



# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES



**CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL**

## **ABOUT THE PUBLICATION**

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Creative Associates has been involved for many years in developing effective strategies for improving education in developing countries, including those in the Muslim world. Creative is working on education projects in Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Liberia, Mindanao, Nigeria, and Oman—countries where Islamic education is a major part of academic training and character development.

For this publication, Creative Associates worked with the lead author, Dr. Amr Abdalla of Salam: Peace and Justice Institute, George Mason University (GMU), and the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS) to undertake the research that led to this publication. Salam: Peace and Justice Institute, a non-profit, peace-building, and conflict resolution research organization, is registered in the state of Virginia, and was founded by Dr. Abdalla and Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer in 2003. Salam affiliates—Dr. Ilham Nasser, Dr. Aysa Kadayifci, Ms. Lynn Kunkle, and Mr. Saber el-Kilani, in addition to the Salam founders—contributed to the research and writing of this publication.

# **Improving the Quality of Islamic Education in Developing Countries: Innovative Approaches**

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## List of Foreign Words

Abasid dynasty: The second Islamic monarchy  
Alia madrasah: Government supported madaris in Bangladesh  
Aljazeera: A prominent Arab media outlet  
Amawi dynasty: The first Islamic monarchy  
Ayyubids: A ruling dynasty of the 12/13<sup>th</sup> century  
Caliphah system: The Islamic system of political succession  
Fatwas: Religious edict  
Hadith: Statements made by Prophet Mohammed  
Ijaza: Academic degree in Islamic schools  
Jihadi: Someone adhering to militant Islam  
Madaris: Plural of Madrasah  
Madrasah: A traditional Islamic school  
Qawmi Madaris: Independent madaris in Bangladesh  
Quran: The Islamic holy book  
Seljukids: A ruling dynasty of the 11<sup>th</sup> century  
Shi'a: One of the major Islamic sects, along with Sunnis  
Sunnah: Practices of Prophet Mohammed  
Tarbiya: Education that focuses on individual's development as a good person  
Ulema: Religious scholars  
Ummah: The Muslim community at large

(Note: Several other foreign words are explained or their translation was included in the text.)

## **Executive Summary**

Education in the Muslim world and Islamic education have gained much attention in the past few years due to the perceived link between those issues and concerns for development and security in the Muslim world and beyond. This publication attempts to define Islamic education, provide an in-depth analysis of the educational systems and Islamic education in the Muslim world, using political-historical, socio-cultural, and religious analytical approaches, and identify challenges in improving Islamic education. The publication concludes with a synthesis of approaches and strategies for improving education in Islamic schools.

### **What Is Islamic Education?**

The definition of Islamic education may vary according to who is writing about it and from which angle. Some emphasize the “tarbiya,” or character development. Others define it as religious education, with emphasis on the Quran and other basic Islamic teachings and values. For the purpose of this research, Islamic education refers to tarbiya and any other topics specifically related to that development.

### **Educational Systems and Islamic Education in the Muslim World**

#### ***Political-Historical Review and Socio-Cultural Implications***

A political-historical review of major events that have shaped the Muslim world shows how the current state of education was transformed prior, during, and after the advent of Western colonization during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Muslim communities rediscovered the importance of education when they encountered “modernity” and Westernization in the nineteenth century during the Euro-colonial expansion. It is during this period that the Muslims had to come to grips with Western military, political, and economic superiority. Consequently, Muslim “backwardness” and modernization became the central issues for Muslim intellectuals of this era.

Related to, and resultant of the political events of the past two centuries were socio-cultural developments that shaped all society’s institutions in the Muslim world, including the educational system. Most notable, this publication highlights the significance of the interplay between several value systems—the modern, the traditional, and the religious—in shaping all aspects of life in the Muslim world, including the educational systems. One obvious influence during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred soon after the arrival of the colonialists and the establishment of their institutions. The cultural norms dictating access to resources, power, and status shifted not only towards the attainment of Western-style education, but also to the adjustment of manners and lifestyle to resemble those of Westerners. Under the model of dual educational systems, with the modern general education offering access to status and power, and the Islamic education system becoming more and more limited in what it could offer its graduates, the bulk of ambitious elites and middle-class directed their—and their children’s—education to modern general education institutions, including

missionary schools. Islamic education institutions became a symbol of backwardness and became associated with poor and rural populations.

### ***Islamic Educational Systems***

With this political-historical and socio-cultural analysis in the background, this publication provides an overview of the educational systems in the Muslim world, with a focus on how Islamic education institutions are positioned within those systems. In this regard, this publication describes analytically the developments within Islamic educational systems in five countries (Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey), and the links of those systems to the wider educational systems.

Naturally, as a result of the massive changes that occurred in the Muslim world over the past 200 years, the shape and design of Islamic education varies from one country to the other. However, after reviewing the Islamic education system in various countries, it becomes clear that educational institutions in the Muslim world offer varying mixes of Islamic and general education. On one end of the spectrum, in some countries there are institutions that offer exclusively Islamic education. These are usually informal, community-based institutions intended to teach children basic Islamic information and Quranic memorization, in addition to basic Arabic and arithmetic. This is followed by another type of institution that also offers a strong emphasis on Islamic education combined with minimal general education. A third type combines a stronger general education curriculum and usually follows government regulations. A new emerging model combines high quality general education with a strong emphasis on Islamic education. This new trend of schools is usually private with expensive fees and appeals mainly to the growing modern/religious middle and upper classes. The most prevalent type of institution in the entire Muslim world offers mainly a general education curriculum with minimal superficial instructions in religion. These are usually public schools and private schools that follow the general education curriculum strictly. Near the end of the spectrum are schools that offer only general education. Those are rare in the Muslim world, as most of these countries insist on some type of religious education.

### **Challenges to Islamic Education in the Muslim World**

Islamic education faces challenges from within as well as the challenges that the system poses to communities and societies in the Muslim world and beyond.

***The position of Islamic education within the larger educational system.*** Based on the discussion of Islamic education within larger educational systems, it becomes clear that students in Islamic education institutions find themselves in dead-end sub-systems. In addition, in many instances the educational system does not recognize Islamic education institutions' degrees or limits their usefulness. On the other hand, general education systems usually limit access to Islamic education in general education schools, which opens the door for seeking knowledge about Islam from sources that may be militant or radical. Finally, as Islamic education has not received much attention compared to general education, the management system faces several challenges.



**Islamic education processes and pedagogy.** In some religious circles, a belief continues to exist that religious education is The Knowledge ('ilm). This attitude reflects negatively on efforts to modernize Islamic educational systems. In addition, a common pedagogy used is based on memorization, with less emphasis on individual contributions. Another major prevalent challenge is punishment of students in Islamic education institutions, which is almost a chronic problem in the entire Muslim world. Finally, as a result of ages of stagnation, teaching methods in Islamic education institutions have not seen improvement.

**Efforts of Islamic scholars.** The challenge to stay current, especially during this time of rapid technological advancements—specifically in the areas of communication, and economic and social globalization—poses new challenges to education in the Muslim world in general and to Islamic education in particular. In addition, the threat of militancy and terrorism in the name of Islam as a response to perceived injustices and radical fundamentalism as a response to cultural changes are troubling. Unfortunately, in the face of those challenges, contemporary Islamic scholars concerned with Islamic education seem to fall short in providing effective guidance to address them. This is because contemporary scholars often use approaches that reflect, to a great extent, a siege mentality and produce ad-hoc approaches to the study of Islamic sources on education.

**Misperceptions in the West and in the Muslim world about Islamic education.** In the West, and among elites in the Muslim world, especially after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, media formulated a singular image of Islamic education institutions by focusing on children memorizing the Quran and shouting “jihad”. This resulted in presenting the system as one that is backward, oppressive to children, and used as a seedbed for militancy and extremism. Those negative views of Islamic education institutions misrepresent several aspects. First, the vast majority of these institutions provide more than just mechanical Quranic memorization; they offer a wider range of religious education in addition to modern education. Second, they serve millions of children; girls and boys in the Muslim world who otherwise could be deprived of any education. Third, these institutions in many countries of the Muslim world provide invaluable social services to the communities by offering shelter and education to orphans. Finally, most of those institutions are moving forward with modernization plans.

**Politicization and militarization of Islamic education.** It is unfortunate that governments and militants, in the Muslim world and the West, have on several occasions exploited those Islamic education institutions to advance their own political agendas. The trouble with those policies is that, as the whole world has witnessed in the past few years, such indoctrination and utilization of Islamic education institutions as centers for *Islamic Jihad Internationale*, do not cease to exist once the purpose they were initiated to address is fulfilled. The indoctrination and the militant fraternity live beyond the fulfillment of the immediate purpose. The violent force associated with them continues to affect the entire world in an unprecedented wave of terror.

### **Approaches/Strategies for Improving Education in Islamic Schools**

Based on the information gathered in this research, the following approaches and strategies are provided for improving education in Islamic schools. The information in this section is

organized according to three categories: society-, government-, and institution-related approaches/strategies.

### **Society-related Approaches/Strategies**

**Encourage, rather than hinder, community ownership of Islamic education institutions.** Islamic education institutions in several Muslim countries were the products of successful social entrepreneurship. That is, those institutions have often been initiated and maintained by visionary community leaders whose aims were to provide educational services to their impoverished communities, and to provide shelters to orphans. *This spirit must be encouraged, and maintained. It should not be hampered by efforts to supervise the curriculum.*

**Promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence.** Islamic education institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They are strongly influenced by political, social, and cultural factors. In this time of massive, easily accessible information technology, the spread of radical Islamic doctrines, via what appears to be legitimate and credible religious sources, may negatively influence the worldview of the young generations in the Muslim world in general. This, in turn, may influence Islamic education institutions. *Efforts must be made to provide religiously credible and legitimate information about tolerance and peaceful coexistence via various information dissemination venues such as the internet and media.*

**Provide equitable education for girls.** Girls' enrollment in Islamic education institutions in most Muslim countries is, surprisingly, high. Research has revealed few impressive examples of Islamic girl education models. This educational system, however, continues to be influenced by traditional patriarchal values, and male-dominated religious interpretations. Those values and attitudes result in treating girls and women as second class in those institutions. *Efforts must be made to better accommodate girls. This may be accomplished by increasing the number of women teachers and administrators, as they may be able to influence policies and practices in ways that will make those institutions more attentive to girls' needs.*

**Counter negative perceptions about Islamic education.** Negative perceptions about Islamic education institutions are prevalent among large segments of Western societies, and among the elites and middle class in Muslim countries. *Correcting misperceptions in Western societies and among Muslim countries' elites and middle class via dissemination of appropriate information will bring wider support to the reforms and modernization efforts proposed in this research.*

### **Government-related Approaches/Strategies**

**Support Islamic education, especially in public schools.** The Islamic aspects of identity in the Muslim world continue to influence those societies. Because of the strong presence of Islam as an identity element, people in the Muslim world will continue to seek knowledge about Islam, and will view efforts to reduce Islamic education as an infringement upon a sacred aspect of their existence and identity. *It is not recommended in this research to continue with efforts to eliminate or reduce Islamic education, especially in public schools.*

**Monitor, not mandate, Islamic curriculum content.** The involvement of governments in the Muslim world, and elsewhere, with Islamic curricula to serve security objectives could lead to uncontrolled negative outcomes. The outcomes of such involvements have been devastating on a wide scale. *While state supervision of Islamic curriculum is necessary to guard against the spread of radical and militant views, states in the Muslim world, and elsewhere, must refrain from politicizing this education.*

**Provide careful supervision of Islamic education institutions and curriculum.** The examples of the government role with Al-Azhar in Egypt and with Islamic education institutions in Indonesia demonstrate that state supervision prevents the spread of such institutions in unpredictable directions. In this regard it is important to assert that issues related to Islamic identity and education are highly sensitive materials not suitable for free exchange and handling.

**Monitor curriculum for education quality and negative messages.** The peaceful revival of Islam has been expanding into the middle and upper classes of most Muslim societies. While the impression about Islamic education institutions among large segments of these classes remains negative, increasing numbers of people among these classes are seeking Islamic education that is combined with modern education. This is resulting in the emergence of new models of Islamic/modern educational institutions that cater to those classes. *While governments should encourage this trend because it provides an attractive educational venue to members of those classes, governments must also carefully review both the general education and Islamic education curricula to ensure that they meet quality standards, and that the religious curricula does not contain negative, antagonistic messages.*

### ***Institution-related Approaches/Strategies***

**Encourage the infusion of general education into Islamic education institutions.** The dual model of education (general education institutions and Islamic education institutions) in several Muslim countries is going through changes in which most Islamic education institutions are incorporating general education curriculum into the Islamic curriculum. In doing so, those institutions are receiving financial support and recognition of their certificates, which increases the choices of their students regarding their future education. *The trend towards infusing general education curriculum into Islamic education institutions must be encouraged, and incentives must be developed to attract more exclusive Islamic education institutions to incorporate general education curriculum.*

**Support/promote new student-centered, action-oriented classroom instruction.** The quality of teacher preparation, pedagogical approaches, and teacher-student relations in Islamic education institutions has been of concern to all involved. The traditional approaches based on memorization are depriving students of creative thinking and addressing new challenges and contemporary issues. Corporal punishment concerns many students in those institutions. At the same time, administrators and teachers in those institutions welcome learning new approaches to education. *Encourage efforts to provide teacher training programs and exchange programs to introduce more participatory, less memorization-based, approaches to education and teaching.*

***Spread the word about successful new models.*** The growing interest in studying Islamic education in the Muslim world has led to the discovery of intriguing new models of Islamic education institutions. Several of these models strike an effective balance between providing Islamic education, modern education, and civic education. *A compilation of “best practices” among Islamic education institutions in the Muslim world, and the dissemination of the compilation in various formats (for example, in hard copies, CDs and on the internet) may expand these models into more countries, especially if the implementation of these models is connected to some form of incentive.* One significant advantage of this process is that those models have been “home grown” within “Islamically-credible” institutions. This will eliminate the concern that these are Western imposed models.

## I. Background and Introduction

The topics of education in the Muslim world, and Islamic education, have gained much attention in the past few years due to the perceived link between those issues and concerns for development and security in the Muslim world and beyond. This publication will attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of (1) the educational systems and (2) Islamic education in the Muslim world, using socio-cultural, political-historical and religious analytical approaches. It is believed that these approaches are necessary for several reasons:

- The development of the current educational systems in all countries of the Muslim world have gone through strikingly similar patterns that were shaped by historical political events such as colonialism and independence movements.
- The current educational systems in all countries of the Muslim world, and the role of Islamic education in those countries, reflect cultural patterns and value systems that are the product of a combination of religious, traditional and modern influences.
- Recent socio-economic and technological trends in the Muslim world, combined with newly emerging patterns of international relations in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, are contributing to intensified reviews of Islamic education in the Muslim world and their educational systems.
- The religious underpinning of Islamic education deserves a balanced, well-informed focus in conjunction with socio-political and cultural-historical approaches; the lack of such focus could render any such research incomplete and inaccurate.

This review and analysis includes the following general sections:

- *A political-historical review of major events* that have shaped various sectors in Muslim world countries, including education. This section includes a discussion of the state of education in the Muslim world prior, during, and after the advent of Western colonization in the Muslim world during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The effects of colonization upon all aspects of life in those countries, including education, is reviewed and analyzed.
- *A socio-cultural framework for the analysis of social influences upon education in the Muslim world.* Related to, and resultant of the political events of the past two centuries were socio-cultural developments that shaped all society's institutions in the Muslim world, including the educational system. That large context in which the educational system exists will be examined in order to comprehend its dynamics and developments.
- *An overview of the educational systems in the Muslim world.* This section focuses on how Islamic education institutions are positioned within those systems. Similar to the point made above about the socio-cultural context in which the educational system exists,

understanding the role and influence of Islamic education in Muslim countries requires an assessment of the larger educational system and how Islamic education fits within it.

- *A focused review of Islamic education systems, including their content and developments in a representative sample of five Muslim countries.* This section will include a review of Islamic education in five selected countries: Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.
- *Challenges to Islamic education in the Muslim world.* Based on the discussion and analyses above, this section will include a review of the challenges within the Islamic education system as well as the challenges that the system poses to communities and societies in the Muslim world and beyond.
- *Approaches/strategies for improving education in Islamic schools.* These approaches and strategies will address the challenges described earlier and take into consideration the specific socio-cultural and political-historical circumstances of the Muslim world.

## What Is Islamic Education?

Before delving into this research, it is imperative to clearly define what is meant by the term “Islamic education.” The meaning seems to vary according to who is writing about it and from which angle. For example, Muslim scholars interested in studying the content and substance of Islamic education emphasize the character development (*tarbiya*)<sup>1</sup> aspect of that education. Most of their writings focus on how to ensure the proper Islamic development of Muslim students.<sup>2</sup> Others focus on the historical models of religious education before and after Western colonization, with clear preference for models that existed prior to colonization.<sup>3</sup> Western writings in general focus on the present structure of that educational system, with a strong interest in its implications for development and security issues.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, several institutions in the Muslim world offer education that relates to religion. The term “religious education” has been used in the media without clear parameters as to what is religious education and what is not. Religious education may refer to that type of education offered by Islamic education institutions from early stages to graduate education, such as that offered by the Al-Azhar system in Egypt, Zaitwna University in Tunisia, and Imam Mohammed ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia. Religious education may also refer to the religion class offered within the general education system in most Muslim countries.<sup>5</sup> Finally, religious education is also offered by numerous private and community institutions with a focus on Quranic memorization and community education in basic Islamic teachings and values.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Throughout this publication, the authors have chosen, both for emphasis and ease of reading, to consistently italicize the words *madrasah*, *madaris*, and key words from Arabic and other languages. *Madaris* is the plural form of *madrasah*, an Islamic school.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Rahman al-Naqib, *Al-Tarbiya al-Islamia: Risala and Maseera*. (Dar el-Fikr el-Arabi: Cairo, 1990),10-13.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed Fadel el-Gamali, *Nahwa Tagdid al-Benaa al-Tarbawi fi al-Alam al-Islami*. (Al-Dar el-Tunesia lel-Nashr: Tunisian University, 1984), 139-147.

