teachers. *E'hna kolena mojtama'*.

(We all are a community)

In this vignette, Habiba, one of the school facilitators, recounted in an impassioned and full-hearted spirit how she was gradually engulfed in the communal spirit of the school. The notion that *Iqra'* is more of a community than a school was respectively reiterated by all the interviewed facilitators and parents. Remarkably, using

the exact words, they did not need to present variations on the same theme as they reflected upon how the *Iqra'* community was a space where they all came together, enjoying affectionate relationships and support. The experience of enrolling in an innovative community school that is not aligned with official curricula nor is considered a certified entity is an extremely challenging experience fraught with stressful risks. Such challenges could never be overcome except by such a strong sense of rapport and faith in the dream of the community as well as trust in those who were entrusted to oversee it. In the case of *Iqra'*, such a relational trust is multi-dimensional, meaning that all involved stakeholders trust one another insofar as they are nonchalant about official documents such as fees receipts, certification documents, contracts and other bureaucratic paraphernalia that nowadays procure a sense of organisational credibility in contractual agreements. Trusteeship in *Iqra'* is informal and oral-based, rooted in the Islamic concept of community or *jam'aa* (collective group), which calls for communal bonding, unity and cohesiveness.

The concept of *jam'aa* entails a high degree of solidarity and commitment; it is a paradigm through which a group could “generate collective action” and reinforce “internal coherence” (Al-Anani, 2013, p. 43). In Islam, the role of the *jama'a* (community), whether in acts of worship such as prayer congregations or everyday worldly affairs, is of great import and value. It is, for example, reported in an oft-quoted and renowned hadith that the Prophet (PBUH) said, “Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times more meritorious than a prayer performed individually” (Riyad as-Salihin, 2022, Book 8, Hadith 74). Clinging to the community is a commendable trait as Islam advocates Muslims to engage in a more profound relationship among themselves than that based on blood or kin:

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren.

(The Qur'an, 3:103)

In such a brethren-like relationship, communal love, respect and faith are the foundational pillars of support, rendering it to be deeper than most types of human relationships (Ab Halim, 2014). *Iqra'* draws upon the concept of *jama'a* in a number of ways as it provides a shared space for the stakeholders to act as one entity and community, capitalising on their common ideals and objectives to create a sense of shared identity. Building on the fabric of mutual trust, the communal space afforded by the school becomes owned and collectively administered through the adopted shared leadership model. Without such a trust, it would have been quite challenging for the stakeholders to reach consensus in the face of rising challenges. In their seminal book, researchers Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2002) argued that “relational trust is the connective tissue that holds improving schools together” (p. 144). Relational trust is founded on four main pillars: “respect, competence personal regard for others, and integrity” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23). Such a trust enables the stakeholders to wholeheartedly delegate authority to the leaders and harness a collective sense of ownership.

By definition, “community schools foster relational trust by treating families and the community as partners, asking them to co-construct and realize the vision for their schools” (Roche, 2017, p. 12). As an Islamic community school, *Iqra'* capitalises on relational trust in a profound manner. Appreciating the value of this asset, Ahmed, the head of school, asserted without hesitation that the “parents trusted them” and trusted the ways through which they tackled the challenges, as they have experienced how they were able to trespass many predicaments, ranging from the difficult task of finding a convenient school location to the persisting complication of creating and implementing an original concept-based Qur'anic curriculum. The interviews conducted with the school's stakeholders, in fact, attested that there is an admirable level of relational trust that cements the school community and allows it to flourish notwithstanding the drawbacks. Essentially, the solid sense of trust, safety and cordiality in the school could be attributed to its limited number of students and exemplary teacher–student ratio that amounts to 1:5, as well as the repeated and extensive face-to-face interactions between the facilitators, students and their families. I have witnessed how parents were often encouraged and continuously invited to participate in school activities, share experiences and give lectures on topics of interest. The facilitators are also accustomed, in accordance with the school policy, to visit the students at their households whenever the need arises, which evidently renders a more humanised and emotional nature to their daily interactions. These findings are corroborated by research which validates that some of the conditions that influence the fostering of relational trust include small school size, an unchanging school community and the availability of a commendable degree of choice and volunteerism (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

### **A culture of freedom and self-accountability: Escaping the iron cage of institutional accountability**

The facilitators and leaders of *Iqra'* have respectively presented different nuances on the theme of self-initiated responsibility in conducting their professional duties in the school, often capitalising on how the work environment departs from the status quo. Driven by intrinsic motivation and their faith in spiritual-based compensations, many of the facilitators seem to work in accordance with a transcendental form of accountability that is grounded in the spiritual self. In such a paradigm, it is the gaze of God alone that defines and frames one's level of dedication in the workplace. Hamza, for example, rationalised in the following conversation why he was so devoted to *Iqra'*, often spending more hours than was obligated on a voluntary basis and without being asked to:

R: Are you satisfied with the level of freedom provided in the school or do you rather think it resembles the traditional work environment in Egypt?

HAMZA: If I ever felt that the place here is similar to elsewhere, I would treat the school as just work, not spending any extra effort. If I ever felt that, then we would have moved from '*amal jama'y mojtama'y*' (a collective and communal work) that brings *thawab*<sup>5</sup> (reward from Allah) to a very normal, regular and

institutional job. I have tried both, each of them has a different way of dealing with the workload. If this place ever changed to a traditional environment, I will then start to compare and check my options. ... My salary here is less than my salary when I used to work as a delivery man, but here I am receiving *thawab*.

(reward from God)

In contrast to other schools, the leaders of *Iqra'* ideologically and practically refrain from employing surveillance technologies, resisting the widespread temptation to monitor and invigilate the performance of the staff members. Steering clear of the widespread managerial fetish for control and scrutiny-laden practices, the school does not rely on archetypal performance manuals, administrative policies and procedures or disciplinarian strategies that regulate and track employee attendance and departure. In lieu of such neoliberal managerial gazes of control, the management team of *Iqra'* resorts to what I coin as *Islamic humanocracy* in replacement of administrative bureaucracy.

As the aforementioned vignette demonstrates, there is an analogous culture of intrinsic and spiritual-based motivation that runs parallel to such a leadership model and, inadvertently, strengthens it as it reduces the potential risks that could occur from its relaxed ambience of unaccountability. This culture of spiritual-based motivation is embodied in the notion of *thawab* and *niyyah*, which are both overarching and central ideas to the Islamic worldview. These two guiding concepts have been casually and unwittingly reiterated by the school staff a number of times in reference to how they conceptualised their daily work in school and its accompanying challenges. They wholeheartedly uphold the conviction that the true rewards and benefits come not from the management but from God, who is the One who holds them accountable and will recompense them by *thawāb* on the sacred undertaking of educating children for His sake. In accordance with their worldview, it is only if they harbour in their hearts a sincere *niyyah* and intention that such a sought-after end could be sustained.

Such an emancipative conviction grounds the discourse on accountability in the domains of the self and renders it a very private matter, replacing the traditional organisational form of accountability with self-accountability. Indeed, it should be remembered that, for many long years, the language of accountability has permeated discussions on school reform and educational quality insofar as they have become, to some extent, interchangeable and synonymous. In the audit culture of present-day accountability, school effectiveness is believed to be closely linked to restricted control, administrative hierarchy, continuous quality assessment and control. Accountability, indeed, “can be a very evocative word, and it is one that is easily used in political discourse and policy documents, because of the image of transparency and trustworthiness it conveys” (Bovens, 2010, p. 948). It could be argued that the “culture of educational accountability, created by well-intended policy makers aiming to improve schools, has instead become a culture of fear, driven by unanticipated consequences of the system” (McGhee & Nelson, 2005, p. 368). Many practitioners and administrators often lament the incapacitating and devouring nature of audit-related and accountability practices and the culture of control they generate (Bovens et al., 2008).

Rarely, if ever, has the organisational discourse on accountability focused on individual morality and spiritual responsibility. In *Iqra'*, the reverse is true. The school leaders intentionally and purposefully abandon the culture of benchmarking, quantitative assessment and accountability. Hailed as a yardstick of trustworthiness and efficiency, school accountability has somehow metamorphosed from an instrument of development to a holy grail. Inspired by the Qur'anic paradigm of vigilance, the leaders and facilitators of *Iqra'* opt for an alternative version of accountability. They are quite cognizant of the repeated reminders through which the Qur'an persistently reminds its readers of self-accountability and the final Day of Account:

O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has forwarded for the morrow (The Day of Judgement), and fear Allah. Allah is aware of what you do.

(The Qur'an, 59:18)

In Islamic teachings, self-accountability and responsibility are championed, as human beings are called upon to bear witness to the fact that they are individually responsible for their worldly and otherworldly destiny. As the next verses advocate, one is accountable for oneself alone:

Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burdens if one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load. Not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other). Even though he be nearly related.

(The Qur'an, 35:18)

Essentially, "self-accountability is one of the basic tenets of the Qur'an and the Islamic culture" and "has been regarded as a tool for a believer against insinuations caused by Satan" (Chaudhary, 2017, para. 1). Muslim scholars across the centuries have accentuated the import of *Ihtisab-el-Nafs* (self-accountability) as a prerequisite for the management and control of one's *nafs* (self). It is such a spiritual definition of accountability that seems to be espoused and practiced in *Iqra'*.

### ***Shura as a participatory approach to shared leadership***

Thursdays are special days in *Iqra'*. At the end of each week, the students are accustomed to spending the whole day outdoors with their physical education facilitators, playing sports and engaging in entertaining activities. On the other end of the spectrum, the school leaders and facilitators would seize the precious opportunity of time to engage in an eight-hour dialogue and consultation about scholastic affairs and the holistic well-being of students. Situated around a table together, their seating resembled that of a *halaqa* (learning circle). Essentially, the *halaqa's* circular seating arrangement plays by its nature an unequivocally influential role in equalising power dynamics between involved participants, distributing power in a fluid manner and allowing for everyone to engage in the discussion. In these weekly dialogic *halaqas* and discursive meetings, the facilitators and the management team deal with the behavioural, psychological and academic improvements

or limitations of all students, one student at a time. After consulting the opinions of all staff members, a well-rounded report is written and sent to the parents at the end of each month to document the holistic development of their child. These *shura* (consultative) councils are symptomatic of the learning and leadership culture in *Iqra'* which is marked by its participatory culture.