<sup>4</sup> USAID Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, *Strengthening Education in the Muslim World*. Country Profiles and Analysis. Issue Paper Number 2. (USAID: Washington, D.C., 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Throughout this research, the term “general education” refers to the educational system that has been developed in almost all Muslim countries to provide modern education.

For the purpose of this research, it is important to understand the multiple facets of Islamic education's content, including the theological knowledge and the "*tarbiya*" aspects, its curriculum and pedagogy, and its structure within the wider general education system. Islamic education here will refer to the study of topics related to Islamic education (explained later in Section III), including "*tarbiya*," which are offered by formal or informal institutions in Muslim countries.

### **Islamic Education: An Issue of Polarization**

The subject of Islamic education—its potential for modernization, or lack of; its contribution to intolerance, or even to terrorism—polarizes academicians and policymakers within Muslim societies and in the West. As one academician in Bangladesh commented: "The subject of Madrasah education is as polarizing as the subject of abortion in the United States."

The authors recognize that perceptions about Islamic education are shaped to a great extent by one's worldviews, personal experiences, and exposure to one or another type of media. Particularly, discussing Islamic education in terms of its potential for modernization, inclusiveness, and tolerance, may upset the sensibilities of some adherents to secular traditions, including Western secularists. This is understandable given that the struggle of Western secularism, and its perceived success, was due to confining the role of religion, to the extent possible, apart from public life. Introducing religious education in the twenty-first century as a potential vehicle for modernization challenges established Western secular values and principles.

Inversely, adherents to traditional religious schools of thought, especially within the Islamic context, decry the onslaught on Islamic education. In their struggle to survive in what they perceive as hostile environments, they may resort to even more stringent isolating approaches to Islamic education. Such adherents stand on the other side of the spectrum from Western secularists.

The task of satisfying all sides on the subject of Islamic education is not possible, and more significantly, was not something pursued here at any length. What is presented here is a sincere assessment of Islamic education in the twenty-first century by a group of academicians and scholars who have been exposed to and immersed in Islamic and Western societies.

## II. A Political-Historical Review

### Islamic Education Before Colonization

There are several factors to consider when discussing Islamic education before the period of colonization. First, the time period being studied spans about 12 centuries, from the time Prophet Mohammed started his prophetic mission in the seventh century, to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Second, the Muslim world covered a vast geographical area—almost the same area covered today by Muslim nations—extending from the Indian subcontinent to Morocco, and from Turkey and the Balkans to Central and West Africa. In addition, the Muslim world, within such a vast span of space and time, witnessed several political and social changes. Those factors make it difficult to draw convincing generalizations. The challenges become clear when attempting to study a historical system of Islamic education prior to the period of colonization.

Muslim scholars writing on the subject seem to take two approaches. The first focuses on a description of what is considered to be the tenants of Islamic education, without a clear consideration of historical gaps. For example, Al-Naqib (1990) discusses the principles of education and *tarbiya* in Islam as described by four prominent Muslim scholars: Sahnoun (202-256, H)<sup>6</sup>, Ibn Masquwe (320-421), Al-Ghazali (450-505), and Ibn-Khaldun, (732-808).<sup>7</sup> He acknowledges that the four scholars lived in different time periods, from the third to the ninth Islamic centuries. Such an approach is prevalent among Muslim scholars and lay people as well, who seem to lump Islamic civilization into one era (almost always glorious) covering 12 centuries. This practice lacks a careful assessment of the different circumstances under which, for example, the four aforementioned scholars lived.

A second approach focuses on studying the causes of what is considered to be the rise and fall of Islamic education institutions. For example, Mursi (1982) describes four stages of Islamic education: the Building Stage (from the beginning of Islam to the end of the Amawi dynasty), the Golden Stage (the Abasid dynasty), The Deterioration Stage (the Ottoman Era), and the Renewal and Re-building Stage (from the end of Ottoman rule to present).<sup>8</sup>

Historically, as well as in our current era, Islamic tradition has recognized the centrality of education both as a form of worship and as a means to moral, ethical, and cultural socialization of the *ummah* (Muslim community). Especially during the formative years of the Islamic community, education was considered a high and noble ambition. For example, the first Quranic revelation, which states: “Read in the name of Thy Lord who creates,” also advises the Prophet Mohammed to pray to Allah to increase his knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The Prophet Mohammed is also recorded to have said that “the learned men are his heirs, and that with knowledge Allah

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<sup>6</sup> These dates follow the Islamic Hijra calendar, which started approximately 622 A.D. So the year 202 H is approximately 824 A.D., and the year 256 is approximately 878 A.D.).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>8</sup> Mohammed Munir Mursi, *El-Tarbia el-Islamia: Usulaha wa Taturuha fi el Bilad el-Arabia*. (‘Alam el-Kutub: Cairo, 1982), 171-172.

<sup>9</sup> Rahim Yar Abbasi (n.d.). “Educational Links Between Muslim Countries” at [www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/gmbonham/2000-Fall-IR-Projects/website/Group?ICN/Copy%20of%20ICNweb/Conflict%20Resolution%20P..htm](http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/gmbonham/2000-Fall-IR-Projects/website/Group?ICN/Copy%20of%20ICNweb/Conflict%20Resolution%20P..htm)



raised [sic] a people and made them pioneers in whose paths others will follow and whose examples other will take.”<sup>10</sup> Another *Hadith* (Prophet’s saying) that emphasizes the centrality of knowledge and education asks Muslims to “seek knowledge though it be in China.”<sup>11</sup>

Even though education, “which initially meant learning the Quran and developing a system of piety around it,”<sup>12</sup> was considered one of the central aspects of Islamic tradition since the beginning of the Islamic community, “it was later in the first and second centuries of Islam that scattered centers of learning grew up around persons of eminence.”<sup>13</sup> Fazlur Rahman states that during this period these eminent teachers would give a student a permit (*ijaza*) to teach and copy down the prophet’s tradition and deduce legal points from them.<sup>14</sup> It is estimated that the first organized schools with established curricula were set up by the *Shi’a* to impart knowledge and indoctrinate students. Later on, the Seljukids and Ayyubids established large Sunni *madaris*<sup>15</sup> and colleges.<sup>16</sup>

Higher education systems in Islam during this period mainly consisted of law and theology, which were administered to students. Although very little is known regarding what was taught in the colleges of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, in addition to religious sciences (*ulum shariya*), traditional sciences (*ulum naqliya*) and rational or secular sciences (*ulum aqliya*) such as philosophy, mathematics, grammar, logic, medicine, and astronomy were taught and were considered important as Islamic literature flourished in these fields. However, interest in these areas of knowledge gradually declined, heralding the decline of Islamic influence in the world. Reasons for this included: (1) a prevailing belief that a good Muslim must focus on most important and useful information, meaning religious information; (2) the rise of Sufism, which is inimical to rational sciences as well as intellectualism; (3) vocational concerns as those who had mastered religious sciences could find jobs more easily than those who focused on secular sciences;<sup>17</sup> and, (4) finally, concerns for the status quo, as some of the philosophers and thinkers such as al Farabi, ibn Sina were rejecting orthodoxy and thus were considered heretical.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, these sciences were excluded from the school curricula in the Islamic world.

Several Muslim scholars, especially Arab scholars, add another factor as significantly contributing to the deterioration of education in the Muslim world: the Ottoman Empire. Several Arab Muslim scholars describe the 400 years of Ottoman rule over the Arab world as a time of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1984), 31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Madaris” is the plural form of madrasah; an Islamic school.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Naqib (1990) quoted the prominent 11<sup>th</sup> century Islamic scholar, al-Ghazali, who stated that more people during his time were interested in studying theology than studying medicine, despite the need for physicians in the society, because studying theology brought people closer to powerful positions in the judiciary and government, and to controlling charity funds. 198-199.

<sup>18</sup> For further information and an analysis of these reasons see Rahman, 34-35.

“stagnation of intellectual and cultural life, and the consequences to the Muslim world were severe, as it fell into deep sleep for almost four centuries.”<sup>19</sup>

The result of all those factors was a decline in the quality of education in the Muslim world. For example, classes such as rhetoric and grammar gradually replaced sciences, even at the oldest and most established University in the Muslim world, Al-Azhar. Moreover, original texts of theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence were also replaced with commentaries and super-commentaries.<sup>20</sup> These developments relied more on memorization learning methods without any deeper understanding of the subjects at hand. Thus the quality of education was severely damaged. Moreover, Islamic education became stagnant and was not able to adapt to the changes in society.

### **Islamic Education During and After Colonization**

Muslim communities rediscovered the importance of education when they encountered “modernity” and Westernization in the nineteenth century during the Euro-colonial expansion. European powers were expanding their influence in the Muslim world through a systematic conquest for colonies, which began in the late eighteenth century and lasted until World War I. It is during this period that the Muslims had to come to grips with Western military, political, and economic superiority. Consequently, Muslim “backwardness” and ways to modernize became the central issue for Muslim intellectuals of this era.

As colonial powers continued to penetrate the Muslim world, modern educational institutions were established. For example, the British rulers of the Indian subcontinent established a large number of modern schools in which English was often the medium of instruction for teaching such subjects as science and mathematics. As a result, the number of traditional Islamic education institutions (*madaris*) was gradually reduced. Some private and some mosque-based *madaris* survived.<sup>21</sup> Egypt was the first among Arab countries to borrow the French system of education by sending students to study in France and establishing modern schools.<sup>22</sup> The establishment of modern schools in the Muslim world did not mean the elimination of Islamic education institutions, which by that time were only focused on teaching Arabic language and Islamic studies. Instead, a dual system of education was established throughout the Muslim world.

Muslim intellectuals and reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Mohammed Abdu, considered education a key ingredient in their programs of socio-religious reforms. They were critical of the duality of the educational structures of modernization policies, which artificially divided the Muslim society. Moreover, these intellectuals were also severely critical of the foreign missionary schools, which were perceived to be designed to

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<sup>19</sup> Mursi, *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>20</sup> Rahman, *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Amr Abdalla, *Bangladesh Educational Assessment: Pre-primary and Primary Madrasah Education in Bangladesh*. (Creative Associates International, Inc: Washington, D.C., 2004), 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Mohammed Munir Mursi., *Tareekh el-Tarbia fi el-Sharq wa el-Gharb*. (‘Alam el-Kutub: Cairo, 1984), 457.

subvert Muslim beliefs.<sup>23</sup> They supported Muslim education in modernizing itself to “instill into the minds of Muslim students a burning desire to dig deep into their civilization and descry its eternal dynamics.”<sup>24</sup>

Muslim responses to modernity differed significantly.<sup>25</sup> Some contended that Islam and religious scholars (*ulema*) were responsible for this backwardness and therefore argued that Muslim communities should modernize and secularize at the expense of Islam. Others argued that it was not Islam but conservative *ulema* and the stagnant education system to blame. With that perspective, they argued for a selective application of modernity and argued especially that the technical aspects of it should be appropriated to the Islamic worldview. Still others argued that the reason for this backwardness of the Muslim world was the deviation of Muslims from the true, straight path of Islam. The solution they proposed was that Muslims should go back to the formative years of Islam and try to reestablish the original Muslim community. Modernization of the education system in the Muslim world reflects these different responses to modernity and revolves around the question of how to modernize Islamic communities.

In that line, Fazlur Rahman argues that modern Muslims have adopted two basic approaches to modern knowledge and the education system: (1) acquisition of modern knowledge should be limited to the practical technological sphere, since at the level of pure thought, Muslims do not need Western intellectual products (these Western ideas are detrimental for the Muslim community and the Islamic belief system); and (2) Muslims can and ought to acquire not only Western technology but also its intellectualism, as no knowledge can be harmful.<sup>26</sup>

Today, the Muslim world consists of more than 50 states. There are substantial differences in the way the educational systems of these states have developed during the colonial and post-colonial eras. The political, social, and economic experiences of each state have played a significant role in this process. On that note, Fazlur Rahman identifies four factors that played a crucial role in the different evolution of modernization in the Islamic world. These are: (1) whether a particular cultural region retained its sovereignty vis-à-vis the European political expansion and whether it was dominated and governed *de jure* or *de facto* by a European colonial power; (2) the character of the organization of the *ulema*, or religious leadership, and the character of their relationship with the governing institution before the colonial encroachment; (3) the state of the development of Islamic education and its accompanying culture immediately before the colonial encroachment; and finally (4) the character of the overall colonial policy of the particular colonizing power—British, French, or Dutch.<sup>27</sup> It can be inferred that the same factors have influenced the evolution of the education system in each of these states.

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<sup>23</sup> Ghulam Nabi Saqib, *Modernization of Muslim Education in Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey: A Comparative Study* (Islamic Book Service: Lahore, 1983) 109.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See Rahman *ibid*, also S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, *Standing On an Isthmus: Islamic Narratives of War and Peace in Palestine*. Ph.D. Thesis American University, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>27</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1984), 43.

### **III. A Socio-cultural Framework for the Analysis of Social Influences upon Education in the Muslim World**

#### **Overview**

The educational system, naturally, reflects social and cultural patterns in any given society. In Muslim societies, the advent of Western colonialism added a new significant value system to their society: the modern value system. Muslim societies for the longest time were influenced by a mix of the religious and traditional value systems.

The religious value system represents the norms, expectations, and rules derived from religion. They affect various aspects of people's lives, such as choices of mates, dress code, refraining from alcohol and gambling, and rules related to marriage, divorce, and death. They also affect the political and social outlook for some.

The traditional value system is the set of norms and ethics inherited through history from various sources. These norms and ethics influence many aspects of lives, such as rituals related to birth, marriage, and funerals. They also provide certain values related to strict family traditions (i.e., patriarchy and limitations on women's appearance and choices), and even blood retaliation. These values are not religious in the first place, even if people mistake them for being so.

The third value system that arrived with the Western colonialists was the modern value system.<sup>28</sup> The modern value system is the set of values learned through the interaction with the West over the past two centuries. Examples of these values fall under three categories: *secular*, such as democratic systems; *Westernized*, such as individual freedom on the personal level, music, and pop-culture; and *civic*, such as work ethics and respect for public space.

The mix of those three value systems had, and continues to have, serious implications for the educational systems in Muslim countries. One obvious influence during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century occurred soon after the arrival of the colonialists and the establishment of their institutions. The cultural norms dictating access to resources, power and status shifted not only towards the attainment of Western-style education, but also the adjustment of manners and life style to resemble those of Westerners. Under the model of dual educational systems, with the modern general education offering that type of access to status and power and the Islamic education system becoming more and more limited in what it could offer its graduates, the large bulk of elites and middle-class who were ambitious directed their and their children's education to modern general education institutions, including missionary schools. Islamic education institutions became a symbol of backwardness and became associated with poor and rural populations.

The Westernization of the middle class in the Muslim world was the trend until the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time modern general education gained a strong foothold.

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<sup>28</sup> The subject of "modernity" will be addressed at more length at the end of this section in order to provide readers with a clearer understanding of the authors' views on the matter.

However, as Islam remained a constant component of what constituted the Muslim identity and as efforts were made to balance Islam and modernity, the entire Muslim world witnessed a renewal and revival of its Islamic identity due to several political and social factors. As John Esposito described this revival in Egypt:

*The most important characteristic of Islamic revivalism in Egypt in the nineties is the extent to which revivalism has become part and parcel of moderate mainstream life and society, rather than a marginal phenomenon limited to small groups or organizations. No longer restricted to the lower or lower middle class, renewed awareness and concern about leading a more Islamically-informed way of life can also be found in the middle and upper class, educated and uneducated, peasants and professionals, young and old, women and men.<sup>29</sup>*

One explanation for this revival relates to an element of Islam that is particularly present in peoples' hearts and minds, yet seems to always escape those who write about Islamic culture, especially the secular writers.<sup>30</sup> A passionate sentiment attaches them to their Islamic heritage. The history of early Islam, as taught to the young at home, school, mosque and in the community, is rich with examples of self-sacrifice, courage, solidarity, love and compassion, justice and equality. Every Muslim seems to be able to identify with this heritage and almost feel a sense of ownership of it. This heritage is not subject to the confusing scholarly interpretations or the abusive institutions that have overshadowed the social and political history of Islam. Rather, it represents to Muslims the pure ideals of their religion.

These ideals also represent a reality that once existed, of which any Muslim proudly feels that s/he is an integral part; that is, every Muslim owns this heritage, and this heritage is part of what every Muslim is. This "love" relationship with their Islamic religious heritage always provided continuity and momentum to Muslim societies, in spite of political and social institutions that strayed too far from that heritage.<sup>31</sup> Islam offers its followers a wide range of attitude and behavior models applicable in different situations. These models are prescribed in, and extracted from, divine sources.<sup>32</sup> The success of a Muslim, then, is based on her or his striving to model attitudes and behaviors after the ones presented in the Quran and Sunnah. *Islam, thus, is a process of modeling.* Righteousness is measured by one's ability to model all aspects of

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<sup>29</sup> John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*. (Oxford University Press: New York, 1992), 100.

<sup>30</sup> Amr Abdalla, Islamic Interpersonal Conflict Intervention: A Search within Islam and Western Literature. *Journal of Law and Religion*. V.15. n.1. (2001).

<sup>31</sup> In the history of Egypt, for example, when people felt that the threat of a foreign invasion may deprive them of their right to their Islamic heritage, it was this love and passionate sentiment towards Islam that made the people rise to the occasion and defeat foreign threats. For example, in the Middle Ages, as the Mongols swept Asia entirely, they occupied Baghdad, which was the capital of the Islamic empire. They then marched to Egypt. The Mamluks, who ruled at that time, mobilized the people to fight against this invincible enemy. As the armies faced each other, the leader of the Egyptian army made his historical cry "Wa Islamah." This cry expressed the feelings of love and passionate sentiment towards Islam. Islam was referred to in this cry as if it were a beloved who is about to be hurt or killed; it was the responsibility of every Muslim to protect it with all they could. The Muslims gave the Mongols their first defeat ever, which halted their expansion, and which led eventually to their embracing Islam.

<sup>32</sup> The divine sources of Islam are the Quran (the Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad), and the Sunnah of the Prophet (his statements and actions that were deemed to represent him as prophet, not as a human being).

life after the ones prescribed in divine sources. The major principles emphasized in the divine sources are recognition of monotheism, kindness to others, justice, charity, standing up for the weak, honesty, and belief in the hereafter.

Therefore, it is not surprising from a Muslim standpoint to witness this revival of Islam in all aspects of lives. The implication for the educational system is that such a revival, especially among the elites and the educated middle class, opened a “demand market” for Islamic education combined with quality modern education. As a result, and as will be discussed later with the specific case studies of Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia, a new model of Islamic education institutions is emerging in those countries. The new model offers a combination of high quality modern education, equal to the well-reputed modern education that has been offered by missionary schools in those countries, and strong Islamic education. Those new schools are usually privately-run and require high fees affordable only to the upper middle class and elites. Despite that, large segments of the educated middle class and elites in those countries continue to hold fast to their Westernized manners, hence continuing to view Islamic education institutions as symbols of backwardness. However, this pattern is changing dramatically from the dominant trends of the past two centuries.

In summary, the social and cultural views of Islamic education have been influenced by the advent of colonialism in the nineteenth century in ways that reduced that education to a mere insignificant institution relevant mainly to the lower socio-economic segments of Muslim societies. However, as Islam continued to exercise its strong sentiment among the masses, across all classes, and due to various political and social circumstances, the Islamic aspect of identity re-emerged among members of the elite and the middle class, opening the door for the introduction of new models of modern and Islamic education.

### **Modernity Explained**

Modernity as a prevalent value system in Muslim countries was the outcome of the exposure to what many Muslims perceived as a superior West over the past two centuries. In order to illustrate the concept of modernity the case of Egypt’s exposure and interaction with values of modernity will be used. The example of Egypt represents to a large extent the patterns that exist in other Muslim countries.

Since the French campaign against Egypt in the turn of the nineteenth century, Egyptians on all levels were exposed to different values and institutions that affected all spheres of life. Educational missions were sent to Europe; government and all sectors were reshaped into European styles; and more significantly, people were absorbing a whole new value system in addition to the existing systems. In the heart of the new value system were the principles of freedom and equality. When these principles were transformed into institutions within different realms, they took different shapes and meanings. These emerging shapes and meanings inevitably encountered existing institutions that were based on religion or tradition. The encounters resulted in different and changing outcomes. Singerman (1995) mentioned a

good example of this interaction between the incoming Western values and institutions, and the existing traditional or religious ones.<sup>33</sup> She described the spectrum of wedding rituals and customs that existed in Egypt and contained elements of Western customs (especially among the middle class), and elements of traditional and Islamic ones, in addition, of course, to legal practices that must be followed.

As a starting point, the term “modern value system” is too loose and too wide to be comprehended as one unit of analysis. In terms of its source, perhaps it suffices to state that the source of this system was found in the exposure to a more technologically advanced West. But in terms of how the modern value system integrated into the Egyptian society, it becomes necessary to distinguish between three groups of values within the modern value system: the secular, the Westernized, and the civic. In the heart of each of these groups of values are the basic values of freedom and equality. However, the appearance of these values varies within each realm where each of the value groups is more present.

### ***The Secular Value Group***

The first value group, *the secular*, relates more specifically to the political realm of life. Its main rhetoric is the separation of church and state, pluralism, and democracy. Given the strong presence of the religious value system in Egypt, the introduction of this one value group has faced ongoing challenge, confrontation and compromise. The struggle between Islamic fundamentalists and the semi-secular state in Egypt has been a manifestation of the resistance by the fundamentalists to the possibility that any realm of life may be separated from the divine direction<sup>34</sup>. In addition to the confrontation with the fundamentalists, the introduction of this value group also shook the intellectual establishment in Egypt. Endless efforts have taken place in the past century to “sort out” or “re-interpret” elements of the religious value system, and the secular value group, with the purpose of finding a common ground where principles of political freedom, equality, and participation may be reconciled within an Islamic framework. The scholarly and activist work of Mohamed Abdu and Gamal el-Din El Afaghani at the turn of the twentieth century represented this movement.<sup>35</sup> In addition to those who resisted secularism and those who attempted to find a common ground between the two systems, others adhered to the Western notion of secularism, rejecting any religious foundation for the political realm. President Sadat (1970–1981) stated in several of his speeches, in response to the confrontational fundamentalists, that “there is no room for religion in politics, and no room for politics in religion.”

Another application of the secular value group is in the personal and family realms. Specifically, secular values relating to women’s liberation, right to education, and right to choose their mates, are all present on the level of personal and family life. These values are more present in urban areas. This set of values does not face much resistance because it is considered to be consistent with Islamic principles of equality of gender and women's rights. The efforts of

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<sup>33</sup> D. Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Politics, and Networks in Urban Quarters of Cairo*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Esposito, *Ibid*.

<sup>35</sup> Esposito, *Ibid*, 55–62; Zakaria, R., *The Struggle Within Islam: the Conflict Between Religion and Politics*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988) 164–168.

Mohamed Abdu and his follower Kasem Amin in the beginning of this century, in addition to the relentless efforts by women organizations over the century, and the pro-equality policies since the 1952 revolution, ensured that these women's rights were there to stay.

### ***The Westernized Value Group***

The third value group, *the Westernized*, relates more specifically to the personal and private spheres of life. The premise of this value group is that “to be modern [is] to be Western in dress, language, ideas, education, behavior (from table manners to greetings), architecture, and furnishings.”<sup>36</sup> This value group, with its Western-like institutions, is pervasive among the educated middle and upper-middle classes in large urban areas such as Cairo and Alexandria (Singerman 1995). Its images also dominate the cultural life as represented in movies and television programs.<sup>37</sup> This value group dictates to its adherents a lifestyle that is based on personal freedom, especially in terms of appearance, intimacy, and sexual relationships, and individualistic attitudes. Western images of individual freedom in these spheres are the model and ideal to be followed.

This Westernized value group and its institutions receive much resentment and criticism because of their contradiction to both religious and traditional value systems. However, the Westernized institutions and style of life persist among the educated, especially young, middle and upper-middle classes. Despite resentment of these Westernized models, Egyptians appear to tolerate their existence. In other words, the resentment is confined to the expression of disagreement with these models, but not to taking any action to eliminate them. In many middle class families, some individuals live a Westernized lifestyle, while others maintain an Islamic or traditional one; they seem to be able to accept each other's choice, despite clear disagreement with the premise of each other's lifestyle.

Another aspect of this value group, the Westernized, is that its principles and morals do not necessarily reflect the core Western values of equality and meritocracy that are part of the *secular* value group. While individuals in the middle and upper-middle classes may appear and behave in a Western-like fashion, they do not necessarily uphold equality and meritocracy as a foundation of their value system.

### ***The Civic Value Group***

The *civic value group*, the third value group within the modern value system, applies to the business and work realms and the public realm. The premise of this value group is hard work, civic duty, and discipline. This one Western-derived value group is the most appreciated and valued among Egyptians. Egyptians may resent, rethink, or negotiate the first two value groups (secularism and Westernization), but they welcome, unconditionally, the civic value group. As Esposito has stated, “while Westernization and secularization of society are condemned, modernization as such is not. Science and technology are accepted.”<sup>38</sup> Esposito's reference to

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<sup>36</sup> Esposito, *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Armbrust, W. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. Port Chester, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> Esposito, *Ibid.*, 19.



science and technology here echoes what are termed here as the civic value groups. Ultimately, his concept, and the one presented in this research, points to the aspects of Western life that promote scientific progress via hard work and discipline.

Egyptians appreciate this value group because they see no contradiction between its premise and the Islamic premise. The most decorated educator of the nineteenth century, Refa'a El Tahtawy, was one of the early fellows to be sent on an educational mission to France. He wrote extensively about the French society in his classic "*El-Bahriz fi Talkhis Paris*" (A Focused Summary of Paris), not hiding his admiration of the excellent work ethic, public manners, and discipline that he witnessed there. His famous motto is "*In France, I found Islam, but found no Muslims!*" In other words, he found the application of Islamic principles of work ethic, discipline, respect of others, and civic responsibility, but found no Muslims, as he knew them in Egypt.

Finally, a question arises about how prevalent this value group is in any realm of life in Egypt. Interestingly, this one value system operates more as an ideal or a model for which to strive. In terms of application, however, it does not appear that this value system has any solid application. Usually people invoke this value system to criticize disorganization, corruption, nepotism, and lack of civic responsibility. Those invoking this value system find that the lack of institutions modeled after this value group is the cause of much of the backwardness of the country. The absence of these institutions in Egypt, and their prevalence in the first world, and in the ideal Islam, explains to many why the country is facing many public problems in areas such as housing, traffic, and sanitation. Many of the sources of conflicts in the society are also related to the lack of institutions that are modeled after the civic value group.

The modern value system, with its three value groups (secular, Westernized, and civic), exists similarly in all Muslim countries. As explained, it provides a foundation for contemplating, admiring, and resenting the West, all at the same time. Debates about modernization in the Muslim world range from: (1) longing to emulate civic practices such as work ethics and respect for public space (the civic value group); to, (2) contemplating the application of democratic systems and granting women rights (the secular value group); to, (3) resisting and sometimes resenting personal practices that represent decadence when measured by religious or traditional standards (the Westernized value group).

The Muslim world associates modernity with the desire to see implementation of elements of the civic value group (e.g., work ethics and respect of the public space). They welcome *modernity*. To the extent that they associate modernity with their cautious contemplation of the secular value group (e.g., democracy and women's rights), they are divided about *modernity*. And finally, to the extent that they resent the presence of elements of the Western value group (e.g., individual freedom on issues such as sexuality), they reject "*modernity*." The perception of what modernity is, and what implications it may have for Islamic education, influences approaches among academicians and policymakers. The discussion in chapters VI and VII will build upon this understanding of modernity to illustrate some of the challenges facing Islamic education, and some of the potential courses of action.

**Figure 1**  
**Summary of Dominant Value Systems in Muslim Societies\***

<b>Religious Value System</b>	<b>Traditional Value System</b>	<b>Modern Value System</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Represents the norms, expectations, and rules derived from religion</li> <li>▪ Affects various aspects of people’s lives, such as choices of mates, dress code, refraining from alcohol and gambling, and rules related to marriage, divorce, and death</li> <li>▪ Also affects the political and social outlook for some</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the set of norms and ethics inherited through history from various sources.</li> <li>▪ Influence many aspects of lives, such as rituals related to birth, marriage, and funerals.</li> <li>▪ Also provide certain values related to strict family traditions (i.e., patriarchy and limitations on women’s appearance and choices), and even blood retaliation.</li> <li>▪ Are not of religious origin, even if people mistake them as such.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consists of the set of values learned through the interaction with the West over the past two centuries</li> <li>▪ Examples of these values fall under three categories: Secular, such as democratic systems; Civic, such as work ethics, and respect for public space; and Westernized, such as individual freedom on the personal level, music, and pop culture.</li> </ul>

## IV. An Overview of Educational Systems in the Muslim World

### The Spectrum of Education

Based on the previous discussion about the political-historical developments and socio-cultural influences on Islamic education in the Muslim world, an overview of the various Islamic education systems in the Muslim world is now presented. Naturally, as a result of the massive changes that occurred in the Muslim world over the past 200 years, the shape and design of Islamic education varies from one country to another. After reviewing the Islamic education system in various countries, however, we feel that the chart in Figure 2 encompasses the various types of institutions.

The chart shows that educational institutions in the Muslim world offer varying mixes of Islamic and general education. On one end of the spectrum, in some countries, there are institutions that offer exclusively Islamic education. These are usually informal community-based institutions intended to teach children basic Islamic information and Quranic memorization, in addition to basic Arabic and arithmetic. This is followed by another type of institution that also offers a strong emphasis on Islamic education combined with minimal general education. The *Qawmi Madaris* in Bangladesh are good examples of this type. A third type combines a stronger general education curriculum and usually follows government regulations. The *Alia madrasah* in Bangladesh and Al-Azhar K-12 schools in Egypt are good examples of this type of education.

A new emerging model combines high quality general education with a strong emphasis on Islamic education. This new trend of schools is usually private with expensive fees and appeals mainly to the growing modern/religious middle and upper classes. The most prevalent type of institution in the entire Muslim world offers mainly a general education curriculum with minimal superficial instructions in religion. These are usually public schools and private schools that follow the general education curriculum strictly.

Near the end of the spectrum are schools that offer only general education. Those are rare in the Muslim world, as most of these countries insist on some type of religious education. In Egypt, the government has proposed to eliminate all religious education in public schools. The proposal is receiving sharp criticism from Muslim and Christian leaders equally. "Canceling the subject of religion from school curricula will have catastrophic consequences on society. Everybody should learn their own religion," said Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church said in response to such efforts. Shaikh Muhammad Tantawi, head of one of the highest Muslim authorities at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, backed the pope in his argument that religious authorities would have to shoulder the responsibility of religious instruction if such courses were omitted from school curricula.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/592A5456-1C3E-46A5-A50B-00B8EC9FC831.htm>

**Figure 2**  
**Spectrum of Education in the Muslim World**

<b>Mix of General and Religious Education</b>	Exclusively Islamic Education	Islamic Education with Minimal General Education	Mixed Islamic and General Education	Mixed Islamic and High Quality General Education	General Education with Minimal Religious Education	Exclusively General Education	High Quality General Education with Some Christian Education
<b>Level of Religious Education</b>	Strong Focus on Islamic Education	Strong Focus on Islamic Education	Strong Focus on Islamic Education	Strong Focus on Islamic Education	Minimal Islamic Education	No Islamic Education	No Islamic Education; Some Christian Education
<b>Type of Educational Institution (Public/Private)</b>	Mostly Private, Low Fee, Informal Schools	Mostly Private, Low Fee, Schools	Mix of Public and Private, Low Fee, Schools	Private, High Fee, Schools	Mostly Public Schools	Mostly Public Schools	Private, High Fee, Schools (Missionary Schools)
<b>Type of Students</b>	Attended mainly by a small percentage of students from underprivileged segments of the society	Attended mainly by a small percentage of students from underprivileged segments of the society	Attended by a sizeable minority of students mainly from underprivileged segments of the society	Attended by an increasing, yet still small, percentage, of Middle and Upper Class students	Attended by Large Percentages of All Segments of the Society	Attended by Large Percentages of All Segments of the Society	Attended by a very small percentage of students from Upper Influential Class
<b>Example Countries</b>	Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh	Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria	Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria	Bangladesh, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan	Bangladesh, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nigeria	Turkey (until late 1940's), and currently proposed in Egypt	Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria

Finally, on the other end of the spectrum are schools that offer general education and have traditionally been part of Christian missions. They are usually run by Christian religious figures, and provide Christian education to Christian students. Lately, some of these schools have eliminated religious subjects from their curricula.