*Shura* (consultation) is conducted in tandem with all daily events and affairs in *Iqra'*. Many of the decision-making processes I witnessed in the school were indeed based on that premise. In explicating the nature of *shura*, the head of school, Ahmed, narrates,

We have two levels of *shura* in the school. First, there is a level in which I do not altogether interfere in any way, the decisions are taken collectively by others. In this level, the decision-making processes, from beginning to end, are wholly delegated to the staff as they convene together and settle upon what they see fit. There is a second level in which we discuss decisions related to strategy and it is such decisions from which operations emerge. In this level, my participation is essential.

Such a twofold level of *shura* becomes more multi-layered upon realising that it is also practiced with all school students, from the youngest to the eldest. Every single day, a morning *halaqa* is held in the school's *Sakinah* (tranquillity) room, after the students finish their breakfast, with the aim of discussing emerging news or reflecting on problems that occurred the earlier day and engaging in a collective brain-storming session about potential solutions or consulting students through voting about particular decisions that are of interest to them, such as field trip destinations or the choice of extracurricular activities and so forth. Either inside the classrooms or the outdoor learning spaces, the facilitators continuously consult the students about the learning activities they would prefer to engage in, giving them choices, for example between engaging in storytelling or a hands-on activity. Sometimes, upon sensing a collective reluctance or perceiving a prevalent mood among their students, they would further ask them about their interests at that particular moment. Due to the flexibility of the schools' learner-centred approach, the students habitually dictated the nature of the learning context as they were given the lead to decide. The facilitators followed their blazed trail of passion with respect, empathy and a tolerance for students' voices.

The aforementioned consultative and discursive practices are but examples that capture the quintessence of *Iqra's* leadership model, *shura* being its animating principle. The school's collective multi-stakeholder approach entailed that everyone, irrespective of their age or position, was to be consulted and called upon. This implementation is particularly relevant in relation to young students. The Islamic paradigm "significantly argues that Rights of the Child is respected and protected in Islam even before the child is born" and that a child is fully entitled "to be educated, to be provided with protection and care and finally to be treated equally within the family" (Rajabi-Ardeshiri, 2009, pp. 478–479).

As a school deeply steeped in the Islamic paradigm, *Iqra's* leadership model was conspicuously influenced by the concept of *shura* (consultation), which is



reiterated in the Qur'an in different contexts ranging from the private to the political sphere. The first reference came in the second *Surah* in relation to mutual consultation between parents on weaning their child.

And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them.

(The Qur'an, 2:233)

Furthermore, there is a whole *Surah* named (*Al-Shura/Consultation*) that derives its name from one of its verses which addresses the value of mutual and collective consultation in conducting affairs, highlighting the central role of the concept as one of the commendable qualities of true and sincere believers:

And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend.

(42:38)

*Shura*, referred to in the Qur'an as a praiseworthy practice and way of life, is accentuated even in times when it may be a perceived reason for fallibility and failure. As inferred from the previous verses, it is designated as one of the meritorious characteristics of believers and associated with acts of worship and prayer, bearing witness to its centrality and significance. Indeed, there is a consensus among Islamic scholars on the compulsoriness of *al-shura* as the "commentators of the holy Qur'an unanimously approved [its] obligatory nature", which is considered to be "the basis of *Shari'ah* laws and fundamental principle of all governmental affairs" (Shafiq, 1984, pp. 422–423).

In consistency with the long-standing exegesis of the concept of *shura* in Islam in relation to its inclusivity, *Iqra'* adopts an all-encompassing implementation of consultative practices. By dispersing the culture of communal *shura*, ranging from children to facilitators and parents, leadership was not monopolised by the management team but rather it was distributed, transferred, owned and claimed by different school stakeholders.

## Conclusion

The scarcity of research on present-day Islamic leadership models calls for many practitioners and educators to experiment with culturally ingrown strategies and practices, whether inspired by history or challenged by the future. This chapter presented analyses and findings generated from ethnographic research conducted in an avant-garde Islamic school that experiments with decolonising the predominant educational and leadership model. It proposes that there is a recognisable potential for Islamic-based models of leadership to disrupt the prevalent paradigm of hegemonic governance that continues to be perpetuated and normalised along the lines of performance benchmarking, auditing and accountability systems. As



Figure 13.1 Hypothesised Islamic-based leadership model in Iqra'.

summarised in the following diagram, I have conjectured *Iqra's* leadership model through a number of foundational pillars and practices—namely, (1) *shura* and collective decision-making, (2) empowering culture of freedom, (3) self-accountability, (4) shared and distributive leadership, (5) decentralisation, and (6) relational trust (Figure 13.1).

These findings are corroborated by conceptual and empirical studies that presented comprehensive frameworks of Islamic leadership. Many of these studies emphasised the centrality of some values, ethics and practices such as “good counsel (*nasiha*) and sincere conduct (*ikhlas*), consultation (*shura*), dissent (*ikhtilaf*), public interest (*maslaha*), encouraging right and discouraging wrong (*amr bi'l ma'ruf wa al nahi an al munkar*), accountability (*hisba*), and reflection (*tafakkur*)” (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018, p. 63). Essentially, a “Muslim leader is expected to be just, behave righteously, strive towards self-improvement, never break [his/her] word” and “is expected to bear adversity patiently, and remain forever humble” (Beekun & Badawi, 1999, p. 17). As demonstrated in the case of *Iqra'*, some Islamic values, morals and practices—such as consultation and accountability for example—may be accentuated more than others due to the nuanced nature of school leadership models.

Islamic-based themes and values, pertaining to leadership models, are contextualised and instrumentalised in heterogenous ways, accentuating the multiplexity of the phenomenon. By the same token, the performative facets of the self-same leadership team are expectedly contextual and fluctuate in accordance with the circumstances. Such a fluctuation leads us to conclude that leadership practices could be rarely designated as wholly emancipative or oppressive. Akin to a pendulum, they are sometimes inclined towards one side and, at other times, they swing freely from one end to another. However, across the broad spectrum of Islamic *humanocracy*,

there is a creative space for leaders to design their own frameworks, prioritising the values and practices that best address the needs of their communities.

### **Limitations and recommendations**

One of the limitations in this study on *Iqra's* leadership model relates to challenges in its scalability. Due to the limited size of its population, more work will be needed to adapt the model in larger schools. The model could be considered highly successful in its context largely due to its size and homogeneity. However, it is difficult to assess the practicality of its implementation in schools and organisational structures that are more aligned with the practices of mass education. Another major limitation is captured in the quasi-homogenous culture and philosophy that drives and unites most stakeholders in *Iqra'*. Accordingly, more qualitative research is needed to explore the success of similar Islamic-based models in other diversified school experiences and settings.

Future research is needed to investigate the impact of current Islamic-based leadership in educational institutions and its role in tackling the unprecedented challenges of today's world. To breach the gap between theory and practice, it is recommended that researchers and practitioners collaborate with the aim of designing research-based professional development programmes to transfer best practices and experimental strategies to a wider audience. Researching the impact of implementing these transformative programmes in schools could also provide greater insight and rigorous data on the efficiency of these models.

### **Notes**

- 1 *Madrassa* is the traditional Arabic word for schools in many Muslim countries. Historically, they were attached to mosques and developed by time, providing students with the opportunity to study different branches of knowledge such as jurisprudence, Qur'an, Arabic, theology, mathematics, logic, science and literature.
- 2 *Waqf* is the Arabic word for a charitable endowment that has been donated for the sake of Allah with the intention that it would last until the end of time. Throughout Islamic history, these endowments were extremely pivotal in sustaining many hospitals, schools and social institutions.
- 3 *Iqra'* is the Arabic counterpart for the directive "Read" and is also the first word and command to be revealed in the Qur'an.
- 4 All names of the staff members, whether administrators or teachers, are pseudonymised for ethical considerations and to guarantee the anonymity of the participants.
- 5 *Thawāb* is an Arabic word referring to "reward from God". It refers to spiritual merit or reward that accrues from the performance of good deeds and piety.

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# 14 From community to the state to individual preachers

## The vicissitudes of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia

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### **Introduction: defining traditional Islamic studies**

In pre-colonial Malaya,<sup>2</sup> traditional Islamic studies referred to Islamic religious teaching and learning of knowledge organized around three epistemological foundations of Islam. These are, firstly, Iman (faith) which deals with scriptural and rational understandings and beliefs about God, His Messengers, His Angels, His Revealed Books, the Day of Resurrection and fate and predestination (Arabic: *qada'* and *qadar*). Secondly, Islam, which regulates all aspects pertaining to practical and legal matters in life, and finally Ihsan, whose concerns revolve around moral, ethical and spiritual affairs of human beings by psychologically connecting them with the Divine (Badi, 2002, pp. 9–10). Centuries of Islamic scholarship had developed at renowned centers of Islamic learning such as Mecca, Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Fez, Bukhara, Samarkand and Cordova, and by the time Islamic knowledge reached Southeast Asia from the mid-13th century onwards through successive waves of proselytization activity (Hamid & Mydin, 2021), it had been systematized into a tri-partite framework which classified religious knowledge into the fundamental disciplines of *Tawhid* (Theology), *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) and *Tasawwuf* (Spirituality). These three branches of knowledge became the mainstay of the traditional Islamic studies curriculum. Books written by learned *Ulama* (scholars) in the three fields of knowledge became part of the Islamic civilizational *turath* (heritage). These *kitab turath* (heritage books) or *kitab kuning* (yellow books) as they were known in the Malay world after the yellowish color of the books' pages, formed the core studying materials in the traditional religious boarding schools known as *pondok*<sup>3</sup> or *pesantren* as they are called in Indonesia (van Bruinessen, 2018).

### **Note on methodology**

Employing the socio-historical method of investigation, this chapter qualitatively explores traditional Islamic studies as obtained in Malaya from the pre-colonial to the colonial eras, and later neo-traditional initiatives in Islamic education in post-independent Malaysia, and in the process sheds light on their educational contents, sources and leadership background and style. In unearthing historical data, the present authors rely on extant works written by major scholars whose

thoughts have been central in the epistemological construction of Malaysian Islam as an academic discipline. As we progress to look at modern manifestations of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia, we not only take benefit of existing ethnographic data available from notes of our past visits to its centers and engagement with participants of its sessions, but we also conduct fresh interviews with its primary protagonists. Data from the interviews, rather than being spelled out separately, are fused into our explanatory texts.