### **Components of Islamic Education Curriculum**

Based on this review of the content of Islamic education, the following topics are usually taught in educational institutions that focus primarily on Islamic education. Such curricula may exist in exclusively Islamic education institutions, or in institutions that offer a strong dose of Islamic education combined with a general education curriculum:

- **Quranic Interpretation (*Tafsir*):** This subject includes reviews of the classic interpretations of the Quran according to several early scholars such as Ibn Kathir, El-Tabari, and Ibn Taymiyya. In some institutions, the interpretations provided by contemporary scholars such as Sayed Qutb and Mawdudi may also be included.
- **Prophet's Sayings and Practices (*Hadith*):** This subject addresses the processes used to ensure the authenticity of stories and statements related to the Prophet Mohammed, and review of the collections compiled by earlier scholars such as Bukhari and Muslim.
- **Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*):** This subject includes the methodologies used by various scholars, especially those representing the major four schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam (*Shafi*, *Hanafi*, *Malki*, and *Hanbali*), and their rulings on a variety of subjects, usually cataloged under categories such as prayer, marriage, divorce, charity, and jihad.
- **Islamic Basic Beliefs (*Aqaid*):** This subject focuses on the fundamental Islamic beliefs such as unity of God, existence of angels and Satan, Day of Judgment, heaven, and hell.
- **Arabic Language:** As Arabic is the language of the Quran, almost all educational institutions that focus on Islamic education provide education in the Arabic language. Proficiency in Arabic is usually regarded highly in such institutions.
- **Islamic Rituals:** This subject deals with how Muslims should perform their rituals such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca. *Fiqh* books include elaborate volumes on those subjects.
- **Islamic History:** This subject focuses primarily on Islamic history from the time of Prophet Mohammed to the present.
- **Islamic Manners and Values:** This subject includes focused education especially for children on proper Islamic manners as preached and practiced in the formative era of Islam; an era regarded by most Islamic scholars as a golden age from which many positive lessons and models may be drawn. In educational institutions that offer primarily a general education curriculum, the subject of religion usually includes elements of Islamic manners and values.

## V. A Focused Review of Islamic Education Systems

In this chapter the development of Islamic education is discussed within the wider educational system in five countries: Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey. The selection of these five countries is intended to be representative of the Muslim world geographically, culturally, and linguistically.

The discussion for each country will follow a systematic pattern. First, the development of the modern educational system and the Islamic education institutions will be discussed. This will be followed by a description of the country's educational system. Finally, a country review will include a discussion of its Islamic education institutions.

### Egypt

#### *Development of Egypt's Modern Educational System and Islamic Education Institutions*

Until the nineteenth century, the *ulema* and Coptic clergy controlled the educational system in Egypt. Mosques and churches operated as schools where children received their religious education and learned how to read and write. Moreover, Egypt was home to the oldest and most influential university in the Muslim world, Al-Azhar. The Egyptian education system, however, had declined and became stagnant by the nineteenth century.

The first modern and secular education system in Egypt was established by Mohammed Ali to train civil administrators and the military in the French style. His supreme order in 1836 to form a "Common Council for School Organization" was the first legislation to organize education, classifying it into three stages.<sup>40</sup> This system was later expanded to the primary, secondary, and higher levels, and the first school for girls was established in 1873.

As explained earlier, Islam returned to the political and social realms of Egypt and other Muslim countries as a reaction to colonialism and imperialism and because of its enduring nature among Muslims. Based on the criticism offered by the religious scholar (who later became the head of Al-Azhar) Muhammed Abdu, the public school system that had been mainly secular during that period began to incorporate Islam in order to become more Islamic and national.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, Abdu also suggested reforming Islamic education at Al-Azhar to include some modern education classes. Al-Azhar undertook several administrative and organizational reforms between 1872 and 1880, including the requirement of a final examination to complete a degree, and salary reforms.<sup>42</sup> Al-Azhar was resistant to change, however, regarding the content of education. In order to encourage reform, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar was asked, in 1887, whether it was permissible or necessary to acquire modern sciences to compete with contemporary nations. The Sheikh replied that, with the exception of astronomy, modern sciences were

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<sup>40</sup> UNDP (1998/99) *Egyptian Development Report* at [www.undp.org.eg/publications/hdr98/chap2.pdf](http://www.undp.org.eg/publications/hdr98/chap2.pdf) p. 30

<sup>41</sup> Rahman op.cit. 63.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.* for more information.

“useful” for the Islamic community.<sup>43</sup> Such a reform was introduced to Al-Azhar in 1896, although only at the lower levels of education. More comprehensive reforms were introduced only in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although state education did not expand under the British administration (1882-1922), private schools and Egypt’s first secular university were established during this period.<sup>44</sup> In March 1887 the Ministry of Education introduced a secondary school certificate, and the first exam for this certificate was held in 1891. A bylaw for a primary school certificate was later issued and became a condition for enrollment in secondary schools.<sup>45</sup> Education in Egypt remained accessible only to the elite until the 1952 Free Officers Revolution, and the illiteracy rate until that time was 90 percent.<sup>46</sup> With the 1952 revolution, the Ministry of Education’s budget was doubled and education became free for all Egyptians.

### **Structure of Egypt’s Education System**

The educational system in Egypt is regulated, monitored, and evaluated by the Ministry of Education. The Egyptian education system has been multi-faceted, including secular education, general public education, Islamic education of Al-Azhar, and private education, with a strong presence of foreign impact. Secular pre-university education in Egypt includes kindergartens, primary, preparatory, and secondary schools. Kindergartens were included in the education system in the early 1990s. In 1991, two school years at kindergartens were introduced to the basic educational program. Beginning in 1981, the primary and the preparatory education stages were combined to constitute one level of mandatory basic education. Until that year, primary education covered six years. Until 1988, the preparatory stage encompassed nine years<sup>47</sup> but then was reduced to eight years.

Secondary education consists of general and technical education. General secondary education is the pillar of education in Egypt.<sup>48</sup> The objectives of this level include preparing students for university education as well as for practical life. The general education curriculum was reorganized in 1991-92, and new courses, including applied sciences, computer sciences, agriculture, commerce, industry, and home economics, were introduced.” Technical secondary education consists of three major specialties corresponding to three distinct types of schools: agricultural, commercial, and industrial.”<sup>49</sup> The number of technical schools has been expanding since the mid-1990s.

Higher education in Egypt consists of university and non-university education, both general public and Al-Azhar. Non-university higher education consists of specialized faculties and institutes designed to qualify students for specific jobs.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>44</sup> USAID Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination (2004) *Strengthening Education in the Muslim World*. Country Profiles and Analysis, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>46</sup> USAID., 10.

<sup>47</sup> UNDP, 29

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 32

<sup>49</sup> UNDP, 34.

### **Islamic Education Institutions**

In Egypt, providing religious education is viewed as one of the main responsibilities of the state. The religious pre-university education consists of the Al-Azhar system, which consists of two major types of institutions: general institutions and special institutions. The Al-Azhar general institution encompasses primary, preparatory, and secondary levels and prepares its students for university education. Until the mid-1990s, Al-Azhar students were entitled to apply to public universities. After that, however, they were only permitted to apply to Al-Azhar University and a few other academies providing higher education in specialized religious fields.<sup>50</sup> Al-Azhar special institutions, on the other hand, encompass the Islamic Mission's Institutes for Readings and Instructor's Institutes. These institutions specialize in teaching Arabic language and Islamic sciences to foreigners, teaching the study and memorization of the Quran, and preparing students to teach Arabic and religious sciences in Al-Azhar primary, preparatory, and secondary institutes.<sup>51</sup>

Al-Azhar pre-university education has expanded significantly since the early sixties, especially in 1991/92 and 1998/99.<sup>52</sup> The Al-Azhar curriculum is generally very similar to the public education system with the exception of a strong focus on religious studies. Religious curricula for pre-university education are envisioned to plant Islamic morals and values together with the five pillars of the religion. Subjects include the development of faith in God, introducing the life of the Prophet, memorization of various verses from the Quran, and the knowledge and practice of rituals such as prayer and ablution. Students are required to memorize 20 sections of the Quran in primary school and the entire text in the preparatory school. A United States Agency for International Development (USAID) report states that there is no divergence between Islamic schools that operate under the Al-Azhar system and the regular public schools, and that students can transfer from one to the other.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to Al-Azhar religious schools, there are also an increasing number of private religious/general education schools, which function under the Ministry of Education and follow the government prescribed curriculum.<sup>54</sup> According to a USAID Report, there were 206 private Islamic education institutions in Egypt in 1998.<sup>55</sup> Those schools represent the trend described earlier: offering high quality general education with a strong religious focus for high fees affordable mainly by the upper middle class of the society.

Recognizing the importance of education in disciplining the society, the Egyptian government attempted to use educational institutions to consolidate its policies. Religious educational institutions were regarded as an integral part of this process. After the 1952 revolution, for example, religious education, which had been removed from the curriculum for the first two

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>51</sup> see UNDP. 35.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>53</sup> USAID op.cit. 14.

<sup>54</sup> USAID op.cit. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



years of primary education, was restored.<sup>56</sup> During this period schools were used to indoctrinate students and religion was also used pragmatically to find scriptural justification for state policies.

Using Islam as a political tool became particularly visible during the Anwar Sadat period (1970-1981). Sadat attempted to strengthen Al-Azhar and other governmental religious agencies such as the Ministry of Religious Endowments and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs to counterweight his socialist predecessor (Nasser) who built socialist institutions. During a four-year period, between 1976/77 and 1980/81, Al-Azhar primary institutions' enrollment increased 70 percent.<sup>57</sup> These institutions were staffed by Al-Azhar graduates and were feeding students into preparatory, secondary, and university studies at Al-Azhar University. Al-Azhar soon became a fixture in poor urban and rural areas where the Ministry of Education could not keep up.<sup>58</sup>

The religious textbooks during the Sadat period were as fully bound to nationalist character as ever. The content of the curricula introduced during this period clearly showed the functionalization of religious doctrine and strongly contrasted with the ritual-centeredness of Al-Azhari instruction and of peasant concerns.<sup>59</sup> It favored the psychological, sociological, and historical implications of the Islamic tradition.<sup>60</sup> The religious instruction was to ensure "the values of loyalty to the nation and to its goals, which correspond to the goals of religion and its struggle in opposition to imperialism."<sup>61</sup>

Currently, the authority of the *ulema* and the traditional, state-trained, subsidized religious scholars is threatened by a market-driven economy of religious commodities. The state under Mubarak has responded to this threat by "entering the fray with products carrying the invisible imprimatur of Al-Azhar, the Ministry of Religious Endowments, the Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs, and subsidiary organizations."<sup>62</sup>

Currently, the state controls many of the educational institutions in Egypt. Under these conditions, religion has been reformulated to apply broadly to areas of social planning. In terms of religious education, the government provides a curriculum that the schools must use. The state also emphasizes in these textbooks Islam's commitment to human rights, freedom of belief and opinion, and a cordial attitude towards non-Muslims.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> G. Starrett , *Putting Islam to Work: Education, Politics and Religious Transformation in Egypt*. (University of California Press: California, 1998), 79.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 80, PPC Issue Working Paper No. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Starrett *op.cit.*, 83.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Starrett , 97.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

## Indonesia

### ***Development of the Education System and Islamic Education Institutions***

The evolution of Indonesia's education system reflects its unique struggles with national identity and nation-building. As the fourth most populous country in the world, with hundreds of languages and tribes, and a culturally diverse population spread across a number of islands, the Indonesian government has approached education as a key pillar of its nation-building strategy. As such, the government from the outset of colonial independence adopted a national education system that would not only teach the national language (Bahasa Indonesia), but also the national philosophy (*Pancasila*). This process reflects a formulation of national principles around the motto, "Unity in Diversity."

Religious groups have predominantly controlled Indonesia's education for most of its history, and educational systems have traditionally been politicized as sources of political and social transformation. After the Dutch colonized the Indonesian archipelago beginning in the sixteenth century, the main forms of education were associated with missionary schools and other associated centers of learning. Following the occupation by Japan in the Second World War, many Indonesian Christians were motivated to create their own universities, prompted by nationalist impulses and positive experiences of self-governance in matters of education while Europeans were being interned. The founding of Gadjah Madah University in 1950, Indonesia's most preeminent, post-independence university, took place in 1950, both as a statement of independence as well as a formative moment in nation-building.

Up to the twentieth century, the *pesantren* (residential learning institutions that focused on religious studies) were the only form of education found in Java, and they traditionally taught an almost exclusively religious curriculum. These autonomous and individually organized schools emphasized specific teachings of the Quran, the Arabic language, and Muslim traditions. They were primarily concerned with teaching students how to live authentic lives as good Muslims.

Education has also been a realm traditionally associated with politics and political transformation in Indonesia. The drive to Indonesian independence from Dutch and British rule originated in educational institutions and by educational leaders. The first "political" Indonesian organization under Dutch colonialism in 1922, *Taman Siswa*, was to promote national education, while in 1924, the Indonesian Student Association became the central force in the nationalist movement for independence. More recently, in 1998, it was the university student protests—and the initial violent crackdown against them—that ultimately prompted the resignation of President Suharto, one of the longest tenured authoritarian leaders in the Southeast Asian region.

From the outset of Indonesia's independence in 1949 from the Dutch, the drafters of the country's new constitution intended to replicate the Dutch, mainly secular, model of universal education of at least six primary school years for Indonesian children. The country has struggled to achieve this feat, in part due to rapid population growth that has outpaced needed and available resources.

In 1973, the government under Suharto set aside portions of oil revenue to fund the construction of primary schools, resulting in over 4,000 new primary school facilities by the 1980s, with the Global Health Council estimating that roughly 92 percent of Indonesia's school-age children attended primary school in 2001.<sup>64</sup> Secondary school, however, is less widely attended, with UNICEF (2004) estimating only a 58 percent male and 56 percent female gross attendance rate from 1997 to 2002.

*Pancasila* remains the key feature of the national curriculum for Indonesians, memorized by rote from the age of six, articulating five core beliefs: belief in one God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy, and social justice. Since 1975, the central goal of Indonesian education has been less focused on “secular wisdom about the world,” but rather on how “to instruct children in the principles of participation in the modern nation-state, its bureaucracies, and its moral and ideological foundations.”<sup>65</sup> As such, Indonesia's style of learning has been described as emphasizing rote learning with hierarchical forms of authority. All public schools are required to follow the same government-sponsored national curriculum.

The Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 negatively impacted primary and secondary school enrollment rates, as many students were forced to work and others were unable to afford the fees charged by private schools after spaces in free public schools ran out. In an effort to address this disparity, in 2001 the Ministry of National Education passed a law to help provide state and local funding resources and scholarships to help meet private school costs at the primary school level, where there is a “surplus” of students. Due to ongoing economic difficulties, there continues to remain a “deficit” of students enrolling into the secondary, or lower junior high, level.

### **Structure of Indonesia's General Education System**

General education in Indonesia is primarily secular, although through the emphasis on *Pancasila* (a required class that all Indonesian students must pass to advance to the next grade) and mandatory study of religion, the division between secular and religious is not explicit or overly emphasized. Following kindergarten, the general educational system consists of the following:

- *Primary schools*, which provide mandatory and free six-year training for boys and girls between the ages of 6 through 12 or 7 to 13. Indonesians can choose between state-run, nonsectarian public schools under the supervision of the Department of Education and Culture or private or semiprivate religious schools, which fall under the responsibility and financial sponsorship of the Department of Religious Affairs. Only about 15 percent attend these religious schools.
- *Secondary schools*, which encompass both junior and senior high school, three years in each, the latter of which are focused on vocational, technical, or academic skills. In

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<sup>64</sup> Global Health Council. [http://atlas.globalhealth.org/indicator\\_detail.cfm?Country=ID&IndicatorID=100](http://atlas.globalhealth.org/indicator_detail.cfm?Country=ID&IndicatorID=100)

<sup>65</sup> Library of Congress, Indonesia. Country Profile.

senior high school (grades 10 through 12), students can specialize in academic or vocational, technical tracks including three-year agricultural, veterinary, and forestry schools in addition to hotel management, legal clerking, business, shipping, aviation, graphics, and home technology. There are also four-year programs in development, music, and social work.

- *Technical education institutions and academies*, which offer one- to three-year programs in technology, agriculture, business, accounting, publishing and tourism, and education (2 years); foreign languages, computer science, and engineering (three years); and teacher training facilities.
- *Universities*, both public and private, with considerably more autonomy in curricula than either primary or secondary schools.

### **Islamic Education Institutions in Indonesia**

While the Constitution of Indonesia explicitly rejects the notion of an Islamic state out of respect for Indonesia's diversity, it recognizes the importance of Islam for Indonesian identity. The national philosophy of *Pancasila*, which is required teaching in all schools, recognizes five religions in Indonesia despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population remains Muslim.

Two types of Islamic education institutions dominate in Indonesia. *Pesantrens*, traditional Indonesian Islamic boarding schools, have provided instruction for hundreds of years. In response to concerns by some Indonesians about emphasizing secular approaches to learning, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) has vigorously pushed for adopting a newer and more formal variety of Islamic schools known as *madaris*<sup>66</sup> as distinct from the widespread presence of the *pesantrens*, which are often informally structured and loosely organized.

Today, there are two basic education systems with two government-recognized curricula: the National System (*Sistem Negeri*) supervised by the Department of Education and Culture (MOEC); and the Madrasah System (*Sistem Madrasah*), administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). While the National System is mostly secular (modeled after the Dutch secular systems), and are public institutions, both systems are required to follow a government-sponsored curricula that teaches some religious studies.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, *madaris* have not attained the stature or quality of education attributed to traditional *pesantren*. As a result, the presence and growth of *madaris* in Indonesia has been checked, limited to roughly 15 percent of the total student population. The public madrasah system tends to attract more female students than males, typically from lower economic strata. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Office of Education Management Information

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<sup>66</sup> It should also be noted that while the Indonesians use the word *madrasah* from the Arabic word, it differs in meaning: "while madrasah are pesantren-like institutions, madaris in Indonesia are day schools that follow a government curriculum that, since 1994, includes twelve percent religious instruction." (Lukens-Bull, 36).

<sup>67</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, "Teaching Morality: Javanese Islamic Education in a Globalizing Era," in the *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000), 36.

System (EMIS), there are 37,362 madaris in Indonesia, 3,226 (8.6 percent) of which are run by the state. Private organizations control the vast majority of Islamic schools, comprising the remaining 34,136 (91.4 percent). In the academic year of 2001-2002, for example, of the 5.6 million students enrolled in madaris, an estimated one million (19 percent) were enrolled in state-run madaris, with 4.6 million students in privately-run madaris.

The curricula of the privately-run madaris are not supervised by the state and vary according to the clerics in charge. As a result, some have been accused of marginalizing the role of science and technology education out of fear that “science will reduce the student’s belief in God and the religious norms governing their lives.”<sup>68</sup> In addition, many of these madaris have also suffered from a lack of qualified teachers, or teachers who are only semi-literate on the subjects of physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics, resulting in an environment where “implanting beliefs is more important than the instilling of factual knowledge, and where deductive thinking is nurtured to the detriment of inductive thinking.”<sup>69</sup> Some private madaris have also become associated with Islamic radicalism in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the relative autonomy of private madaris has also allowed for better educational opportunities in religious learning to develop. In 1989, the government passed the Indonesian Education Law, which was intended to bring madaris into the mainstream as modernized equivalents to “secular” schools, and were encouraged to employ the national curricula issued by the Ministries of National Education and Religious Affairs. As a result, what is known as *sekolah Islam unggulan* (quality Islamic schools) have emerged, largely attended by the children of Muslim elites, that “play an important role in the ‘re-Islamization’” of Muslim parents. These include the Sekolah Islam al-Azhar, SMU Madania, and SMU al-Izhar.

Nevertheless, pesantrens, which predated the Dutch-secular system, may have neither, either, or both types of secular or religious schools on the same grounds, and also run relatively autonomously.<sup>70</sup> These learning institutions have retained their popularity in the national culture and their close association with Indonesian Muslim identity, continuing to reflect Indonesian cultural preferences in styles of education. Different schools offer a variety of specialized areas of learning – Tremas Islamic School is popular for its Arabic grammar and Jampes School in Kediri for its *tassawuf*, while Tebuiring School in Jombang was famous for its headmaster who was an expert on *Hadith*. As a result, many students go to a number of different schools, deliberately seeking diversity in the Islamic subjects, teachers, and their interests.<sup>71</sup> There are no strict or linear progressions in courses leading to graduation, and students can join or enter at any time of the year.

In the absence of an organized priesthood, the leaders of the pesantren, *kyai*, have traditionally been the leaders of Indonesia’s Islamic community. Focused mainly in rural areas on the island of Java, there are roughly 1800 pesantren in East Java (the recognized center of the pesantren

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<sup>68</sup> Leonard Sebastian, “Getting to the Root of Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia,” *The Straits Times*, August 6, 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, “Teaching Morality: Javanese Islamic Education in a Globalizing Era,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000), 36.

<sup>71</sup> Damar Harsanto, “Orthodox ‘Pesantren’ Evolves into Modern School,” *Jakarta Post*, Feb. 7, 2003.

world) and another 2200 elsewhere in Indonesia.<sup>72</sup> Many of these centers are increasingly found in urban environments as well as on other islands beyond Java, offering important educational, vocational, and professional opportunities for an emerging “new Malay” middle class. Lukens-Bull finds that pesantren approaches to curriculum and academic learning restructures the thoughts of 30 percent of Indonesia’s school-age children.

There are two different types of pesantren: *salaf* and *khalaf*. *Salaf pesantren* usually teach religious studies through very traditional teaching methods (*sorogan* and *wetonan*). *Salaf pesantrens* are very dependent on the religious leader or cleric of the school, on whose authority the curriculum is developed. While the community of religious leaders is engaged in curriculum discussion, final authority is reposed in the *kyai*, whose lectures are structured as monologues, rather than dialogue.<sup>73</sup>

Modern *khalaf pesantren* teach religious studies and teachings as well as other subjects as well, including culture, the arts, and sports, bringing the educational approach closer to the general national system of organized madrasah education. “Modern pesantren usually provide public school education for the *santri* (Javanese Muslim elites). In other words, most modern pesantren have a madrasah, although the madaris are not always managed or controlled by the same institution or foundation that manages the pesantren.”<sup>74</sup>

There are two distinctive types of madrasah, although these are also found in combined forms: *general madrasah*, and *adrasah diniyah* (elementary school) “A *general madrasah* is basically the same as a public school. It adopts the same curriculum applied by other public schools” while retaining the attributes of an Islamic school. *Madrasah diniyah* reflects a synthesis of the madrasah system with pesantren-style learning, and they were initially created to supplement what was taught in public school with extracurricular, after-school classes on religious studies. According to the *kyai* of Al-Hikum pesantren, the goal of these schools that combine modern and traditional styles of learning is to train modern people in traditional values, so they will be able to be leaders forging national identities consistent with their Islamic heritage.<sup>75</sup>

Many new initiatives on civic participation and education are currently being developed within the madrasah and pesantren systems that emphasize traditional Islamic understandings of pluralism and democracy, in an effort to promote tolerance and civic values in a specifically Indonesian context. Student-led democracy programs that encourage initiative, critical thinking, and democratic participatory experiences, as well as training teacher training on the use of elicitive pedagogical approaches, have been introduced to over 1,000 pesantrens.<sup>76</sup> Universities have also begun developing, with great success, programs on comparative religion and conflict resolution, with the first graduate level degrees in these fields being offered at Gadjah Madah University following severe Christian-Muslim violence in Ambon in 2000.

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<sup>72</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, “Teaching Morality: Javanese Islamic Education in a Globalizing Era,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000), 27.

<sup>73</sup> Damar Harsanto, “Orthodox ‘pesantren’ Evolves into Modern School,” *Jakarta Post*, Feb. 7, 2003.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, “Teaching Morality: Javanese Islamic Education in a Globalizing Era,” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3 (2000), 33.

<sup>76</sup> Education Reform and Islam in Indonesia. [http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/indo\\_EducationReform\\_Islam.pdf](http://www.asiafoundation.org/pdf/indo_EducationReform_Islam.pdf)

## Nigeria

### ***Development of the Modern Educational System and the Islamic Education Institutions***

#### History

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Lord Lugard (the great imperial pro-consul in charge of British administrative policy) estimated that there were roughly 2,000 Islamic primary schools in the north of Nigeria attended by about 25,000 pupils in an educational system that had been in place for centuries. The educational system in place in Nigeria today was formally established by the British in 1921, drawing upon a secular model. This approach continues to influence the strategic planning and organizational structure of Nigerian education.

During colonial times, the British organized the Nigerian educational system primarily to fill minor administrative functionary positions in the larger colonial system, relying principally on religious and missionary groups to provide basic levels of education. As a result, uneven levels of education emerged that privileged certain religious and ethnic groups over others, creating challenges with which the Nigerian state continues to grapple.

The British administration asserted indirect rule with emirs of predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north of Nigeria, allowing them to maintain law and order and their educational system without substantially interfering with British colonial interests. While some have observed that more “modern” schools were set up during the colonial period that included Islamic religious instruction, Adam Curle<sup>77</sup> observed that

*In the north, the emirs neither wanted nor needed educated persons. They had the Quranic schools in which religion and literacy were learned: these were enough. Newfangled ideas from outside might undermine religion and their own authority. They indeed struck a bargain with the British to keep out missionaries and to curtail government-sponsored education to the minimum. So effective was this arrangement that by the time of independence [1960] only about 10 percent of the age cohort were receiving primary education. (Curle 1973, 89).*

While the Yoruba of western Nigeria had been the more educationally and economically advanced until the First World War, the predominantly Christian Ibos of eastern Nigeria surged ahead in education by the time of Nigeria’s independence in 1960, achieving almost 100 percent primary education enrollment. While the north remained primarily illiterate, despite being more numerically powerful, the more educated Ibos assumed greater political control and economic advantages in the years following independence, contributing to long-simmering tensions between the two communities that led to a civil war. Adam Curle notes that greater levels of education in both communities actually led to an increase of hostilities and mutual derision.

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<sup>77</sup> Adam Curle, *Educational Problems of Developing Societies: With Case Studies of Ghana, Pakistan, and Nigeria*. (Praeger Publishers: New York, 1973).

To deal with the substantial differences and inequalities of Nigeria's 36 states, local governors were granted substantial autonomy in decision-making and implementation of education efforts and curricula, though they remain dependent on the federal government for their resources and funding. The government briefly took over all private and parochial schools in the mid-1970s, but they were allowed to exist autonomously again in 1990.

### The Current State of Education in Nigeria

Universal Free Primary Education (UFPE) was introduced by the Murtala-Obasanjo regime in 1955, despite the insufficient numbers of qualified teachers to meet the enormous demand. Since 1955, the student enrollment in primary schools has risen in some states by over 600 percent, the number of schools being built has increased 229 percent, and similarly substantial increases have been witnessed in the enrollment figures for technical and teacher education in the state since 1980. By 1970, universal primary education became a focus of the federal government, though to date this has been far from successful.

Some of the main challenges confronting Nigerian post-independence education involve the severe lack of resources (UNESCO cites Nigeria as providing some of the lowest levels of budget allocations for education) and population demands that outweigh capacity and undermine the maintenance of standards. While declaring universal education to be a chief aim of Nigerian society, the population explosion in Nigeria has vastly outpaced the capacity and resources of schools to keep up.<sup>78</sup> In the year 2000, a day school in the northeast had a population of over 7,000 students, and in many metropolitan schools classes carry between 150 and 250 students.<sup>79</sup>

The World Bank recently criticized the state's "lopsided" allocation of education funding where 78 percent of Nigeria's education budget in 2004 went to tertiary institutions, leaving the primary and secondary institutions "virtually in the lurch," with primary institutions receiving just 1 percent, the Universal Basic Education scheme 1 percent, the National Board for Technical Education 12 percent, and the National Commission for Colleges of Education 11 percent, while the National Library got 0 percent.<sup>80</sup>

In response to large increases in the number of students in schools, standardized tests that determine graduation into the next level of education have been either significantly relaxed or abandoned outright, with "automatic absorption" allowing all students to continue to the next level. Accounting for the exact number of students in schools is difficult, as "admissions were decentralized from their position in the ministries of education to schools. As a result of this, no state ministry of education can today precisely account for the number of its students.

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<sup>78</sup> There is a virtual explosion in the number of students: one study pointed out the number of undergraduate grew from 3,646 in 1962 to 227,999 in 1994, graduate students from 424 in 1963 to 46,975 by 1992 and the number of university teachers rose from 960 in 1962 to 12,031 in 1994. L.S.O Liverpool, E.G. Eseyin and E.I Opara, "Modelling for Resource Allocation to Departments and Faculties in African Universities," Association of African Universities, 1996. [www.aau.org/studyporgram/pdfiles/liverpoo.pdf](http://www.aau.org/studyporgram/pdfiles/liverpoo.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Aliyu Tilde, "Enrolment and Falling Standard of Education," Nov. 6, 2003. [www.amanaonline.com/Articles/art\\_472.htm](http://www.amanaonline.com/Articles/art_472.htm).

<sup>80</sup> "Education: World Bank Flays Lopsided Education Budget," *Africa News*, April 22, 2004.



Ministry officials, principals, vice-principals, game masters, and others give admissions for token amounts into all levels throughout the year.”<sup>81</sup>

The government relies heavily on the private sector to support the public education system. There are few restrictions on private education in Nigeria, and many argue that this sector is essential to maintaining overall levels of education in a country where states and authorities have failed. Private education in Nigeria is the responsibility of private entrepreneurs and private agencies or groups such as religious bodies, communities, universities, and corporations, which are nominally monitored and supervised by Federal and State Ministries of Education.

The hardships of Nigeria’s developing economy have also influenced net enrollment rates and levels or standards of education. The Federal Office of Statistics in Nigeria estimated that in 2002, roughly 15 million primary school-age children were engaged in child labor, 6 million of which were not enrolled in primary school.

### ***Structure of Nigeria’s General Education System***

Disparities exist between urban and rural schools, public and private schools, and enrollment rates between males and females. Difficulties are encountered at the local level of implementation and accountability where religious differences and prejudices are concerned. The structure of the general educational system in Nigeria can be delineated as follows:

- *Pre-schools*: optional, roughly 47 percent of preschool age children have access to these schools (UNESCO 1996).
- *Primary schools*: encompass mandatory and free training for boys and girls beginning at age six for six years, with roughly a 56 percent net attendance rate for school-age children between 1996 and 2002 (UNICEF 2004). The curriculum in primary school is premised on seven subjects: language study, primary science, mathematics, social studies, cultural arts, agriculture, and home economics.
- *Secondary schools*: comprised of junior secondary school (JSS), and senior secondary school (SSS) of three years each. The secondary schools are approximately 33 percent male and 28 percent female, based on gross data for 1997-2000 (though data may refer to another year than indicated, or only part of the country; UNICEF 2004).<sup>82</sup> In the junior secondary school, the curriculum comprises English language, mathematics, “language of the environment,” one major Nigerian language, integrated science, social studies, creative arts, practical agriculture, religious studies, physical education, two pre-vocational subjects (students choose from technology such as woodworking, metalwork, electronics), Arabic studies, Islamic studies, Bible knowledge, local crafts, and French.

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<sup>81</sup> Dr. Aliyu Tilde, “Enrolment and Falling Standard of Education,” Nov. 6, 2003. [www.amanaonline.com/Articles/art\\_472.htm](http://www.amanaonline.com/Articles/art_472.htm).

<sup>82</sup> UNICEF. *The Official Summary of the State of the World’s Children*, 2004.

Senior secondary school education is usually taught at a technical college to create “low-level manpower” craftsmen and master craftsmen. Vocational education is an aspect of secondary school used to provide technical and professional training.

- *Tertiary*: university education, both public and private, as well as four Inter-University Centers (IUCs), which do not have regular students and do not award degrees.

### **Islamic Education System and Institutions**

Given the religious diversity of Nigeria’s population, the Constitution has provided for substantial local and regional autonomy in handling education, though both state and federal governments are involved in religious affairs in public education. The Constitution also stipulates that while religious studies are compulsory for all students, they are not required to learn about religions not their own. In practice, however, due to local autonomy and preferences, minority students in different regions have had religious studies of other religions imposed on them, or classes on their religion have been unavailable.<sup>83</sup>

In the early 1980s, the government attempted to carry out a major overhaul of the educational system by revising curricula toward “moral education based on religious values.”<sup>84</sup> While some secularists tried to eliminate religious knowledge from the syllabi altogether, Christians and Muslims retained their right to attend school together but also to attend their own religious education classes, with additional information regarding other religions and African traditional religion.

Islamic education in Nigeria had traditionally been delivered informally under the tutelage of *Mallams*, or specialized religious scholars, where children learned up to one or two chapters of the Quran by the time they were five or six years old. A great emphasis is placed on memorization and recitation in Arabic, as well as on lessons on morals and community relationships. Curricula are not uniformly defined, and as such schools and curricula are shaped and defined by the Mallams. While some have argued that this approach makes Islamic schools locally responsive while preserving traditions and historical continuity<sup>85</sup> (Tibenderana 2003), others have pointed out that Nigeria’s economic development requires more modern curricula.

Sheikh Salahudin Olayiwola, the head of the league of Arabic and Islamic school’s founders in Nigeria, stated that, “We now have two kinds of Muslim graduates. The first badly lacks basic understanding of their religion and is ignorant about the language of the Quran. The other, on the contrary, has thorough knowledge about Islamic subjects and has mastered the Noble Quran, but lacks the faintest idea about modern curricula.”<sup>86</sup> Worse, many are charging that

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<sup>83</sup> Office of Religious Freedom Report, 2002, The United States State Department.

<sup>84</sup> Aisha Lemu, *A Holistic Approach to Teaching Islam to Children: A Case Study in Northern Nigeria*, Islamic Education Trust ([www.iarf.net/REBooklet/Nigeria.htm](http://www.iarf.net/REBooklet/Nigeria.htm))

<sup>85</sup> Peter K. Tibenderana, *Education and Cultural Change in Northern Nigeria: A Study in the Creation of a Dependent*, African Books Collective, Oxford, UK, 2003.

<sup>86</sup> Al Khidr Abdul Baqi, *Revamping Islamic Schools Takes Central Stage in Nigeria*, Islam online, June 30, 2004. ([www.islam-online.net/English/News/2004-06/60/article03.shtml](http://www.islam-online.net/English/News/2004-06/60/article03.shtml))

universities have become markedly sectarian and are less interested in promoting learning than proselytizing or evangelizing.

Madaris are known in Nigeria as *makarantun allo*. In the north, these are regarded as traditional yet organized systems of learning and religious education in which respected teachers, parents, and other members of the community collaborate in inculcating knowledge and a “sense of enterprise” in the *almahirai* (pupils).<sup>87</sup> There are an estimated 16 million children studying at 73,486 Islamic and Quranic schools in Nigeria.