### **Historical evolution of traditional Islamic studies in pre-colonial Malaya**

In the 14th century, Malacca established itself as the hub of international commerce and trade in the Malay world. Under the patronage of its Malay Sultanate (1400–1511),<sup>4</sup> whose conversion to Islam has been well documented amidst wide variations in narratives of the episode (cf. Wake, 1964), Malacca played host to diverse Arab, Chinese, Indian and European commercial interests whose long-term presence could only be secured by the systematic implementation of a set of maritime, commercial, marital and criminal laws known as *Undang-undang Melaka* (Malaccan Legal Digests). *Undang-undang Melaka* guided a spectrum of civilizational activities from individual and societal affairs to professional and international matters. The basic law of *Undang-undang Melaka* was the *shariah* (Islamic law), although traces of indigenous pre-Islamic rules existed in patches within the overall legal framework, especially in criminal law (Yasin, 1996). Sustaining such a cosmopolitan polity necessitated a continuous production of functionaries and scholars, leading to the blossoming of Islamic educational institutions in Malacca, as testified by its sultans' regular solicitation of counsel from the *Ulama* on religious and theosophical matters and Malacca's *pondok* schools' ability to attract foreign students and teachers including some of Java's famed *Wali Songo* (Nine Saints) (Bakar, 1991).

In time, the *Ulama* came to play indispensable roles as court advisors, bulwarks of the community and de facto societal elders in times of uncertainty. Consensual opinions converged around the general acceptance of *Tawhid* in the mold of the teachings of medieval Iraqi scholar Abu Hassan al-Ash'ari (874–936)<sup>5</sup>; *Fiqh* as taught by the eponymous school founded by Muhammad Idris al-Shafi'e (767–820), and *Tasawwuf*—i.e., Sufism—as practiced by the many orthodox *tariqahs* (mystical orders) that had spread throughout the archipelago. Of the many Sufis of medieval Islam, the Persian scholar Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) left the deepest imprint on Malay-Muslims, who have consequently shown clear preference for Sufism of the sober rather than of the ecstatic variety characteristic of the teachings of the Andalusian master Ibn Arabi (1165–1240).

Subscribers to such a tri-partite understanding of Islamic knowledge reified as *farḍ 'ain* i.e. doctrinal and ritual obligations which must be testified to and practiced by every adult male and female Muslim, eventually assumed the tag of 'traditionalists' within the broad *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* or Sunni tradition. Along with a common *lingua franca* in the Malay language and a common political order in the many Malay sultanates, rudiments of a core traditional Malay-Islamic

identity were formed (Bakar, 2014). At the apex of such a hierarchy of educational leadership were the *Ulama*, some of whom served as court advisors of Malay ruling families but most of whom fiercely guarded their independence and led communities of followers centered on their *pondok* and affiliated branches.

### **Crystallization of traditional Islamic studies on the verge of colonial encounters**

For many generations thereafter, the traditional Islamic studies curriculum became the normative diet in the educational upbringing of a Malay-Muslim. Prior to the onset of British colonialism, which took on a more substantive place in regulating the lives of ordinary Malay-Muslims following the conclusion of the Anglo-Perak Pangkor Treaty in 1874 (Hamid, 2004), the path to social ascendancy, economic comfort and political clout among lay Malay-Muslims outside the circles of royalty and aristocracy lie in mastery of the three foundational disciplines of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*, through which influence on the nobility and royalty was exercised. Excelling in traditional Islamic disciplines took something like 20 years of devoted study in educational institutions at home and abroad. The preferred overseas destination for Malay-Muslims to pursue higher religious education until the 1920s was Mecca, and for those with familial linkages especially from among the creole Malay-Arab communities, Tarim in Hadramaut, Yemen.

At the advanced level of the traditional Islamic studies pathway, students would not just have grasped basic texts of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*, but they would also have demonstrated mastery of such subjects as Arabic language, *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Quran), Hadith (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)<sup>6</sup>), *Kalam* (analytical theology), *Usul Fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) and history. The more developed centers of learning were even more adventurous, venturing beyond the *'ulum naqliyyah* (revealed sciences) to cover such *'ulum aqliyyah* (rational sciences) subjects as *al-hisab* (mathematics), *al-handasah* (geometry), *mantiq* (logic), *al-tib* (medicine), *al-jighrafiyah* (geography), *al-badi'* (metaphor), *al-bayan* (rhetoric), *al-iktisad* (economics) and *al-siyasa* (politics). These *'ulum naqliyyah* disciplines, known collectively as *fard kifayah*—collective obligations that must be observed by at least one unit of a group of Muslims—were considered essential tools to enable the system's graduates to survive in an increasingly challenging world. While learning them was undeniably important, they were usually offered as electives and not core subjects. Moreover, the continuity and advancement of individual, societal and professional education were underpinned by the basics of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*, which formed the integral component of traditional Islamic studies.

In Malaya, the *pondok*-based *umumi* (general) system persevered as the main medium of formally imparting Islamic education from the pre-colonial period right up until the eve of the Second World War, after which it was gradually eclipsed by the more structured *nizami* approach of the modern Madrasa system. The Madrasa, being the product of returning Middle Eastern graduates stimulated by reforms taking place in the heartlands of Islam, incorporated innovative Western-influenced educational techniques, age groups, age-based classrooms and written examinations into the existing Islamic educational terrain (Hamid, 2018).



By the 1930s, the traditional Islamic studies paradigm was being rivaled by a parallel Madrasa system promoted by the first-generation Malay-Muslim graduates from Cairo, which replaced Mecca as the primary attraction for Malay-Muslim students to higher-level religious studies once the grim realities of the excesses of the rise of Wahhabism<sup>7</sup> in the Haramain—i.e., Mecca and Medina—sunk in. A lot of these returnees had come under the influence of Cairo's Al-Manar circle pioneered by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935). Immortalized in history as the *Kaum Muda* (Young Faction), these modernist-reformists generally subscribed to the *Salafiyah*<sup>8</sup> methodology, which did not appeal to the *pondok*-based *Kaum Tua* (Old Faction) traditionalists.

### **Colonialism and marginalization of traditional Islamic studies**

Although Hinduism and Buddhism had had early influences on Malays as the native inhabitants of Malaya, it was not until the Malays' wholesale adoption of Islam as their religion—a process spanning some three centuries (c. 1300s–1600s)—that Malay society could be described as having constituted a civilization proper, as underlined by its mass appeal and literary and corporeal accomplishments (Al-Attas, 1969). Many theories have been advanced on the Islamization of the Malays, among the most popular of which is the hypothesis that the diffusion of Islam occurred mainly in the hands of the Sufis who had traveled to Southeast Asia on deliberate missionary expeditions as part of trading guilds and also as escapees from political tumult in the Middle East in search of new lives in the service of their faith (Hamid, 2002). It was not uncommon for these Arab Sufis to first establish themselves in India or elsewhere in the Indonesian isles before making their journey to Malaya. Educational networks, both scriptural and spiritual, thrived between the Malay world and the Middle East, resulting in diasporic communities on both sides of the Indian Ocean (van Bruinessen, 1994).

Sixteenth-century European colonial expansion brought about the seeds of the destruction of indigenous and traditional knowledge and education systems. While many historians have rightly pointed out the debilitating economic and social impact of colonialism on colonized peoples, virtually permanent intellectual damage was wrought on them through the “epistemicides”—i.e., the elimination of indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, which occurred in tandem with the often better-chronicled genocides (Grosfoguel, 2013). While the British did not at first directly impinge on the traditional Islamic education of the Malay-Muslims, they slowly and stealthily drew Malays into supporting their highly exploitative capitalist economic system. Malays' cooperation as ‘owners of the land’ were vital to propping up the colonial administrative system taking shape toward the end of the 19th century. This the British did by winning over the Malay royalties and feudal class, in the process severing their relationship with the Malay-Muslim masses and making them financially dependent on the colonial state. In order to sustain the burgeoning colonial economy, the British imported cheap labor from southern China and India, thus laying the foundations for a plural society in ethno-religious terms. The native population who refused to participate

in the colonial economy were stereotyped as ‘lazy’ (Alatas, 1977). The more rebellious among them were deemed as traitors to the Malay *Kerajaan*—i.e., the several ruling monarchical families that had come under British influence through its Residency system, and through whom the British exercised its indirect rule policy. Sustaining the whole new colonial system was an administrative apparatus that enjoyed organic linkages to colonial economic interests.

For the ordinary Malay populace, the British generally promoted Malay-medium education. In these Malay schools, token Islamic subjects were retained but their significance weakened by for example relegating Quranic classes to afternoon sessions, denying salaried tenure for religious instructors and replacing the Arabic *jawi* script with Roman alphabets for Malay language lessons (Hamid, 2010). The deadliest impact of Malay schools, which gradually attracted more Malay parents as they were won over by prospects of improvements in literacy and arithmetic skills and stable employment for their children in the colonial-designed modern economy, was an irreversible epistemological invasion to befall a whole new generation of Malays. By perpetuating colonial-defined categories and knowledge paradigms, the Malay vernacular curriculum effectively served as a tool of indoctrination. In imparting knowledge of Malayan history and geography through British-authored textbooks, for example, the colonial authorities were subtly removing Islam from its hitherto pivotal role in molding a distinctive Malay identity and worldview (Naoki, 2001).

In short, notwithstanding the benefits that accrued to the native population in terms of greater literacy, higher arithmetic capabilities, lower managerial competencies and vocational training, colonial education mainly served as a means to control the indigenous population and thereby benefited mostly British commercial and imperialistic interests. As for its Islamic studies contents, by separating the religious component of education from worldly affairs, British colonial education successfully but harmfully compartmentalized the organic unity between the sacred and secular realms, which had typified traditional Islamic studies of bygone years but which the *Ulama* were struggling to come to terms with in a rapidly changing capitalist-driven economy. As Malaya entered its colonial phase, Islamic educational leadership gradually changed its guards from *pondok*-based *Ulama* figures to the colonial state, whose influence was exercised through Malaya’s multiple ruling families whose powers over Islam and Malay customs the British did not ostensibly interfere with.

### **Challenges facing traditional Islamic studies during the colonial epoch**

As European colonialism magnified its grip on Muslim societies in Asia and Africa toward the end of the 19th century, the *ummah* (global Muslim community) wrestled with the reality that they were no longer a force to be reckoned with in global affairs. The last remaining Muslim empire, the Ottoman Empire, gradually ceded its territories to European powers, with whom the Ottomans were increasingly finding it difficult to compete on equal terms. Desperate to preserve the Ottoman state, Ottoman elites turned westward, as embodied in the series of *Tanzimat*

reforms (1839–1876), of which educational reform formed an integral part. As part of its ambitious program of comprehensive state education, Western-style secular training was grafted onto traditional education, and specialized institutes created for such purposes relegated religious education to the margins. Such measures influenced Southeast Muslim elites as well, who had always looked up to the Ottomans as the symbol of worldwide ummatic unity. Wealthy Arab-Malay families went to the extent of abandoning traditional Islamic education for their children in favor of modern technocratic education in Istanbul (Mandal, 2018).