## Pakistan

### ***Development of the Education System and Islamic Education Institutions***

The education systems in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia were impacted by the colonial experience in a manner similar to their Middle Eastern counterparts. For example, when organized Islamic education reached India in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the formative and creative stages of the Islamic education system were already in decline. Hence, education in India was not of a very high order.<sup>88</sup> The first sciences that were introduced in India were law and theology, followed by logic, rhetoric, and eloquence. Rational sciences such as philosophy, however, gained more prominence during the Mogul period, especially during the eighteenth century. During this period two syllabi competed: that of Nizam al-Din leaned toward rational sciences, and that of Shah Waliy Allah was oriented toward traditional religious sciences with an emphasis on the Hadith tradition.<sup>89</sup>

During the colonial period, Islamic education institutions such as the *madrasah* of India were not in favor, and the British used their educational institutions to serve their colonial interests. The regions, which constitute what is Pakistan now, had an educational system that was based on beneficiary communities. This traditional education, however, was destroyed during the British rule.

One of the most important educational institutes in India was the Aligarh College. It was established in 1881 and was transformed into a university in 1920. Although modern education was administered to students in this institution by British and other Western educators, religious education was provided by traditional religious *Ulema* from the Deobandi schools. These two educational perspectives were not combined and integrated.<sup>90</sup>

Following Pakistan’s independence in 1947, the government attempted to reverse the colonial legacy that provided modern education for the elites. Due to political and economic challenges, however, it was not possible to put these ideals in practice. Only after attempts to expand education in the 1970s was it undertaken. Nevertheless, the Pakistani government lacked the infrastructure and capacity to provide education to the poor, and education continued to divide the rich and poor. In addition, the quality of education declined significantly.

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<sup>87</sup> Nigeria: Understanding Islam versus the Media, *Africa News*, July 19, 2003.

<sup>88</sup> See Rahman op.cit. 39.

<sup>89</sup> See Rahman op.cit. 41.

<sup>90</sup> See Rahman, 75.

## **Structure of the Education System**

Educational institutions in Pakistan operate under the general supervision of District Education Officers (DEO) with additional staff at the sub-district level. These DEOs operate under guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education. Schoolteachers report to the DEO, and DEOs report to the Directorate of Primary or Elementary Education.<sup>91</sup> The curriculum in public schools is mostly secular. Islamic religion and history have been added, however, at all levels to appease religious leaders who insisted that the educational system should be inspired by Islamic ideology.<sup>92</sup>

Similar to other South Asian states, the Pakistani education system also consists of four state-financed educational levels: primary education, which is five years; middle school, which is three years; secondary school, which is two years; and finally, college. To meet the education needs of the population, the Pakistani government converted 25,000 Quranic schools into mosque primary schools by adding some secular subjects to their curriculum.<sup>93</sup> These schools are financed and managed by the Ministry of Education.

## **Islamic Education Institutions in Pakistan**

### **Pakistan's Madrasah System**

Religious schools, *madaris*, in Pakistan, mainly consist of Quranic schools that teach exclusively Quran and Islamic subjects. Dar-ul Ulum is a higher education institution where advanced Islamic education takes place.

The role of Islam as an integrative force was critical in defining Pakistani national identity, and it also played a strong role in all educational policy statements, both at the level of socialization and culture.<sup>94</sup> For that reason, Islamic studies became a compulsory subject at all levels in the educational institutions. Madaris provided education before independence and continued to grow steadily until the 1980s. At the time of Pakistan's independence, there were around 250 madaris in Pakistan.<sup>95</sup> There was a rapid rise of madaris after the 1980s, both in terms of their number and in terms of state patronage through grants.

There were attempts to reform the madrasah system in Pakistan. In order to bridge the gap between madrasah education and the secular schools, the National Education Policy of 1979 under Zia ul Haq suggested introducing secondary education to the religious schools and did introduce some secular subjects.<sup>96</sup> Each of the school types, however, (i.e., Bareli, Ahl Hadith, or Deobandi) included different proportions of secular subjects, and there was not a unified and enforced curriculum for all schools. The idea of introducing radical changes to the madrasah

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<sup>91</sup> For more information on the management of schools see USAID, 46.

<sup>92</sup> Cited in USAID, 44.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>94</sup> Saqib op. cit. 194.

<sup>95</sup> A.H. Nayyar, "Madrasah Education Frozen in Time," in *Education and the State: Fifty Years of Pakistan* (Pervez Hoodbhoy Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1998).

<sup>96</sup> For more info on the curriculum see Nayyan, 234-235.

system and the curricula re-emerged in 1986 through the Institute of Policy Studies (an organ of Jammāt-I Islami) in Islamabad. Jammāt-I Islami aimed to Islamicize the formal education system in Pakistan and demanded an increase in its religious content.<sup>97</sup> Jammāt-I Islami supports the madrasah system but would like to see it modernize.<sup>98</sup>

Today, madaris in Pakistan provide free Islamic education and teach students how to read and write. madaris aim to prepare students for religious duties and focus on the Quran, Islamic law, jurisprudence, *Hadith*, and logic. The basic text of these madaris is the Quran. In these schools students learn how to read the Quran and also memorize it. Islamic exegesis and other advanced Islamic studies, such as interpretation of the Quran and *Hadith* (Prophet's deeds and sayings), and jurisprudence, are introduced later at higher educational institutions called "Dar-ul Uloom". These schools issue certificates equivalent to bachelor's and masters degrees. These seminaries operate on public philanthropy and produce indoctrinated clergymen of various different sects.

Despite state intervention, the curriculum of madrasah education is still based on traditional literature and teaching methods. Its rationale has not changed over the course of 100 years.<sup>99</sup> After September 11, 2001, the Pakistani government attempted to reform the madrasah system. This proposal was supported by the *ulema* running these institutions.<sup>100</sup> However, although the *ulema* accept the introduction of non-religious sciences to the madrasah system, they reject the secularization of these institutions. Based on the recommendations of the International Conflict Group (ICG), the Pakistani government has set up model *madaris* in Karachi, Sukkur and Islamabad with a new curriculum that has introduced modern topics, modern textbooks, and syllabi.<sup>101</sup> ICG states that the new Musharraf policy on madrasah reforms is incoherent, displays a lack of will, and possibly might antagonize the clergy in the long run.<sup>102</sup>

### The Pakistani Madrasah System and Militancy

Since September 11, 2001, madaris in Pakistan have been viewed as breeding grounds for militants. Therefore, there is pressure on the government of Pakistan to reform these institutions significantly. For that reason, there is a need to focus on the militant role of madaris in Pakistan more closely.

The evolution of these educational institutions must be understood within the socio-political and economic context of the societies within which they function. Within this context the relationship of these institutions with the state is particularly important. Both in Pakistan and Egypt it has been observed that the state has played a significant role in the evolution of these institutions.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> See ICG op.cit. 3.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>102</sup> ICG 26.

In Pakistan, state-madrasah relations have been complicated since British colonial times. Western education was introduced by the colonial power and was threatening the traditional system. In response to this threat, Dar-ul Uloom Deobandi, established in 1867, began placing an emphasis on spiritual studies and purification of the belief system and the rejection of imperialism and its values.<sup>103</sup> It was during the British times that the Deobandi Ulema was institutionalized and gave an administrative and academic structure to the madrasah system. Since then *madaris* became sites of dissidence and resistance to the state, authority and modernity, but at the same time they have included selective modern subjects in their curricula.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77) used Islam to consolidate his policies and gain votes. He attempted to co-opt the madaris, reforming the curricula to increase its religious content and including Arabic as a compulsory subject. His policies also encouraged these institutions to establish linkages with external donors, especially in the Arab world.<sup>104</sup> A turning point was the era of Ziya ul-Haqq (1977-1988), when Islam was used to support the state policies more extensively and more efficiently. Haqq attempted to consolidate his power through Islamization at home and the war in Afghanistan.<sup>105</sup> In order to consolidate state policies, Islamic scriptures were used selectively to provide enticements. The government provided financial assistance to *madaris*, such as the Deobandi Madrasah, that supported these policies. Thus, their institutional strength and ability to spread their message increased.

In addition to the support received from the Haqq government, an increasing flow of money from some of the Middle Eastern countries, particularly the Persian Gulf states, contributed to the rise of *madaris* in the 1980s.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, as the formal education system in Pakistan was not sufficient to provide education to all, especially the poor, due to high cost and low quality, madaris provided free boarding, food, and even clothing to students. For that reason, families were content that their children were receiving an education, being disciplined, and receiving training in accordance with the morals of Islam, in addition to receiving food, clothing, books, and board free of charge.<sup>107</sup> Madaris became especially attractive to lower and middle class families. These institutions, as a result, play a key role in Pakistani society and the education system.

There are five distinct types of madaris in Pakistan, but two of them, Deobandi and Barelli, are the most dominant.<sup>108</sup> Madaris were used particularly in connection with the war in Afghanistan. In support of his mission at home and abroad, Haqq's policies nurtured many varieties of fundamentalism. The competition between these groups led to sectarian divisions, which were militarized. During the Afghani war, two kinds of madrasah were active. The first group consisted of those that were created specifically to produce jihadi (military) literature, mobilize

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<sup>103</sup> ICG 5.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>105</sup> See Nayyar and also International Crisis Group (ICG), *Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military*. Asia Report No. 36 (Islamabad/Brussels, July 29, 2002).

<sup>106</sup> See Nayyar, 231-232.

<sup>107</sup> See Ibid and ICG.

<sup>108</sup> International Crisis Group. 2002. *Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism, and the Military*. Asia Report No. 36, (Islamabad/Brussels, July 29, 2002) 1.

public opinion, and recruit and train people. The second group consisted of independent madaris, which opposed Haqq but were partners in the war in Afghanistan.

During the Afghan war these institutions were used to support the war against the Soviets by encouraging a militant interpretation of Islam. In that respect, special textbooks were designed and published by the Center for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska- Omaha under a USAID grant in the early 80s. These textbooks were written by American Afghanistan experts and anti-Soviet Afghan educators to promote jihadi values and militant training among Afghans.<sup>109</sup> These books were distributed at afghan refugee camps and Pakistani *madaris*.<sup>110</sup> Traditionally, jihadi texts were not part of the curricula of madaris. Until the 1980s, verbal and written attacks on other religions were quite rare.<sup>111</sup> This American and Pakistani jihadi literature was quickly adopted by the clergy who were averse to communism, and many madaris adopted these texts into their curricula. After the war was over, the madaris continued to use these textbooks.

## Turkey

### ***Development of the Education System and Islamic Education Institutions***

#### History

Many Muslim communities in the Middle East and Balkans were part of the Ottoman Empire until the twentieth century (Algeria until 1830; Egypt and Tunisia until 1860). The Ottoman legacy has left a political, cultural, and social imprint on these Muslim states. Recognizing the centrality of education, the Ottoman state established three different kinds of educational institutions. The first institution was the palace school (*enderun*), located within the Ottoman palace. Enderun was mainly a secular institution under the direct control of the Sultan. It aimed at training non-Muslim boys on the basis of intellectual and bodily merit to become military and political elites of the state.<sup>112</sup> The second Ottoman institution was the mektep, which provided popular education that focused on the Quran. The third institution was the madrasah, which provided advance religious education in order to educate the ulema, religious leaders. Both mektep and madrasah were religious in character and recruited their students from the Muslim population.”<sup>113</sup> Education in the villages was provided by mekteps that were established by the local mosque and focused on teaching the Quran. Non-Muslims received their education at their religious institutions.

The distinction between the enderun and the other two educational institutions became blurred and the education system stagnant by the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century non-Muslim and missionary schools had begun to surpass Ottoman state schools in providing education. Therefore, modernization of the education system was viewed as inevitable for the

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> *International Crisis Group, op.cit.* 14.

<sup>112</sup> See Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1966) 26-29.

<sup>113</sup> see Ibid., 26.

Ottoman state to both survive and compete with Western influences.<sup>114</sup> Modernization of education started in the eighteenth century in the military schools and continued when a series of reforms referred to as *Tanzimat* were introduced to regain political, economic, and military power. These reforms were inspired by and emulated French secularizing models.<sup>115</sup>

Initially, modern education was equated with technical and vocational skills. For that reason vocational schools in the fields such as medicine, engineering, and military were established. Nevertheless, traditional schools continued to provide Islamic education, especially at the primary level, and were used to reinforce the Ottoman state's domestic legitimacy and also to repel foreign cultural infringement.<sup>116</sup> Another factor in preserving the Islamic education system at primary and high school levels was the Ottoman *ulema's* resistance to change.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, how to introduce secular education and to what extent were central questions for the Ottoman intellectuals.

However, these Islamic primary and high schools were unable to provide the educational infrastructure for these vocational higher education schools. During the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid (1876-1909), from the late 1860s, the *Idadi's* (junior high and high schools) were expanded in Ottoman urban and provincial centers to produce junior cadres for government departments. This view is also supported by Selçuk A. Somel, who argues that the Ottoman state tried to use public schools as an institutional tool of social discipline and modernization during the *Tanzimat* period.<sup>118</sup> The first Western style high school was the Galatasaray high school and was based on the French style. Galatasaray is the high school that became the model for high schools in the Turkish Republic after its founding.

The most important development during this period, however, was the passing of a comprehensive law entitled "Regulations for General Education" in 1869.<sup>119</sup> Some of the important articles of this law included:

- Compulsory primary education
- Reorganization and regularization of teaching methods
- Increase in science institutions (literature and natural sciences)

### Current Status of Education in Turkey

Because education was viewed as a critical socialization and modernization tool, a reform program that aimed to modernize the Turkish education system was launched immediately

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<sup>114</sup> See Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*. (Oxford University Press: London, 2002), 12, and also Somel, Selçuk A. *The Modernization of Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>115</sup> See *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>116</sup> See Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*. (Oxford University Press: London, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> See Rahman op.cit. 59.

<sup>118</sup> Somel, Selçuk A. *The Modernization of Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline*. (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>119</sup> See Kazamias op.cit. 63.



after the Republic was founded. In accordance with this reform program *madaris* were closed and the teaching of religion was proscribed in 1923. All schools were annexed to the Ministry of Education under the 1924 “Unification of Education Law.” The Ministry of Education was charged with the task of implementing a contemporary, modern mode of education for Turkish citizens by establishing primary and secondary schools, and other institutes, and designing courses according to the educational policies of the new Republic.

Following the abolishment of the Caliphah system, the Ministry of Religious Law was replaced with a presidency of Religious Affairs under the prime minister in 1928. In 1937 the constitution was amended, and secularism was introduced. As a symbol of modernity the alphabet was changed from Arabic to Latin. Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, was assigned as the Chief Instructor/Teacher of the nation and traveled to different cities and villages to encourage education and the new alphabet.

### ***Structure of the General Education System in Turkey***

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the Turkish educational system has been mainly secular. The general education school system in Turkey consists of <sup>120</sup>

- *Pre-school training*, which is optional;
- *Primary education*: this encompasses the training of children ages 6-14. It consists of 5-year primary and 3-year secondary schools. They are compulsory for both girls and boys, and are free;
- *General Lycees* (high-schools): provide training to children in the age group for a 3-year period after secondary school. There are different kinds of lycees:
  - *Anatolian lycees*, which teach at least one foreign language;
  - *Teachers’ lycees*, which train students to become teachers;
  - *Evening lycees*, for those who work during the day;
  - *Anatolian fine arts lycees*, which develop special talents and preserve cultural, artistic, and national values;
  - *Multi-purpose lycees*, for children in small and dispersed areas;
  - *Private foreign language lycees*.
- *Professional technical educational institutions*, such as Imam-Hatips, schools for the blind, and other vocational training.
- *Universities*: public and private.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> See <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tsa/tr-info/edu.system.html>

<sup>121</sup> To see a complete list of educational institutions in Turkey see Ministry of Education website at [http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29\\_48.html](http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29_48.html) *ibid.* and also *ibid.* To see the law regarding the education system in Turkey see Unesco EFA Country Reports (2000) *Turkey: Report* at [http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/turkey/rapport\\_1.html](http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/turkey/rapport_1.html)

The philosophy underlying the Turkish education system was expressed by the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk as follows:

“The method to be applied in education and instruction is to make knowledge a practical and useful tool that ensures success in material life rather than an accessory, a tool of administration, or a modern form of pleasure.”

“National education must be secular and based on a single school principle. Our objective in education is to raise citizens who shall increase the civil and social values and improve the economic power of the society.”<sup>122</sup>

### ***Islamic Education Institutions in Turkey***

In order to introduce secularism gradually and more smoothly, Ataturk believed that religious education was necessary. For that reason, he established 29 *Imam-Hatip* schools that provided four-year religious education to replace *madaris*. These schools were closed down in 1930. However, demand for restoration of religious education in public schools began in the late 1940s, thus becoming a political issue through which the political parties could draw upon the votes of Islamists.

The government first responded by authorizing religious instruction in state schools for those students whose parents requested it. Reintroduction of religion into the school curriculum raised the question of religious higher education, and a faculty of divinity was established at the University in Ankara in 1949. Following that development, *Imam Hatip* schools were re-opened in 1950 by the Democratic Party to train imams and preachers.

The number of *Imam Hatips* grew exponentially as they became centers to produce Islamic militants to counter Marxists-Communist militants during this era. After the September 12, 1980 military coup, the number of *Imam Hatip* schools increased even more. During these times of political crisis the Turkish government used religious education as a social disciplining force to exert social and moral values, and to combat atheist leftist ideologies.