It was in such a challenging environment that reformist figures such as Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida spearheaded the call for widespread reforms in Muslim society. This gave rise to the *Salafiyah*-based Muslim modernist movement which took root in the Malay world in the form of the *Kaum Muda* reformist intellectuals. The modernist pioneers had themselves arguably been influenced by the European Enlightenment and the European nation-state development, leading to the germination of the idea of an Islamic state in response to the dissolution of the Ottoman caliphate. A pivotal figure in moving the revivalist discourse from a purely intellectual to a political one was Rashid Rida, who was also the go-between connecting the Al-Manar school with Saudi Arabian Wahhabism (Ayubi et al., 2021; van Bruinessen, 1995). That Rida's theological views and scriptural interpretations were at odds with the traditional Islamic studies framework was not unknown (Abdullah, 2009). Rida exerted a lasting influence on his Egyptian contemporary, Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin (1869–1956), later Malaya's *Kaum Muda* chief protagonist. Syeikh Tahir's religious career had included a royal appointment to the Council of *Ulama* of the state of Perak (Mustajab, 2003, p. 15), beginning a long process of Salafist<sup>9</sup>-influenced penetration into Malaya's Islamic officialdom. To the Malay masses, part of the attraction of the *Kaum Muda* lay in its political activism. The renowned *Kaum Muda* Madrasa, *Ma'ahad Al-Ehya Al-Sharif* in Gunung Semanggol, Perak, for instance, was a hotbed of early Malay nationalism (Othman & Rahmat, 1996).

Continuing from the 'Kaum Tua versus Kaum Muda' fissure of the 1930s, the 'traditionalist versus reformist aka Salafist' polemic went on to color the post-independent scenario of Malaysian Islam (Rahim, 2006). Up until the 1960s, the fault lines dividing both camps revolved mostly around jurisprudential matters. In most cases of disagreements, traditionalists would prevail, as reflected for instance in the ensconcement of the Sunni doctrine based upon the Asha'arite-cum-Maturidite conceptions of *Tawhid* and Shafi'e *Fiqh* as the core Islamic paradigm in the *Undang-undang Tubuh* (constitutions) of the various Malay states (Unit Penyelidikan Ilmiah, 2020). As traditionalists were historically aligned to the Malay political establishment and sultans, under whom the jurisdiction over Islam in their respective states lay, Salafists became accustomed to yielding to what was then the normative form of Islam. Only in the northwesternmost state of Perlis did the Salafists prevail, helped by the networks they built over the years with the state's local United Malays National Organization politicians and royals, who were of Arab descent (Malik & Mat, 2017). In the latter stages of colonialism, Islamic educational leadership had to all intents and purposes transferred to the state-level Islamic

bureaucracies, at the top of which lay the *Majlis Agama Islam* (Islamic Religious Council) whose patron was a state's Malay sultan. Control over the *Majlis Agama Islam* and the various *Jabatan Agama Islam* (Islamic Religious Departments) became a bone of contention between traditionalists and modernist-reformists. Unless exceptional circumstances took hold, the former usually prevailed.

### **Traditional Islamic studies in the new nation-state: Challenges of ummatic globalization and Salafism**

Beginning in the early 1970s, a global Islamic resurgence swept through the Muslim world, powered by petro-dollars, which accumulated in rich oil-producing Arab Gulf countries in the aftermath of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries successive oil crises. Suddenly finding itself catapulted to the role of global patron of political Islam or what has become known as 'Islamism', Saudi Arabia embarked on an aggressive drive to fund Islamic projects throughout the world either directly on a government-to-government basis or via organs under its patronage such as the Muslim World League (*Rabitah al-'Alam Islami*) and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. In Malaysia, Saudi Arabia funded new mosques, Islamic schools and Madrasa, *da'wa* (propagation) centers and buildings; distribution of copies of the Quran and Islamic books; charitable organizations, *da'wa* movements and programs; and a plethora of capacity-building projects for students and youth (Hamid, 2016). In addition, the doors of Saudi higher education institutions were widely opened for Malaysian students, all on a fully sponsored basis—an arrangement that continues today (Abidin, 2021).

Such free-flowing funds did not come cheaply. A whole new generation of Salafi-inspired *Ulama* were in the making, not just directly via the Malaysian alumni of Saudi universities but also through a gradual process of Salafization of Malaysia's Islamic institutions and studying materials. Gaining ground at a leisurely but steady pace, the Salafist approach of directly and literally interpreting the Quran and Hadith began to overshadow the very foundation of traditional Islamic studies as contained in centuries-old traditions of *Kalam*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*. These Saudi Arabian-imported puritanical and literal understandings of Islam synergized back home with the Salafist worldviews and training of newly returned activist graduates from Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, to form an Islamist bloc laden with a 'Wahhabi-Salafi' bias (Malik, 2017). Graduating from accredited Islamic institutions of higher learning, Wahhabi-Salafi *Ulama* held a distinct advantage over their traditionalist rivals in recruitment to government service and influential posts in the Islamic bureaucracy.

By the 1990s, these Islamists preferred to drop altogether the pejorative term 'Wahhabi', which is now employed only by their opponents from among traditionalists and liberal Muslims. In a subtle rebranding exercise, Salafism came to acquire legitimacy as the most dominant trend of both Islamist and Islamic thought. The Saudi Arabian government's default position as the custodian of the two holiest places in Islam—i.e., the Grand Mosque of Mecca and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina—helped to cement such a rehabilitated reputation for Wahhabism. This conflation of Salafism with Wahhabism, to be followed by an effective Wahhabi

co-optation of Salafism, was part of a global trend (Algar, 2002) and began impacting Malaysian Islam in the 1980s.

Although Islam itself is legally situated under the jurisdiction of the various states, education is under the federal list in the Federal Constitution (Constitution of Malaysia, 1957). The federal government took this opportunity to overhaul the structure and content of Islamic education nationwide. State secondary religious schools (SMAN: *Sekolah Menengah Agama Negeri*) and *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (community religious schools)—inheritors of the traditionally oriented *pondok* schools, previously outsourced to the various state religious councils—were gradually converted into federal-managed national secondary religious schools (SMKA: *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama*) and government-assisted religious schools (SABK: *Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan*). Recalcitrant schools, whose management boards refused to give up their independence, were denied annual per capita grants, forcing many to close operations. A uniform syllabus called the Higher Islamic Knowledge Syllabus (*Sukatan Pelajaran Pengetahuan Agama Islam Tinggi*) was introduced to streamline entrance into tertiary Islamic institutions (Hamid, 2010). In higher education, the significance of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur—founded in 1983 in close association with Saudi Arabia—in advancing Salafi-centric Islamic discourse in Malaysia cannot be overstated (Malik, 2017).

In the private Islamic studies sector, the proliferation of Quranic memorization or *tahfiz* schools throughout the country is yet another manifestation of the Salafi-centric ‘direct scriptural reading’ methodology (Leong, 2017). In addition, many private religious schools (SAS: *Sekolah Agama Swasta*) are run by Salafi-inclined Islamist movements such as *Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia* (IKRAM) (MUSLEH, 2020). Whichever way we look at it, during a span of some 40 years (1970–2010), Malaysia’s Islamic education terrain had undergone a sea of homogenizing changes that gravitated unfortunately toward a puritanical and literalist understanding of Islam, marginalizing the tri-partite pedagogy of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*. In terms of Islamic educational leadership, the first 40 years of independence had seen a steady erosion of traditionalist influence over the overall landscape of Islamic education in Malaysia, overtaken by contemporary Salafism as the practical heirs of the *Kaum Muda* modernism–reformism of the 1930s. Salafists expanded their influence by not only slowly taking over influential positions in the Islamic bureaucracy—especially at the federal level—but also by founding well-funded Islamic educational institutions.

### **Emergence of global traditional Islamic studies: A response to radicalism**

The twin terrorist attacks on USA’s World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 (hereafter 9/11) was a watershed event for global Salafism and political Islam generally. It brought to worldwide attention the scourge of Salafi-jihadism as the ideology behind large-scale terrorist attacks launched throughout the world. Salafi-jihadists were representatives of the ‘new terrorism’ sweeping the world, a wave that did not recognize international borders

but instead considered the whole world as its theater of operations. Fueled by the discovery that a majority of the 9/11 flight hijackers were Saudi Arabian citizens, Salafi-centric literalism and legalism bore the brunt of the blame for allegedly driving the suicide attackers toward Manichean and conspiratorial views regarding relations between Islam and the West. The apocalyptic solution sought was reflective of the radicalism and violence internalized by Islamist extremists conditioned by Wahhabi-Salafism. In the light of such path-breaking works as Olivier Roy's *The Failure of Political Islam* (Roy, 1994), political Islamists were driven to re-think their positions. The horrendous aftermath of 9/11 were repulsive to many faithful Muslims. Muslim nation-states which had had experiences with Islamist governments such as Pakistan and Sudan were not faring well economically, politically and socially. With Salafi-powered political Islam seemingly reaching an impasse, the door was open for traditionalist Islam to make a comeback.

### **The Middle Eastern-Malaysia traditional Islamic studies network: Cairo and Yemen**

The revival of traditional Islamic studies traces its origins to the untiring efforts since the mid-1990s of two scholars, viz. Shaykh Ali Jum'ah (1952–present) of Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Egypt, and Habib<sup>10</sup> Umar bin Hafiz (1963–present) of Tarim, Hadramaut, Yemen. Both Cairo and Yemen have long been known as bastions of Islamic traditionalism with strong links to Southeast Asia. The connection with Cairo is mainly scholarly based, built upon the unrivaled position, since the 1930s, of Al-Azhar University as the most popular destination for Malaysia's fledgling Islamic scholars to pursue tertiary education, which qualifies them to serve as religious bureaucrats, teachers or independent preachers upon returning home (Kushimoto, 2015). A former Grand Mufti<sup>11</sup> of Egypt who served in the position for a decade (2003–2013), Shaykh Ali Jum'ah initiated *Majalis 'Ilmiyyah* (Study Circles) in the vicinity of the Al-Azhar Mosque, to run parallel with the official university lectures. *Majalis 'Ilmiyyah* lessons invariably focused on studying Islamic classical texts—i.e., *kitab turath*—which in Al-Azhar's context emphasized the teaching and learning of *Asha'irah Tawhid*, *Fiqh al-Mazhab* (the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence) and *Tasawwuf* via the *talaqqi* (face-to-face) method. As revealed by Mary Elson's doctoral-level ethnographic fieldwork on reviving *turath* studies in the Al-Azhar Mosque (Kazmi & Bastermajian, 2021), the environment in a *turath* class is decidedly more intimate than a university lecture as per the student-teacher relationship. The *turath* sessions supplement rather than complement the university lessons, with attendance indicating diligence in broadening the horizons of knowledge instead of signifying a desire to pass exams. Tellingly, as Elson relates, Malaysian and Indonesian students play a conspicuous role in providing companionship and logistical assistance to the Arabic *turath* teacher.