As a result of the rehabilitation of Islam in 1970s and 1980s by the right/center secular parties to discipline and socialize the population against left parties, Islam was reintroduced to the Turkish social and educational narrative. A small advocacy group called the Hearth of Intellectuals, an organization that believes the true Turkish culture is a synthesis of pre-Islamic traditions and Islam, argued that Islam not only constitutes an integral aspect of Turkish identity but is also a force that can be regulated by the state in order to socialize people to be obedient citizens acquiescent to the overall social order. This idea was carried out by the new government; after the 1980 military coup many of the Hearth's proposals for reconstructing schools, colleges and state broadcasting were implemented. This attitude also encouraged the proliferation of private religious activities, such as construction of new mosques and Quranic schools throughout the country. Islamic research centers were also established to study Islam and its role in Turkey.

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<sup>122</sup> Ministry of Education website at [http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29\\_48.htm](http://www.meb.gov.tr/Stats/apk2002ing/apage29_48.htm)

In recent years, however, the number of *Imam Hatip* graduates who enter Turkish universities have been a concern for the secularist camp in Turkey. Based on the fears of secularists in Turkey and the insistence of the army, graduates of these *Imam Hatip* have been barred from admission to universities, save theological faculties. In order to appease the conservatives, and to provide consistency, the same barring policy was also applied to graduates of vocational schools. To reverse this policy a bill that allows vocational school and *Imam Hatip* graduates to enter universities was proposed in 2004. This bill was vetoed by the Turkish President. Whether these graduates should be able to study at universities is now one of the central debates in the country.

Another recent avenue for religious education in the Turkish education system has been private schools. Private schools use the same curriculum as in general education. However, there has been a rise of religiously inspired private schools that use the official curriculum in their education programs in addition to teaching their students Islamic morals and ethics through extra-curricular activities. Initiated by Fethullah Gulen, and initially supported by the Turkish government, these schools are based on the belief that Islam and modern science are not only compatible but that Islam requires the study of these sciences. For that reason their major focus, within an Islamic context, is on modern sciences and Turkish nationalism. These Gulen schools have also expanded outside of Turkey, particularly to provide education in Central Asia. There is also a Gulen school in New Jersey, USA.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> For more information, see M. H. Yavuz and J. L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Nationalism and the Secular State: The Gulen Movement* (Syracuse University Press, 2003).

## VI. Challenges to Islamic Education in the Muslim World

The review of educational systems in the Muslim world and the position of Islamic education within them show wide variations in terms of how different countries allow Islamic education to be included, regulate its institutions, integrate it with general education, and recognize its degrees.

It is obvious that Islamic education in the Muslim world faces many challenges, from different directions. These challenges are presented here in the following categories:

- The position of Islamic education within the larger educational system.
- Islamic education processes and pedagogy.
- Efforts of Islamic scholars.
- Misperceptions in the West and in the Muslim world about Islamic education.
- Politicization and militarization of Islamic education.

### The Position of Islamic Education Within the Larger Educational Systems

The review of educational systems in the Muslim world and the position of Islamic education within them have shown wide variations in terms of how different countries allow Islamic education to be included, regulate its institutions, integrate it with general education, and recognize its degrees.

Those variations resulted, naturally, from different development processes in each country since the time of Western colonization. But the challenges emerge when Islamic education results in negative outcomes. Four such negative outcomes, and the challenges they produce, are described here.

***Students in Islamic education institutions find themselves in dead-end sub-systems.*** We have seen in this review that in some Muslim countries there are sub-systems within the Islamic education system that provide mainly memorization-based religious information. This happens more often in the early formative years. The Furqania/Hafizia system in Bangladesh is one example of those sub-systems. One problem with such sub-systems is that they narrow the knowledge that students attain to a sort of religious education that limits their chances for development and their work choices. Due to poverty, many students end up not continuing their education beyond that formative memorization-based stage. Consequently, they miss out on educational, vocational and professional growth opportunities.

***The educational system does not recognize Islamic education institutions' degrees or limits their usefulness.*** As several Islamic education institutions are limited, whether by choice or due to government regulations, in their integration of general education curriculum, their graduates often find their higher educational, vocational and professional opportunities limited.

Often they find themselves restricted to further religious education, without a choice to pursue other types of education, vocations or professions.

***The educational system limits access to Islamic education in general education schools.***

In most general education schools in the Muslim world, Islamic education is limited to one class, usually dealing with the basics of religion. Since September 11, 2001, there have even been discussions in some Muslims countries to eliminate that one class altogether. The problem with those approaches - limitation or elimination - is that they do not recognize that people will always seek alternatives to receive Islamic knowledge.<sup>124</sup> This has led in the past, and may very well continue, to lead to increasing the pool of individuals who become vulnerable to extremist, intolerant and violent religious teachings.

***Madrasah management presents a challenge.*** Beginning in the early 1950s, most government establishments in Muslim countries, in order to ‘control’ Islamic education, created special Islamic education boards the purpose of which was to regulate this sector. These religious education boards often operate under the auspices of a Ministry of Religious Affairs, although some belong to Ministries of Education. In Egypt, Islamic schools have continued to operate under the auspices of Al-Azhar University, which also functions like the religious education boards in other Islamic countries.

Although the intended purpose of the religious education boards was to keep tabs on Islamic education, creation of special boards was viewed as ‘legitimization’ of this stream of education by the religious establishment (for example, in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia and other countries). As religious leaders in these countries slowly gained more power in terms of management and delivery of education, it kept on ‘slipping’ from the hands of secular governments. Religious schools did not have a history of violence in the past so no one anticipated that without proper checks these institutions could ‘fall into a pit’. As a result, Islamic education was basically ignored by the governments. Religious boards essentially functioned only to set the curricula in these schools and pay the teachers. The interpretation of the Quran, adoption of teaching methodologies, selection of supplementary reading materials, and collecting funds to cater to ever-increasing numbers of students became largely the responsibilities of head teachers or the Imams of the mosques to which these schools were attached. Thus the complete dichotomy of religious and general education streams in some countries has inadvertently resulted in total marginalization of Islamic education and, to a certain extent, a greater autonomy for the religious schools in those countries (especially in South Asia).

### **Islamic Education Processes and Pedagogy**

Proponents of Islamic education insist that it is superior to that offered in general education schools, as it educates and prepares students for “the here and hereafter,”<sup>125</sup> thus they become good honest citizens. Islamic education at the present time, however, suffers to a great extent

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<sup>124</sup> See the discussion above about Islam, the religion of modeling.

<sup>125</sup> During the Creative Associates madrasah research study in Bangladesh in April/May 2004, madrasah teachers and students often praised their educational system for its focus on “Deen wa Dunia,” which translates to “the here and hereafter.”

from centuries of stagnation. Islamic scholars writing on Islamic education agree that methods of memorization, imitation, and lack of creativity have dominated Islamic pedagogy for centuries.<sup>126</sup> Maulana Maududi, who is considered to be the architect of current religious conservatism in Pakistan, argued that, being based on memorization of medieval texts, the *madaris* were not providing relevant education to the Muslim society.<sup>127</sup>

At least four challenges exist with Islamic education processes and pedagogy.

***In some religious circles, a belief continues to exist that religious education is The Knowledge ('ilm).*** After centuries of emphasizing religious education at the expense of other branches of knowledge, the term “Knowledge” became to an extent synonymous with religious knowledge.<sup>128</sup> The basic assumption on which most Islamic education curricula function is that the Muslim past was a golden age in which all that was best had already been written and the only responsibility of modern Muslim scholars is to preserve this knowledge. This notion continues to negatively influence the ability of Islamic education institutions to incorporate general education curriculum or to provide their students with more options to explore more branches of knowledge.

***Memorization seems to be a dominant method of Islamic education.*** In non-Arabic speaking countries, children often memorize sections of the Quran, or the entire Quran, without understanding what they memorize. To be an ‘*Alim*’ (the one who reaches the height of Islamic knowledge) these have to be learned by heart, which makes students use only their memory to pass a certain exam and not their analytical powers to examine what they are learning and whether it makes sense.

***Punishment of students in Islamic education institutions is almost a chronic problem in the entire Muslim world.*** Not only did Bangladesh *madrasah* students interviewed during a USAID/Creative Associates research study in 2004 rate physical punishment as their top concern, but it is also common knowledge among Muslims that harsh physical punishment and verbal abuse are common practices in religious educational institutions, especially in the formative years.<sup>129</sup>

***Teachers need to be better prepared.*** As a result of ages of stagnation, teaching methods in Islamic education institutions have not seen improvement. The concern over teacher preparation has been identified in several studies. The USAID study titled “Strengthening Education in the Muslim World,” and the Creative Associates research study of *madaris* in

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<sup>126</sup> See for example: al-Naqib, Mursi, el-Gamali, Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Tariq Rahman, *The Madrassa and State of Pakistan: Religion, Poverty and Potential for Violence in Pakistan*. Available at <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/February/essay.htm>

<sup>128</sup> For example, le-Gamali (Ibid) states that “in the Muslim world today there are those who see that Islamic education, in its traditional form, and as we inherited its content and methodology, is what should spread, as modern [educational] systems do not guarantee graduating pious knowledgeable or honest citizens.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>129</sup> The famous auto-biography (*Al-Ayam*) of the prominent blind Egyptian writer, Taha Hussein, described the ill-treatment he and his classmates received during his childhood in the religious education facility, *Kuttab*. In addition, the Bangladeshi movie *The Clay Bird* depicted such treatment in *madaris*. *The Clay Bird*, directed by T. Masud and C. Masud (New Jersey: Milestone Film and Video, 2002).

Bangladesh in 2004, validated those concerns. Most teachers are the products of the *madrasah* system itself and have no or minimal exposure to the alternative ways of teaching or encouraging their students to ask questions about what they are being taught.

### **Efforts of Islamic Scholars**

Since the advent of Western colonization, several Muslim scholars have embarked upon the task of reforming Islamic education in order to keep up with modernity. It is obvious that the diligent efforts of Islamic scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were behind the reforms that took place in the Muslim world at that time. Those reforms shaped the current models of Islamic education and contributed significantly to its modernization,<sup>130</sup> but they also faced challenges. Colonization on the one hand and rigidity of the religious establishment on the other are two reasons for these challenges.

The challenge to Islamic education today, however, is different than the challenges of the past two centuries. Muslim countries are no longer colonized. Yet, the challenge to keep up with modernity, especially during this time of rapid technological advancements—specifically in the areas of communication, and economic and social globalization—poses new challenges to education in the Muslim world in general, and to Islamic education in particular. In addition, the threat of militancy and terrorism in the name of Islam as a response to perceived injustices, and radical fundamentalism as a response to cultural changes, are troubling.

Unfortunately, in the face of those challenges, contemporary Islamic scholars concerned with Islamic education seem to fall short in providing effective guidance to address them. This is because contemporary scholars often use approaches that reflect the following:

***Rhetoric often feeds radical, negative views of non-Muslims.*** Writers on Islamic education reforms almost always assert that the Muslim world has been under a constant, orchestrated attack to rid it of its identity and its resources. Such rhetoric exists not only in scholarly writings on the subject but also in Islamic education institutions' brochures and publications.<sup>131</sup> It is important to assert here that by raising the issue of siege mentality it is not being suggested that "it is all in their head," and that there is no substance or justification for the prevalent feeling of being under threat in the Muslim world. Many Muslim nations have suffered from foreign encroachment, military invasions, and resource exploitation. Such suffering explains the emergence of a siege mentality discourse and rhetoric in those countries. The trouble with such a mentality is that it feeds into radical, negative religious-based views of the other, that is, non-Muslims. Radical preachers and scholars then use the siege mentality to advance attitudes of exclusion of others, and in some cases promote the call for violence as a response to the perceived attacks and threats. Even when the radical religious rhetoric does not promote violence, it often promotes hatred towards non-Muslims. Such views then find their ways to religious education institutions, along with other institutions in the society. It must be pointed out, however, that operating from the turf of 'siege mentality' is not something exclusive to Muslim scholars and preachers. After the tragic events of 9/11, even some

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<sup>130</sup> Among those prominent Islamic reformers are Muhammed Abdu, Gamal el-Din el-Afghani, Rifaa el-Tahtawi, Mohammed Rashid Reda, and el-Taher ben 'Ashour.

members of the American media, as well as American religious leaders, have increasingly promoted hatred towards Muslims. The consistent reminder of “we are under attack” does lead to a sense of insecurity and an urge to do something about it.

***Ad-hoc approaches to the study of Islamic sources on education and Tarbiya provide slanted views.*** Contemporary Muslim scholars usually assert that the Islamic civilization included proper educational foundations and methodologies. It becomes their duty to highlight them based on the writings of scholars who lived in what they consider to be the golden age of Islam. As al-Naqib (1990), quoting examples of the studies of other Muslim scholars, noted:

*In most of these studies, our scholars highlight that our ancestral Islamic educators had already reached what modern scientific education now advocates. So, ‘Al-Ghazali stands on equal footing with the most famous and the greatest among [modern] Western educators.’ ‘And Ibn Sina preceded Fraywell [sic] in recognizing that play must be central to education in kindergartens, and also preceded contemporary educational scholars in emphasizing the educational and vocational mentorship, and considering individual differences among students in terms of preferences and abilities.’ This type of writing mostly does not study, criticize, or discuss as much as it praises while hiding negative aspects that existed in that educational history...these are selective studies and are not methodical, as they select times and characters to prove our wounded educational superiority.<sup>132</sup>*

This is not to say that modern Muslim scholars have not been able to provide guidance to Islamic education. For example, the Jamat-I-Islami is a revivalist political party created in Pakistan by Abul ala Maudoodi, also spelled Mawdudi, (1903-1979), whose life and achievements have been ably described by Syyed Vali Reza Nasr in *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*.<sup>133</sup> Maudoodi believed in borrowing technology and other concepts from the West in order to empower the Islamic community. As such he favored a more modernist education than the orthodox backers of the traditional madaris. He did, however, also lay emphasis on refuting Western culture and intellectual domination. Maudoodi’s anti-Western critique tends to be more thorough, trenchant and appealing than that of the traditional seminarians.<sup>134</sup> On the surface it may be argued that there is nothing inherently wrong with these views since they do promote modernity but not at the cost of losing one’s religious and cultural identity. However, even Maudoodi’s teachings have been taken out of proportion by the current religious establishment in Pakistan and the rest of the Muslim world where his books were translated and widely disseminated.

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<sup>131</sup> This notion is abundant in Arabic writings on the subject. Al-Naqib (Ibid) detected that notion and elaborated that “the study of Islamic education started as a type of fortifying self in the ‘we’ versus the overwhelming European central notions of education.” 15. In addition, the review of six *madrasah* brochures during the Creative Associates madrasah research study in Bangladesh in April/May 2004, showed that four of them emphasized as objectives the preservation of the true Islamic identity in face of the cultural and civilization attacks by other groups. (Abdalla, Ibid, 23).

<sup>132</sup> Al-naqib, Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Syyed Vali Reza Nasr. *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, OUP, New York, 1996.

<sup>134</sup> Paragraph taken verbatim from Tariq Rahman, *The Madrassa and State of Pakistan: Religion, Poverty and Potential for Violence in Pakistan*. Available at <http://www.himalmag.com/2004/February/essay.htm>



What seems to be of significance at this time is to see what Muslim scholars can contribute to help Islamic education effectively respond to contemporary issues such as development, globalization and militancy. In this regard, two other concerns, related to attitudes towards non-Muslims and women, must be addressed. The concerns about these two issues do not relate directly to scholars as much as they relate to the subsequent troubling cultural values that promote a sense of Muslim exclusiveness and male superiority, and which seem to appear occasionally in various Muslim societies.

In addition, the use of new technologies such as the internet has provided new venues for the spread of radical religious interpretations about women and non-Muslims. This leads to the fast spread of such interpretations into the realm of cultural norms among wider audiences in the society. Although many scholars seemed to make tremendous progress towards acknowledging women's education rights,<sup>135</sup> it is alarming to see how new technologies are used to spread other Muslim scholars' oppressive and hostile views against women. For example, a Saudi-run website (Islamtoday.net) provides a "fatwa"<sup>136</sup> service to Muslims. Several of their *fatwas* addressing spousal relations give permission, no matter how restricted, to men to physically harm and sexually force themselves on their wives.<sup>137</sup>

On the matter of non-Muslims, the same website consistently provides *fatwas* that seem to reflect a worldview in which non-Muslims are not worthy of Muslims' good treatment. In one *fatwa*, a scholar discouraged, in a rather elusive manner, an inquirer from working in the field of social services with the poor and ill in a non-Muslim European country.<sup>138</sup> In another, Muslims are prohibited from initiating greetings to Jews and Christians and are given preferential right of passage over non-Muslims.<sup>139</sup>

The concern with such attitudes, coupled with their availability worldwide via the internet and other technologies, is that they could influence large numbers of Islamic education teachers and students worldwide. After all, those *fatwas* are issued by scholars who enjoy much credibility for being Islamic studies professors in Saudi universities. It is new challenges such as these that Islamic education scholars concerned about the state of Islamic education in the world must address in a realistic manner. Continuing to guide efforts for Islamic education reforms via the siege mentality and the praise for time past would be fruitless if they do not counter the new cyber-spread of hate, chauvinism, and superiority and similar contemporary issues.

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<sup>135</sup> For example, see Mursi (Ibid), 155-158. Also see Abdallah Mohammed el-Zaid (1984). *El- Ta'lim fi al-Mamlake el-Arabia el-Saudia: Anmouzg Mukhtalif*, 113-123.