As for the Malaysia-Yemen connection, historic links built on blood ties, trade and Islamic scholarship which had become dormant during the Hadramaut's existence as a region under the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen's pro-communist regime from 1967 to 1990, received a boost following North Yemen and South Yemen's unification in 1990. It was understandably members of Malay-Arab

families who led the process of resuming contact and correspondence with their ancestral homeland (Mandal, 2018). In Tarim, a capital of traditional Islamic scholarship and piety (Mauladdawilah, 2014), Habib Umar bin Hafiz established Dar al-Mustafa, a traditional Islamic studies seminary with a focus on *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*, in 1993. It became an instant hit among traditionally oriented *pondok* and *pesantren* graduates of Malaysia and Indonesia to pursue advanced Islamic studies in the tri-partite *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* mold. It is now the Dar al-Mustafa alumni who are principally leading the traditionalist defense of *pondok* education in Malaysia (cf. Muhaizad, 2020). Hailing from a distinguished Sayyid lineage, making him a 39th direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Habib Umar has built a loyal coterie of following among Southeast Asian resurgent traditionalists, whose admiration of him rests upon not only his pedigree but also his leadership of the Tariqah ‘Alawiyyah, his strong intellectual grounding as a former disciple of renowned Ba’alawi spiritual *guru* Abd al-Qadir al-Saqqaf (1912–2010) and his untiring efforts of building bridges with non-Muslims (The Muslim 500, 2021). Another of al-Saqqaf’s former students, the equally well-known Yemeni Ba’alawi preacher Habib Ali Al-Jifri (1971–present) has made countless television appearances in the Middle Eastern media channels in defense of Sunni traditionalism (Sinani, 2019). Both Habib Umar and Habib Ali Al-Jifri have, however, been constant targets of scurrilous attacks over social media by Malaysia’s Wahhabi-Salafists who see them as no better than religious impostors who promote *bid’ah* (reprehensible innovations in religion).

### **The Western-Malaysian traditional Islamic studies connection: UK and USA**

Since the 2000s, two Western Muslim convert scholars have emerged to the forefront in promoting traditional Islamic studies, namely Abdul Hakim Murad aka Timothy J. Winter (1960–present) of the United Kingdom (UK) and Hamza Yusuf aka Mark Hanson (1958–present) of the USA. Both of them combine the best of traditional Islamic scholarship with a deep immersion in critical Western philosophy. They promote the tri-partite pedagogy of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* via courses offered by the educational outfits they respectively founded, viz. the Cambridge Muslim College<sup>12</sup> (2009) and Zaytuna College<sup>13</sup> in Berkeley, California, USA (2008). On the one hand, Cambridge Muslim College’s diploma program is accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education while its bachelor’s degree is validated by The Open University in Milton Keynes. Himself a lecturer in Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, Abdul Hakim Murad makes sure that Cambridge Muslim College’s curriculum is broad enough to include aspects of Western history, civilization and philosophy.

Zaytuna College’s bachelor’s degree in Islamic law and theology, on the other hand, has been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges since 2015 (Frost, 2015). Styling itself as a liberal arts college, Zaytuna combines the rigor of traditional Islamic sciences with a reasonable command of knowledge of American culture, history, literature and philosophy. Its stated mission

emphasizes the harnessing of traditional knowledge for usage in contemporary contexts.<sup>14</sup> Helping to raise Zaytuna's profile is Hamza Yusuf's sterling reputation as a globe-trotting neo-traditionalist scholar who once underwent spiritual training under the guidance of the UK's Shaykh Abd al-Qadir as-Sufi aka Ian Dallas (1930–2021) (As-Sufi, 2021)—founder of the Murabitun World Movement and recipient of an honorary doctorate in literature from Universiti Sains Malaysia in 2001 (As-Sufi, 2001); and the Mauritanian polymath-cum-statesman Abdullah bin Bayyah (1935–present) (Bayyah & Abdallah, 2021), recipient of Malaysia's *Ma'al Hijrah*, i.e., Islamic New Year international award in 2019 (Mohamed, 2019).

### **The revival of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia: emerging individual trends<sup>15</sup>**

Since the mid-2010s, the return of students of Shaykh Ali Jum'ah and Habib Umar bin Hafiz created an impetus for the revival of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia. At the same time, English-speaking Malaysians who have attended lectures by Hamza Yusuf and Abdul Hakim Murad in their world tours have sought traditional Islamic studies programs back home.

#### **Maktabah al-Ihya (The revival library)**

Ustaz Raja Ahmad Mukhlis Raja Jamaluddin (1986–present)<sup>16</sup> represents a new breed of young scholars outside the old *pondok* system determined to revive the traditional Islamic studies pedagogy for the urban Muslims of Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur. He himself was a student of Pondok Ma'ahad Al-Manar, Kelantan and Pondok Al-Razi, Penang, before pursuing further studies at Al-Azhar University, where Shaykh Ali Jum'ah ranks among his teachers. Having completed his Al-Azhar sojourn in 2009, he established Maktabah al-Ihya to promote traditional Islamic studies lessons, focusing on *Tawhid* and *Tasawwuf*. He felt that the teaching and learning of *Tawhid* and *Tasawwuf* were more urgent in Malaysia as compared to *Fiqh*, which had been occupying the bulk of the menu of religious instruction for far too long.

In a decade since its establishment, Maktabah al-Ihya has offered various *Tawhid* and *Tasawwuf* classes to hundreds of students. They have taught classic works on *Tawhid* like books on the creeds of Al-Tahawi, Al-Sanusi, Ibn Hajib and Al-Iji for lower-level students and advanced works like *Maqasid*, *Mawaqif* and *Tawali* for higher-level students. Before joining the *Tawhid* classes, students are requested to take preparatory classes in Arabic language and *Mantiq* to enhance their understanding when undergoing the *Tawhid* sessions. In delivering the courses, Ustaz Raja Mukhlis would invite his colleagues from among Al-Azhar graduates who understand his philosophy behind the establishment of Maktabah al-Ihya.

#### **Darul Murtadza**

Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin Al-Hamid (1974–present) was one of the earliest of Habib Umar bin Hafiz's students at Dar al-Mustafa, Tarim, after which he



furthered his education at Al-Azhar University where he benefited from the tutelage of Shaykh Ali Jum'ah (Murtadza, 2021). Originally hailing from one of Indonesia's many Sayyid clans, he relocated to Malaysia where he also carried out postgraduate research at IIUM. In 2004, Habib Ali was entrusted by the founder of Darul Murtadza, Habib Abdul Qadir Al-Jufri, to lead the center, as the latter was moving to Malaysia's southernmost state of Johor. In a matter of a few years, Habib Ali transformed Darul Murtadza into one of the most active centers for traditional Islamic studies in Kuala Lumpur. Starting with around only 20 students, today Darul Murtadza's weekly public gathering is regularly attended by around 3000 people. The teaching and learning of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* in Darul Murtadza is carried out by Habib Ali himself, with guest scholars being invited to deliver lessons from time to time.

Apart from managing Darul Murtadza, Habib Ali has been involved in various other traditional Islamic studies initiatives established by Habib Umar bin Hafiz's students and Dar al-Mustafa's alumni. For instance, Habib Ali also chairs Madrasa Al-Nur, a traditional Islamic school preparing young students before continuing their educational journey to Dar al-Mustafa in Tarim. Established now for more than seven years, Madrasa Al-Nur sends around 20 students yearly to Dar al-Mustafa. Habib Ali also serves as advisor to the Dar al-Mustafa alumni society Ittihad Al-Nur. Ittihad Al-Nur facilitates Dar al-Mustafa graduates in launching their traditional Islamic teaching and learning activities once they re-settle for good in Malaysia.

### **Academy for enlightened traditional thought**

Another outfit for the revival of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia is the Academy for Enlightened Traditional Thought initiated by Al-Azhar University graduate Ustaz Ahmad Fateh Faiz (1990–present) in 2016. Ustaz Fateh's Academy is in many ways a carbon copy of Shaykh Ali Jum'ah's *Majalis 'Ilmiyyah*. Anchoring his center in the delivery of *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* subjects, the Academy has attracted an enrollment of thousands of students from not only Malaysia but also from neighboring Brunei, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia. The Academy's classes depend heavily on online virtual delivery even before the Covid-19 restrictions hampered movements to attend live sessions.

Ustaz Fateh's traditional Islamic studies Academy offers a wide variety of classical text classes besides the conventional *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* lessons. Preparatory subjects on offer include Arabic language, *Mantiq* and Islamic Dialogics or Dialectics, while the advanced syllabus covers subjects like *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, Astronomy and Philosophy. Students are enrolled in these classes based on their background knowledge, taking up the subjects from the beginner's level before proceeding to intermediate and advanced levels. A few years of teaching and learning are normally required to complete the Academy's traditional Islamic studies programs. Assisting Ustaz Fateh in his endeavor are fellow Al-Azhar graduates whom he makes sure possess mastery of all the classical texts that make up the Academy's reading curriculum.

### ***Ruwaq Jawi***

In 2015, another protege of Shaykh Ali Jum'ah, Ustaz Nazrul Nasir (1984–present),<sup>17</sup> initiated a traditional Islamic studies center dedicated to Malaysia's Al-Azhar students in Cairo named Ruwaq Jawi, which broadly follows the *Majalis 'Ilmiyyah* model but is more structured. Together with Ustaz Hairul Nizam, he founded Ruwaq Jawi to provide an opportunity for Malaysian students to learn traditional Islamic studies subjects in a more guided system as an alternative to the more open system employed in the Al-Azhar Mosque. Since then more than 1,000 students have attended the *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* classes given by Al-Azhar University scholars as well as Ruwaq Jawi's Malaysian teachers.

Ruwaq Jawi is a manifestation of Malaysian scholars' disillusionment with political Islam, which they blame for derailing Malaysian students from their core activity of expanding their horizons of knowledge while overseas. Neglecting the pursuit of fundamental knowledge which they could have explored by scouring the vast resources available in Egypt, many of them simply get carried away by activities of the Association of Malaysian Students in the Republic of Egypt (PMRAM: *Persatuan Melayu Republik Arab Mesir*) linked to the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS: *Parti Islam SeMalaysia*). Back in Malaysia, they are hailed as knowledgeable *asatizah* (religious teachers) despite obtaining only mediocre results. Today, Ruwaq Jawi old boys contribute actively to Malaysia's Islamic discourse by promoting traditional Islamic studies conceptions in the mainstream Malay language media (Hussain, 2020).

### **Concluding remarks: a new Islam-based education paradigm and leadership?**

The revival of traditional Islamic studies in Malaysia cannot be separated from the 'late Sunni traditionalism' phenomenon that has been behind the organization of several global initiatives to counter Islamist extremism such as the Amman Message (2007), the 'A Common Word Between Us and You' document (2007), the Mardin conference (2010), the Marrakesh Declaration (2016) and the International Conference on Who are the Ahl al-Sunna in Grozny, Chechen Republic (2016) (al-Azami, 2019; Sinani, 2019). In large measure, the revival of the traditional Islamic studies methodology worldwide reflects the growing frustration of both the *Ulama* and lay Muslims at the manifest inability of political Islam and Islamists to arrest the drift of Muslims toward extremist and radical interpretations of the religion.

With regard to education, Islamism's political solutions, and even the installment of Islamist leaders and parties at the top of the power structure, have not brought any good in terms of reversing Muslims' educational backwardness and decolonizing knowledge and epistemological patterns. Muslim puritans' and reformists' mantra of appealing directly to the Quran and Sunnah was not bearing the expected fruits in terms of civilizational progress. On the contrary, by neglecting *turath* studies, Muslims the world over struggled to rediscover their identity as Muslims, which corresponded harmoniously with their indigenous and ethnic

narratives. The traditional Islamic studies paradigm respected diversity within the *ummah*, as opposed to the rigid literal and scriptural understanding of Islam promoted by Wahhabi-Salafism and its fundamentalist variants. What happened in effect under many Muslim countries' postcolonial Salafized educational regimes was an unwarranted 'Arabization of Islam' (Tahmina, 2021).

The new alternative brought about by the revival of traditional Islamic studies re-connects Muslims back to their millennium-old rational, legal and spiritual traditions of Islam. These traditions expanded and metamorphosed as the religion expanded its borders and welcomed new converts from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups. The tri-partite *Tawhid*, *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* pedagogy advanced by the classical *Ulama* flourished on the spirit of accommodation and creative hermeneutics, which were at odds with literalist inclination of modern Islamism that became a conveyor belt to intolerance, extremism and ultimately violence.

Following the failure of political Islam to solve the *ummah's* manifold problems, we recommend that the *ummah* rediscover the traditional Islamic studies paradigm as spearheaded by the likes of Shaykh Ali Jum'ah in Al-Azhar Mosque, Habib Umar bin Hafiz in Dar al-Mustafa, Hamza Yusuf in Zaytuna College and Abdul Hakim Murad in Cambridge Muslim College. In the Malaysian context, the same pedagogy is promoted by Ustaz Raja Mukhlis at Maktabah al-Ihya, Ustaz Fateh Faiz at Academy of Enlightened Traditional Thought, Habib Ali Al-Hamid at Darul Murtadza and Ustaz Nazrul Nasir at Ruwaq Jawi. Practically all of them maintain an active social media presence. The arrival of Covid-19 movement restrictions from March 2020 onward has made the utilization of the new media even more relevant for traditionalist scholars, most of whom would have preferred to maintain the *talaqqi* method of course delivery in normal times. These young *Ulama's* independent initiatives have intellectually counter-balanced the ideological drift of Malaysia's Islamic education toward Salafism. While they have yet to successfully contain the Salafist influence, they have widened the choice of Islamic educational paths for growing cohorts of Malaysian Muslims, who could now better see options for Malaysian Islam beyond the Salafist worldview which had been dominant for the past forty years.

## Notes

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- 2 'Malaya' refers to the Malay Peninsula before its merger with Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore to form the Federation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963. Singapore left the federation in August 1965. During colonial times, authors were known to have used the term 'Malaysia' to refer to the whole Malay archipelago, instead of just the present-day nation-state of Malaysia.
- 3 Literally, 'hut' in Malay. The word is derived from the Arabic *funduq*, meaning a place of temporary residence.
- 4 All years and range of years used in this chapter refer to the Common Era (CE).
- 5 The only other mainstream theological school normatively accepted as part of orthodox Sunni Islam is the one founded by Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (853–944) of Samarkand in present-day Uzbekistan.
- 6 Peace be upon him, which is a common salutation Muslims say when mentioning the name of the Prophet.
- 7 The puritanical stream founded by the Nejd-based Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab (1703–1792) who allied with the Saud clan, eventuating in the founding of three Saudi states run on Wahhabi religious precepts.
- 8 Deriving from the word *salaf*, which carries the literal meaning of 'those who precede'—i.e., predecessors. *Salaf* is commonly paired with the word 'salih' or 'soleh', meaning 'pious' or 'righteous', to form the term *salaf al-salih*—i.e., pious predecessors. Based on a *hadith*, *salaf al-salih* are understood to be faithful Muslims who lived in the first 300 years following Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s demise in 632.
- 9 Another more popular cognate of the word *salaf*. 'Salafists' refer to adherents of Salafism, a term which gained currency in the 1990s to depict revivalists who seek to resurrect the ideals and practices of the earliest Muslim communities who lived alongside and immediately after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- 10 'Habib' is an alternative rendering of 'Sayyid,' denoting a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- 11 A *mufti* is a religious scholar officially appointed by a state Ruler to issue authoritative *fatwa* for use in that particular state.
- 12 <https://www.cambridgemuslimcollege.ac.uk/>.
- 13 <https://zaytuna.edu/>.
- 14 As forthrightly stated in Zaytuna College (2021), 'Zaytuna College aims to educate and prepare morally committed professional, intellectual, and spiritual leaders who are grounded in the Islamic scholarly tradition and conversant with the cultural currents and critical ideas shaping modern society.'
- 15 Material in this section is based on oral interviews conducted via telephone. At the time of writing, mobility was hampered by Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed to curb Covid-19 infections.
- 16 See <https://www.facebook.com/Us.RajaAhmadMukhlis>.
- 17 See <https://www.facebook.com/UstNazrulNasir>.

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# 15 Concluding remarks

*Khalid Arar, Rania Sawalhi, Amaarah DeCuir and  
Tasneem Amatullah*

## Introduction

The contributing authors of this volume have each introduced an aspect of education leadership, management and administration shaped through context and people, representing both diversity of thought and experiences, as well as a shared faith commitment to Islam. Education leadership, management and administration continue to be an interdisciplinary field, drawing upon foundational knowledges in education leadership, management and administration and incorporating practices from organization learning, policy implementation, community engagement and student achievement. Collectively, the authors showcase unique ways in which the complex work of education leadership and management is shaped by Islam's guiding principles as it moves across Muslim-majority and minoritized spaces, and through multiple types of educational configurations. The collection of these ideas contributes to the development of Islamic-based education leadership, management and administration, a framework meant to shape the principles and practices of education leadership and management for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Also, this contribution adds to the body of education leadership, management and policy scholarship in exploring different epistemological lenses, and global, cross-cultural fertilization of different models of education leadership and management in general and faith-based schools in particular.

Having said that, this book does not aim to redefine education leadership, management and administration. The editors of this book aimed to uncover how education leadership, management and administration practices need to be re-explored when examined through an Islamic lens. Islam is not another word to be added before the terms leadership, management and administration, it serves as a framework for building relationships with God, humans, the universe, life, and afterlife, as depicted in Al-Kaylani's relationship model (1985, p. 286). In addition, as this book introduces a new term (Islamic-based education leadership and management), we, the editors, provided space for each chapter author/s to introduce their own perspective and experiences.

Muslims have been conceptualizing community leadership since the Golden Age, when prominent philosophers and religious scholars established the field of Islamic social sciences as an attempt to make meaning of self, relationships to others and relationships to the environment through the lens of the tenets of Islam. In



that time period, scholars had active teaching agendas to share knowledge from earlier generations and construct new meanings relevant to their contemporary experiences with students under their tutelage. The conceptualization of leadership was often limited to religious leadership in places of worship and community leadership to govern human relations (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2018). After the 8th–14th centuries, the modern era ushered in the construction of new knowledges and epistemologies, although limited due to the impacts of colonialism and the rise of secular thoughts which marginalized faith-centered social science scholarship. In the 1970s and 1980s, many scholars including Muslims tried to decolonize social science scholarship that reproduced hegemonic norms of Western superiority and marginalized religious thought. As Islamophobia continued to rise in the post-World War II years, many researchers and policymakers sought to clarify what is meant by Islamic education and how to benefit from Islamic principles to reclaim socio-religious thought leadership. Although deeply relevant and transformative scholarship emerged at this time, and some effort to describe leadership broadly, no framework was constructed to articulate what we understand as Islamic-based education leadership.

In contemporary education research, scholars are identifying the work necessary to implement culturally relevant leadership practices that could meaningfully respond to the needs of Muslim students (Brooks, 2019; Shah, 2015). Khalifah's model of Culturally Responsive School Leadership names that community engagement and the validation of their funds of knowledge is necessary leadership work to impact effective learning environments for students experiencing marginalization in schools (Khalifa, 2018). Also, other grounded scholarship delineating education leadership for Muslim schools emerged with few models conceptualized, (e.g. Brooks & Mutohar, 2018; Park & Niyozov, 2008; Shah, 2006, 2015) including Islamic feminist school leadership (Khalil & DeCuir, 2018). But as public polls continue to illustrate, the continued impact of Islamophobia silences and makes the lived experiences of Muslims globally invisible (Brooks et al., 2021; Hammad & Shah, 2019). For too often, leadership in Muslim contexts has not been examined as a site for education advancement or social change. Muslim community knowledge is often devalued as a violent doctrine that opposes social development, hyper-focusing on narrowly interpreted religious dictates and obscuring Muslim secular experiences. As the research contribution and voices heard in this field are mostly from Anglo-phonic scholars, this volume presented voices of scholars from Global North and Global South alike, especially as it brings to the fore voices of scholars with lived Muslim experiences which help further conceptualization of education leadership and policy in Muslim schools in different cultural contexts. Therefore, the authors included in this volume demonstrate that scholarly work conducted in various spaces can generate meaningful contributions to culturally relevant leadership practices by centering leadership work that develops the whole human spiritually, physically, and emotionally. The following sections in this chapter describe the framework named Islamic-based education leadership in greater detail, communicating its core concepts and offering recommendations for its full inclusion in future scholarly agendas utilizing the authors' perspectives presented in this book.

## **Constructing Islamic-based education leadership**

Islamic-based education leadership has been co-constructed through critical reflexivity across multiple school, religious and national contexts. We introduced this framework to help educators utilize educational methods and approaches driven from Islam in different scenarios: (1) Non-Muslim leader providing educational opportunities for Muslim minorities. (2) Non-Muslim leader providing educational opportunities for Muslim students. (3) Muslim leading educational organizations in non-Muslim communities. (4) Muslim leading organizations in Muslim communities. And (5) non-Muslim educators seeking to utilize Islamic educational principles in their practices. Rather than limiting our scholarship to describing how Islamic-based education leadership functions within our current system of schooling, it is recommended that we use our framework to envision how we can transform education to better reflect the needs of students, teachers, and their communities. In addition, Islam highlights how education helps prepare for the afterlife and form their relationship with Allah.

Chapter authors helped articulate some of the key terms that comprise this framework and help represent how Islamic-based education leadership is understood. Islam is recognized as the globe's second most populous religion and the fastest growing, with almost a quarter of people practicing Islam as their religion. Many researchers highlighted the need to learn from Islamic educational practices and approaches (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019).

Our framework encourages educators to learn more about diverse Islamic educational approaches as an attempt to make it accessible for Muslims and non-Muslims in majority and minoritized spaces (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1). These beliefs and values also comprise an Islamic epistemology communicated as an Islamic worldview that centers religious knowledge as a social interpretive framework (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1). Unlike other social interpretive frameworks, an Islamic worldview can be regarded as incompatible with criticality because it implies that the religious knowledge is not divine (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1). We named our framework Islamic-based because it is not divine religious knowledge, but rather practitioners' critical reflexive engagement with Islamic texts and scholarship to envision education leadership in Muslim contemporary contexts. As such, it is subject to criticality as it is an interpretive framework based on religious thoughts and texts. 'Islamic-based' also provides a 'sense of direction' (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1) for educators and fosters a humanizing approach, and provides a clear purpose of its leaders (Blaik, Litz, and Ali, Chapter 10). And leaders are also those called to transform human relationships to self, others, and the environment as an extension of their moral obligations to society at large. In addition, to Muslims, their relationship with God Almighty.

This type of leadership operates in three dimensions simultaneously, spatial, social, and temporal (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1) to reflect the multiple domains where Islamic-based education leadership functions. The integration of social and religious work, both within and around schools (Toprak and Karakus, Chapter 3) contributes to the unique nature of this education leadership framework that disrupts traditional school leadership models privileging student achievement and

focuses on the development of belief systems and practices within and around the school community.

Religion, beliefs, and values are a 'social policy determinant for many countries' (Turner, 2012, p. 138). This suggests that they are central to the functioning of nation-states where Islam is the system of governance, where Muslims are the majority population, and where Muslims comprise minoritized communities. Our framework is based on scholarship originating in each of these national contexts spanning Malaysia, Qatar, Türkiye, Egypt, the United States and the United Kingdom. This diversity of both geography and governance contributes to the wide applicability of our single framework, as it incorporates the varied reflections of Islamic-based education leadership as experienced by Muslims in divergent settings. In secular nations with Muslim-majority populations, like Türkiye, schools reflect Muslim influences (Karatas, Chapter 7), even if the leadership policies and practices remain secular. And in Western nations where Muslim communities establish independent schools often borrowing secular school practices, Islam emerges as a central influence shaping the leadership discourse and practices.

This leadership conceptualization is situated within complex social and cultural realities to advance school organizations as sites that foster student achievement through academic, social, and religious measures. Nations remain subject to the hegemonic constructions of capitalism which impacts the functions of schools (DeCuir, Chapter 5). Economic market forces require educational leaders to organize schools as self-sufficient institutions that can thrive in a neoliberal environment, either with fee-based structures that limit accessibility or adoption of standardized government programs to be eligible for state funding resources.

Additionally, Muslims globally continue to face disproportionate social and political bias defined as Islamophobia (DeCuir, Chapter 5) most recently organized as state-sanctioned racism in the United Kingdom through the Prevent program. This reality impacts the work of Islamic-based education leaders, as their leadership practice is called to address the social conditions of the community. Some chapter authors introduced *Maqasid al Sharia*, a compilation of the higher objectives of Islamic law (Al-Attari and Bani Essa, Chapter 2). This body of knowledge serves to transfer core tenets of Islamic law into leadership work that incorporates the higher objectives of those laws into school organization functioning within complex social conditions. *Maqasid al Sharia* is globally recognized by Muslims as a social-religious framework, and its inclusion in this framework serves to establish core concepts in Islamic-based education leadership necessary to respond to social conditions impacting educational institutions.

Based on the previous chapters, we introduce this model to help researchers and practitioners to have a better understanding and to clarify their epistemology. Our suggested framework is based on an ecological framework. It starts with individuals understanding their own beliefs and biases about Islam (Sawalhi, Chapter 4), reflecting on their identity and to what extent their practices are aligned with Islamic principles and values which highlight the importance of clarifying researcher/practitioners' epistemology.

The framework shows the importance of understanding the context and the changes in the communities. The next level in the model highlights the needed competencies and how educational leaders practice leadership according to their beliefs/religion. The last level shows that researchers/practitioners should understand Maqasid al Sharia, as they need to help individuals prepare for their life's afterlife (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1). This model might be connected to that ecological leadership framework which includes (micro, meso, exo, macro, chrono systems) (Toh et al., 2014) or any other frameworks which would be of great opportunity for scholars to build and utilize the core of this model. This model urges individuals to reflect on education practices starting from clarifying the principles of the individual's beliefs and ways of developing educational opportunities and systems and connecting these efforts with Maqasid al Sharia toward individuals and communities (Ummah) and preparing for afterlives which is still missing from the current educational systems and scholarly contributions (Figure 15.1).

### Communicating core concepts in Islamic-based education leadership and management

Decolonizing scholarship removes hegemonic structures that center Western ideologies and privilege secular constructions of knowledge. Our leadership framework requires educators to position themselves and clarify their paradigm and guiding epistemological structure as an embodiment of decolonizing scholarship,

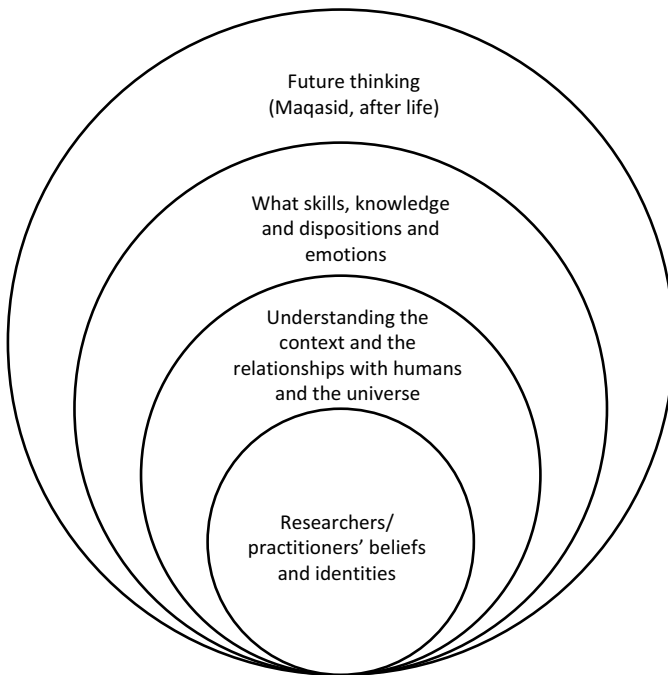


Figure 15.1 Islamic-based ecological model.

placing the intellectual contributions of Muslims and Islam in conversation with contemporary frameworks of education leadership. This also includes Muslims, as they have diverse groups and schools of thought that influence various forms of knowing and practicing of Islam.

This is transformative work as Islamophobia continues to reproduce marginalization and bias targeting Muslims globally, yet Islamic-based education leaders decolonize excellent leadership in sites subject to harm, injustice and inequity. Each of our contributing chapter authors engaged in a thorough representation of Islamic context that supports an aspect of the work of Islamic-based education leaders, reflecting its strong alignment with religious knowledge and practices. We represent our findings as a framework, disrupting the understandings that there is a narrow conceptualization of excellent leadership, and instead present a broad frame that makes space for many iterations of Islamic-based education leadership across multiple contexts and settings.

Islamic-based education leadership is communicated as the work of the leader understood through beliefs, discourse policies, and practices that advance educational priorities in schools utilizing Islamic educational objectives. Leaders embodying this framework strive to organize educational opportunities to prepare students for life and life after death, a goal more complex and noble than simply advancing academic achievement.

Although secular scholarship of education leadership often suggests that leaders begin by constructing strong visions and mobilizing group priorities, Islamic-based educational framework/model reminds Muslim leaders to reflect on their own practices and enlighten non-Muslims about future thinking and going beyond reacting to solve current challenges. This model emphasizes faith and good relationships with others including environment and sustainable goals, core attributes of the religion of Islam.

Community engagement is central to the work of Islamic-based education leaders. Leaders focus on community building (Toprak and Karakus, Chapter 3), increasing community participation (Türkoğlu, Parlar and Cansoy, Chapter 11), and caring for the community as attributes of their work priorities. It invites a strong followership (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1) to project the community's endorsement of the leader and build a community united around the leadership goals of the educational organization.

The leadership characteristics can be described as humble, advancing equality and justice (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1), self-reflective (Amatullah, Chapter 12), and accountable to God Almighty (Arar and Sawalhi, Chapter 1; Al-Attari and Bani Essa, Chapter 2; Amatullah, Chapter 12). They embody empathy, self-awareness, and self-regulation as traits consistent with prophetic behaviors (Al-Attari and Bani Essa, Chapter 2). The work of Islamic-based education leaders is to advance equity and antiracism as demonstrations of faith (Sawalhi, Chapter 4; DeCuir, Chapter 5), disrupting inequities faced by Muslims in their school communities (Sawalhi, Chapter 4; DeCuir, Chapter 5; Amatullah, Chapter 12). They use emotions to help mobilize others across the school community by promoting positive behaviors, relationship building, and navigating intense school experiences

There are diverse priorities of pedagogy, curriculum, and school culture within schools united by an Islamic-based education leadership framework. Our chapter authors asserted that these schools embody high-quality academic and religious education (Türkoğlu, Parlar and Cansoy, Chapter 11), but some school plans emphasize one type of knowledge over another. For instance, the Imam Hatip schools in Türkiye, focus on advancing religious knowledge among students but thrive in a secular national landscape (Karatas, Chapter 7) because they provide a unique alternative to standard education. Or the Islamic-based schools in the United Kingdom and United States that emerged from anti-Muslim contexts in the West, providing Islamic education to minoritized communities (DeCuir, Chapter 5; Laham, Chapter 6). In both settings, educational organizations and their leaders are susceptible to a localized hyper-focus on the religious aspects of their organizations, extending the work of the Islamic-based education leader to disrupt anti-religious sentiments.

Our book represents a conceptual framework describing the dimensions that help educational leaders reimagine educational opportunities and redesign educators' preparation programs utilizing Islamic approaches. Our work broadly asserts four key guiding elements, as detailed next, which can help prepare, evaluate and establish priorities for Islamic-based education leaders.

Among our recommendations is the hope that others will apply this broad framework to examine other examples of educational leadership in Muslim and non-Muslim contexts to support the use of these concepts in both academic and practitioner spaces. The elements of Islamic-based education leadership are as follows:

- *Centering Islamic knowledge* through the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, and the contributions of Islamic scholars to ground the theoretical orientation, rather than habits and assumptions attributed to Islam.
- *Self-development of the leader* informs their beliefs, values and practices.
- *Community work* that shapes the academic, social and emotional education and all other aspects that brings students and school communities to a closer understanding of their roles in this world.
- *Constructing an Islamic-based culture* to articulate the advancement of lifelong learning and self-learning and continuous education for personal growth and development, rather than solely preparing for exams.

### **Shortcomings to advance Islamic-Based educational leadership**

Although our conceptual framework is based upon the synthesis of the 13 chapters included in this edited volume, with data informed from multiple continents and nations and through complex analyses contributed by scholars around the globe, there remain some shortcomings in its development. As our work represents our collective scholarship, we welcome critical engagement with our findings to help advance our leadership framework and its applicability to school contexts broadly. Conceptually, there are gaps in the collective scholarship within this volume that limit the transferability of this framework to multiple contexts. To start, the text

does not incorporate leadership practices from the rich, vibrant educational experiences from West Africa. As the geographic site of some of the earliest education institutions in Islamic civilizations, the absence of West African leadership thought and practices is a glaring omission.

Beyond geography, there is also the absence of Islamic social justice theories that center issues of community and society. Since the dawn of the Golden Ages to contemporary times, Islamic scholars have written epistemological constructs to explain social science realities from an Islamic worldview. Some of the contributing authors of this volume mentioned the contributions of Islamic thought leaders, which shed light on the importance of developing Islamic-based epistemology frameworks to analyze data from educational contexts. The contributions of our chapter authors are expansive and complex, but these absences leave the reader to assume that neither of these additions would have meaningfully shaped Islamic-based education leadership in a new direction.

The second concern to raise over the conceptualization of this ecological framework is that there is a reliance on over-simplification of complex social realities. 'Muslim' is simply understood as a person who adheres to the religion of Islam, reproducing the false narrative that there is one way to be Muslim in today's society. Although several chapter authors addressed theological distinctions between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, there are many more representations of religious diversity beyond this dichotomy. It leads to an over-simplification of the work of Islamic-based education leaders, suggesting that by constructing a Muslim community there will be a shared consensus on how to practice Islam and the expectations assigned to community leaders. But one chapter represents the Malaysian context as a nation where the practice of Islam has shifted over the course of time, and today's leaders are tasked with disrupting the course of radicalized Islam (Abdul Hamid and Amran Muhammad, Chapter 14; Kusumaputri, Hariri, Juniardi and Sumintono, Chapter 9), a new leadership challenge related to both safety and religious education. Similarly, Islamic values are named as 'all' values from the Quran and prophetic narrative, organized as 'hard' and 'soft' values (Toprak and Karakus; Chapter 3) according to their orientation to administrative work, not leadership, within the educational institutions. Several chapters in the text reproduce Western forms of leadership practice that center the functions of leaders in organizations, but Eastern scholarly traditions center cultural values, context, and mission of the group as a direct influence on leadership experiences. Researchers should be mindful to recognize both Eastern and Western traditions, including both the educational setting and social context and the individual leader, to develop a decolonized framework that organizes our contributions to the literature in the lens of all ecological levels including future thinking and redesigning educational opportunities.

As each of the contributing authors described their research methods, we acknowledge that there remain some shortcomings in the articulation of the research design that developed Islamic-based education leadership. First, the majority of the research cited in each chapter's literature review was published in English. This suggests that the original scholarship of the medieval architects of Islamic education was omitted and that by conducting analysis of content in

English, one is obligated to translate foundational material which limits the representation of its original voice. Secondly, because this volume is limited to the presentation of contemporary experiences of Islamic-based education leadership, it communicates a false narrative that this field is emerging, when the reality is that Islamic education has a rich and complex history over hundreds of years that has been silenced and marginalized due to colonialism and anti-Muslim racism. And since contemporary research describing leadership in Muslim contexts is limited, it is difficult to assert a full body of knowledge typically required to develop a transnational conceptual framework. Lastly, the research that contributes to the conceptualization of Islamic-based education leadership is primarily centered in Western contexts, or geographic locations in the Middle East strongly associated with Western principles. As one of our authors names, Southeast Asia has the largest share of Muslims globally: 240 million people or 25% of the world's Muslims. But this expansive share of the Muslim population generated just one chapter in this book (Kusumaputri, Hariri, Juniardi and Sumintono, Chapter 9) which motivates us to encourage researchers.

Discerning elements of the Islamic-based education leadership framework is necessary to examine its applicability in today's education contexts, and there are several aspects of our work that reflect significant omissions of necessary foundational knowledge. Although the Quran comprises the strongest foundation of Islamic leadership concepts, it is highly encouraged to rethink educational practices and the terms used; for example, Dr. Majid Irsan Al-Kaylani in his books uses terms from the Quran to describe the role and expectations as he describes advanced teachers as *Ayateon* (a word means who implements the verses of Quran آياتيون) to show that teachers should walk the talk of the verses in their teaching and day-to-day practices (Sawalhi & Hawari, 2022).

There is less examination of those who navigate school contexts to seek out leadership positions (Er, Şahin and Doguru), as many of the studies in this volume center on reluctant or accidental leaders in school roles of influence.

Despite the absence of neglected content needed to develop this framework, the synthesis of chapters in this volume represents a meaningful contribution to the literature of educational leadership which adds to the rigor in the conceptualization of Islamic-based leaders and policy models, especially by presenting grounded models dealing with education leadership and spirituality drawing in extant literature shaping Muslim leaders' values and their implementation. In this volume, we suggested a new term that might pave the way for a better understanding of current practices of educational leadership in Islamic schools, as the term "Islamic-based educational leadership" is expected to provide a space for a critical understanding, away from Islamophobic or ambiguous perspectives and assumptions. Furthermore, this term might help educators to reflect on their practices in developing responsive educational opportunities that better meet the needs of their students and communities. We encourage educators to explore current educational leadership and management theories and see if they help in shaping and clarifying the main principles of Islamic-based educational leadership. In turn, this will help to equip educators, school leaders, and policymakers with the most



effective theories and practices to provide quality education to Muslim learners. Furthermore, these theories and practices will enable Muslim educational leaders to utilize the skills and knowledge they have to promote lifelong learning.

### **Recommendations emerging from Islamic-based educational leadership**

In terms of implications, drawing upon what is known of transformational leadership and Islamic education, it is recommended that researchers describe how Islamic-based education leaders influence classroom learning environments that thrive in a world challenged by global health pandemics, social and political injustices, and emerging resistance movements. We seek to explore how a pedagogy of criticality (El Odessy, Chapter 13) would promote critical and reflective engagement among students to deepen their commitments to faith, inquiry and social justice.

We do not suggest that Islam is subject to critical inquiry, but rather that students can be taught how to apply critical inquiry to self, relationships to others, and relationships to the social and natural environment through an Islamic worldview that shapes our ways of knowing and being. This is challenging for educators of Muslim students because faith and religion continue to be marginalized in secular societies, and students are taught to question everything in the world around them. It is our recommendation that researchers examine how different successful models of instructional leadership is practiced to advance Islamic-based critical inquiry both in the classrooms and in the schools alike while seeking multi-faceted participation in school processes and practices

More participatory, action research, emancipatory and critical approaches could be utilized for a deeper analysis and contributing to the body of research, informing policy, discourse and praxis. Thus, there are many questions to be posed in this field and more research needs to be done to understand Islamic-based educational leadership and value systems.

In conclusion, our findings indicate some means for future research in terms of epistemology and methodological approaches. Therefore, there is a great need to revisit, reconfigure and relearn previous contributions made by Muslim scholars. Hence, more diverse and critical research methods could be utilized for deeper analysis and rigor. As most of the publications are qualitative, case studies or multiple case studies, in nature, future research could benefit from quantitative, mixed-methods and grounded research approaches. Moreover, there is a dearth of studies of literature linking Islamic knowledge research and policy design.

Furthermore, implicit and explicit forms of policy implementation, related to challenges and the dynamic inspection including covering different forces in policy design and implementation need to be represented broadly in the frame of Islamic-based education leadership. Although future research should aim for further conceptual and methodological clarity, especially concerning Islamic-based educational leadership approaches. As argued in our systemic analysis chapter (Chapter 8), the shortage of empirical mixed-method, comparative and successful programs of Islamic-based educational leadership is still evident. In addition, future

conceptualization can benefit from previous grounded studies and the chapters in this volume by problematizing Islamic ways of knowing, and testing current conceptualization (Brooks & Mutohar, 2018). Therefore, grounded ontologies, epistemologies, and paradigms in future research are encouraged. Moreover, in closing this volume, we indicate some avenues for future research in terms of methodologies and approaches.

We conclude our edited volume with our kindest appreciation to all the authors whose contributions facilitated the development of our Islamic-based education leadership framework. We acknowledge the challenges of doing this work in the global health pandemic and through racial injustice uprisings, and economic and governance challenges present today that impact so many people around our world in disproportionate ways. Consistent with the tenets of Islamic-based education leadership, our contributing authors have prioritized the representation of knowledge as an articulation of their commitments to faith, social relationships and transformation of our shared environment. It is an honor to share these pages with such exemplars.

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