<sup>136</sup> Fatwa is a religious opinion given by a Muslim scholar on any matter.

<sup>137</sup> For example see the fatwa issued by Professor Sami ben Abde el-Aziz el-Majid of Imam Mohammed ibn Saud Islamic University giving men permission to force themselves sexually on their reluctant wives. [http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show\\_question\\_content.cfm?id=38465](http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show_question_content.cfm?id=38465)

<sup>138</sup> See [http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show\\_question\\_content.cfm?id=40570](http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show_question_content.cfm?id=40570)

<sup>139</sup> See [http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show\\_question\\_content.cfm?id=26670](http://www.islamtoday.net/questions/show_question_content.cfm?id=26670)

## **Misperceptions in the West and in the Muslim World about Islamic Education**

As discussed earlier, in most Muslim countries, especially those that implement a dual system of general education and Islamic education, there are prevalent negative assumptions among members of the educated elites and upper middle class that Islamic education institutions are backward and that their graduates are somewhat useless to the modern economy and workforce.

In the West, and especially after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, media formulated a singular image of Islamic education institutions by focusing on children memorizing the Quran and shouting “jihad”. This resulted in presenting the system as one that is backward, oppressive to children, and used as a seedbed for militancy and extremism.

Those negative views of Islamic education institutions misrepresent several aspects. First, the vast majority of these institutions provide more than just mechanical Quranic memorization; they offer a wider range of religious education in addition to modern education. Second, they serve millions of children, girls and boys in the Muslim world who otherwise could be deprived of any education. Third, these institutions in many countries of the Muslim world provide invaluable social services to the communities by offering shelter and education to orphans. And finally, most of those institutions are moving forward with modernization plans.

The continuation of those views and their spread in modern media is clearly one challenge that faces those who wish to reform and modernize Islamic education. This is because such views add a pre-established negative notion about Islamic education that makes it difficult to attract funders and educators to participate in such efforts.

## **Politicization and Militarization of Islamic Education**

Similar to the point made above concerning misconceptions about Islamic education by the elites in the Muslim world and in the West, it is unfortunate that governments and militants, in the Muslim world and the West, have on several occasions exploited those Islamic education institutions to advance their own political agendas. Noted earlier was the role of rulers in the Arab world, such as President Sadat, in encouraging Islamic education to counter socialist and Nasserist opponents. That move resulted in the growth of militant Islam in Egypt, for which President Sadat paid with his life. During the Bangladesh war of liberation in the early 1970s, *madrasah* students were being indoctrinated in pro-Pakistani rhetoric in the name of Islamic unity, which contributed to a massive genocide.<sup>140</sup> During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, several Muslim and non-Muslim governments alike collaborated to indoctrinate students of *madaris* in Afghanistan and Pakistan in Islamic militancy in order to fight the Soviets.

The trouble with those policies is that, as the whole world has witnessed in the past few years, such indoctrination and utilization of Islamic education institutions as centers for *Islamic Jihad Internationale*, do not cease to exist once the purpose they were initiated to address is fulfilled.

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<sup>140</sup> Masoud, *Ibid.*

The indoctrination, and the militant fraternity, live beyond the fulfillment of the immediate purpose. The violent force associated with them continues to affect the entire world in an unprecedented wave of terror.

Undoing militant indoctrination may prove more difficult than anticipated, given several political and social upheavals that seem to give credence to such ideas in the Muslim world. When this is coupled with the “credible” cyber-hatred described above, efforts to bring normalcy to Islamic education institutions may appear, to use extremist logic, “like attempts instigated by the infidels to pacify the true believers.”

## VII. Approaches/Strategies for Improving Education in Islamic Schools

Based on the information gathered in this research, the following approaches and strategies are provided for improving education in Islamic schools. The information in this section is organized according to three categories: Society-, Government-, and Institution-related approaches/strategies.

### Society-related Approaches/Strategies

**Encourage, rather than hinder, community ownership of Islamic education institutions.** Islamic education institutions in several Muslim countries were the products of successful social entrepreneurship. That is, those institutions have often been initiated and maintained by visionary community leaders whose aims were to provide educational services to their impoverished communities, and to provide shelters to orphans. Those leaders have also been effective in building economic support for those institutions within their communities. *This spirit must be encouraged, and maintained. It should not be hampered by efforts to supervise the curriculum.* Governments and donors in the Muslim world must realize that this social entrepreneurship has been an integral part of community sustenance and development. That spirit is not the problem; it is the radical abuse of that spirit that is problematic. Therefore, any efforts that may lead to encroaching on those institutions and their social spirit will provoke unnecessary disenchantment among the populace. Religious radicals, not unexpectedly, may exploit such disenchantment to support their claims that “Islam is under attack.”

It is perhaps plausible to consider the opportunity that arises from effectively addressing this intersection between social entrepreneurship and radical religious efforts. Perhaps one effective approach in this regard would be to establish policies that encourage and give incentives to entrepreneurs to continue to develop programs and institutions to serve their communities. This of course must be contingent upon abiding by specific governmental regulations guiding the religious curriculum. In doing so, it becomes clear that governments and donors are not “fighting Islam,” but instead allowing for the continuity of developing social programs inspired by the Islamic values of community service. At the same time, such policies must develop mechanisms to ensure careful and ongoing follow-up on the implementation of religious curriculum and activities that correspond to notions of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

**Promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence.** As asserted repeatedly here, Islamic education institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They are strongly influenced by political, social and cultural factors. In this time of massive, easily accessible information technology, the spread of radical Islamic doctrines, via what appears to be legitimate and credible religious sources, may negatively influence the worldview of the young generations in the Muslim world in general. This, in turn, may influence Islamic education institutions. *Efforts must be made to provide religiously credible and legitimate information about tolerance and peaceful coexistence via various information dissemination venues such as the internet and media.*

There are numerous Islamic religious scholars, and Muslim social scientists, who embrace concepts of tolerance, non-violent means of conflict resolution, and peaceful coexistence, as fundamental Islamic values and concepts. They can provide the credible voice of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. As a matter of fact, any efforts to counter the messages of hatred and exclusions will not be effective unless they are introduced and carried out by credible Muslim religious scholars and social scientists. Organizing an international conference for Muslim scholars and social scientists, along with representatives of governments and donors, to discuss the development and dissemination of Islamically-based, peaceful, and tolerant messages may prove to be a viable starting point. Similar efforts to bring together such scholars and experts have taken place in the past few years. What would be unique in this suggestion is to focus on developing concrete models of action, including message development techniques, use of media and wide dissemination approaches that will ensure that the widest segments of populations in the Muslim world, according to their available resources, will be able to receive those messages.

In addition, the one most prevalent, consistent, form of religious-based information dissemination in the Muslim world is the Friday pulpit. In any Muslim country, mosques are almost full to capacity every Friday afternoon as the vast majority of Muslims, whether practicing or not, observe the weekly prayer and its sermon. Unfortunately, the Friday pulpit has been abused often across the Muslim world.<sup>141</sup> Messages of hatred and exclusion are prevalent in many mosques, along with practices that undermine women's roles in the public sphere. No matter how much efforts are made via *madaris*, media and the internet, there is no escape from seeking approaches to ensure that the Friday pulpit is not abused.

Several countries, including Egypt, have at times established careful government monitoring and a selection process of Friday preachers to ensure that their messages were consistent with government policies. This is not what is being suggested here. This is because the majority of the populations in Muslim countries view those approaches as methods of oppression and suppression of freedom of speech. These approaches would actually increase the frustration among the populace with their governments. Governments must refrain from dictating to Friday preachers what to say. Instead, diligent and ongoing efforts to educate more preachers in the Islamic foundations of peaceful coexistence and tolerance are the best safeguards against pulpit abuse. The effects of those policies may not be felt immediately, but their long-term benefit will be worthwhile.

***Provide equitable education for girls.*** Girls' enrollment in Islamic education institutions in most Muslim countries is, surprisingly, high. Research has revealed few impressive examples of Islamic girl education models.<sup>142</sup> This educational system, however, continues to be influenced by traditional patriarchal values, and male-dominated religious interpretations. Those values

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<sup>141</sup> The lead author of this publication was on a visit to Bangladesh in the spring of 2004. On one Friday, he attended the Friday prayer and sermon in a large mosque of an affluent neighborhood. The preacher, during his sermon, which he gave mostly in Arabic (that is not understood by almost all Bangladeshi worshippers), made appeals to God to "destroy the homes and ruin the lives" of Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, and everyone who was not a Muslim. Such rhetoric is not scarce on Fridays in Muslim countries.

<sup>142</sup> Please see the USAID/Creative Associates report on *madrasah* education in Bangladesh for a description of one female *Madrasah* that is operated by women teachers and administrators.

and attitudes result in treating girls and women as second class in those institutions. For example, despite the fact that girls account for almost half of *ebtidai* (elementary) *madrasah* students in Bangladesh, women teachers make up only 3.5 percent of all teachers in those *madaris*. *Efforts must be made to better accommodate girls. This may be accomplished by increasing the number of women teachers and administrators, as they may be able to influence policies and practices in ways that will make those institutions more attentive to girls' needs.*

One possible approach to gather more information about the conditions of girls' education in Islamic education institutions is to conduct focused research on Islamic education for girls in the Muslim world. Most research and studies of Islamic education institutions thus far have been assuming, erroneously, that such institutions are mainly for males. The clear evidence that girls make up large numbers of students in Islamic education institutions while women teachers do not should encourage focused research in this area. Such research should focus on the advantages, disadvantages, aspirations, concerns, and suggestions that girl students and women teachers have.

In addition, hiring more female *madrasah* graduates as teachers will provide a viable professional career for young girls to pursue. This, in turn, may encourage more girls to pursue higher education and not drop out before the university stage or its equivalent.

Government and donors may also apply incentives to encourage religious education institutions to follow policies and guidelines that will ensure better accommodation of female students, and perhaps tie incentives to the increase in the number of female graduates who continue to college, or who pass national examinations.

***Counter negative perceptions about Islamic education.*** Negative perceptions about Islamic education institutions are prevalent among large segments of Western societies, and among the elites and middle class in Muslim countries. Those institutions are characterized often in Western media as terrorist breeding camps. In Muslim countries, many among the elites and middle class have not gotten over the colonial-time stigma about the backwardness of those institutions. It is only natural that such negative attitudes may represent themselves in terms of resistance to supporting efforts to modernize or reform those institutions, as the preference is to overhaul them. *Correcting misperceptions in Western societies and among Muslim countries' elites and middle class via dissemination of appropriate information will bring wider support to the reforms and modernization efforts proposed in this research.*

Several approaches may be considered in this regard. Contrary to the prevalent perceptions in the West and among the elites and middle classes in Muslim societies, there are examples of Islamic education institutions that offer general education in addition to religious education and whose graduates seek higher education in universities or equivalent institutions. Some graduates also do not necessarily specialize in Islamic studies, but instead go on to study various modern subjects. Highlighting such examples via media programs may be beneficial not only to dispel the negative myth, but also to show more students in Islamic education institutions that there are wider options available to them, which may provide for better futures.

Another possible approach, originating in the field of peace-building and conflict resolution, is to conduct facilitated discussions, or problem-solving workshops, between students of general education and students of Islamic education institutions that incorporate general education. The purposes of such sessions and workshops would be to help them “de-demonize” each other, to explore and address the established negative images about each other, and to discuss approaches that would make more people in their respective contexts aware of the untrue stereotypes about each other. Making those sessions and workshops available via media outlets could of course expand their reach beyond the immediate engaged audience.

### **Government-related Approaches/Strategies**

***Support Islamic education, especially in public schools.*** The Islamic aspects of identity in the Muslim world continue to influence those societies. Because of the strong presence of Islam as an identity element, people in the Muslim world will continue to seek knowledge about Islam, and will view efforts to reduce Islamic education as an infringement upon a sacred aspect of their existence and identity. *It is not recommended in this research to continue with efforts to eliminate or reduce Islamic education, especially in public schools.* This would be viewed negatively, as we have seen in Egypt, and would only force more people to seek Islamic education and knowledge from unpredictable sources.

It is important at this point to highlight the connections between various challenges discussed in the section above, and between recommendations in this section. Those challenges and recommendations are best viewed as interconnected as they influence each other. For example, this recommendation is best understood in light of the point discussed earlier about the siege mentality. We know now that for many historical reasons, a strong tendency exists among people in the Muslim world to believe that they and their religion are under attack. Subsequently, many people in those societies look upon any sign that their religion is being shoved out of the public sphere with concern. Such efforts reproduce a self-fulfilling prophecy supporting the siege mentality.

When we also consider the context of international relations after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, in which a widespread view in the Muslim world suspects that the war on terror is actually a war on Islam, it becomes more comprehensible why actions intended to reduce the role of Islam in the public world could not only be viewed negatively, but also results in a reaction intended to restore that role. This leads to the question, and the next point: who may play that role once it is abandoned in formal educational institutions?

As recent history lessons throughout the entire Muslim world have shown us, Muslims with varied approaches to Islam, ranging from pacifism and tolerance to militancy and violence, play that educational and community role. But when the siege mentality ingredient is added, it becomes obvious that the space opened for proponents of militancy and violence to abandon Islamic education in formal education institutions will expand. This in turn will influence more school-age youth, resulting in new waves of radicalism.

Therefore, we suggest in this research that governments in the Muslim world, instead, make concerted efforts to strengthen Islamic education in all education institutions. These efforts

must carefully incorporate the Islamic foundational principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. They must also be presented using pedagogies that reflect modernity. Recall, again, that all the challenges and recommendations noted here are inter-connected. It has already been established that across the entire Muslim world the desire to modernize educational approaches is paramount. Introducing modern approaches to Islamic education will resonate well with the overall social demand for modernity. Exploring further the examples shared earlier about introducing civic education in Islamic education institutions in Indonesia may contribute to replicating those approaches in other parts of the Muslim world.

**Monitor, not mandate, Islamic curriculum content.** The involvement of governments in the Muslim world, and elsewhere, with Islamic curricula to serve security objectives could lead to uncontrolled negative outcomes. For example, using Islamic education to promote Islamic militancy to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan yielded devastating outcomes on a wide scale, as evident from the spread of violent Islam out of Pakistani and Afghan *madaris*. *While state supervision of Islamic curriculum is necessary to guard against the spread of radical and militant views, states in the Muslim world, and elsewhere, must refrain from politicizing this education.*

The subject of using Islam for political purposes, including the enticement of militant sentiments, has been discussed widely in academic circles especially after the tragic events of September 11, 2001.<sup>143</sup> This academic debate, however, must translate into a public debate that engages wider segments of Muslim societies and the governments. The purpose of making that debate public is to increase awareness among the public, and among government officials, of the terrible cost to their societies, governments, and the rest of the world, of politicizing and militarizing Islamic education. Using the new forms of media such as Aljazeera as a forum for such debate will ensure a wide reach at least in Arabic-speaking countries. Perhaps other non-Arabic-speaking countries can then replicate the model in their own languages.

Another approach to address the issue of politicizing and militarizing Islamic education is to invite government officials, civil society representatives, and Islamic educators to a Muslim worldwide forum. Conducting the forum under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic States, in coordination with credible international organizations such as UNESCO, could prove useful in generating recommendations, and perhaps commitments from participants, to refrain from politicizing and militarizing Islamic education.

**Governments in the Muslim world must provide careful supervision of the Islamic education institutions and curriculum.** The examples of the government role with Al-Azhar in Egypt and with Islamic education institutions in Indonesia demonstrate that state supervision prevents the spread of such institutions in unpredictable directions. In this regard it is important to assert that issues related to Islamic identity and education are highly sensitive materials not suitable for free exchange and handling.

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<sup>143</sup> For example see Esposito, J. *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. (New York: Oxford University Press: 2002); Kepel, G. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002); Lewis, B. *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*. (New York: Modern Library, 2003).



As noted earlier, Islamic educational institutions do not exist in a vacuum. The influences of various elements within the wider society shape these institutions' philosophies and educational messages. The use of the internet to spread messages of hatred to non-Muslims and oppression of women in the name of Islam by credible and legitimate scholars has already been noted. Islamic education institutions, their teachers, and their students, are potentially not immune to those messages. This is even more convoluted when it is considered that, on the other hand, more efforts are encouraging modernization of Islamic education institutions by introducing modern technology such as access to computers and the internet. Perhaps it will become more and more difficult to censor information floating on the internet and via other media outlets. Therefore, students and teachers in Islamic education institutions, and all other members of Muslim societies, may become more exposed to those ideas. Countering such ideas will not be best accomplished by censoring them. A stronger more enduring approach would be to provide more persuasive arguments based on Islamic foundational principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Governments in the Muslim world will have to encourage the development of appealing, convincing materials that promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence. They will also have to ensure that such materials are incorporated and infused into all educational institutions' curriculum.

Similar to the approach on curriculum is one that can be taken about practices that exist in Islamic education institutions. These institutions often follow practices that reinforce and reflect women's degradation and the exclusion of non-Muslims. So even if efforts are made to address such problems in the curriculum, not much will be achieved if the practices in Islamic education institutions continue to reflect something else. Therefore, the governmental supervisory role must extend beyond curriculum issues to assessing certain practices to ensure that they are consistent with Islamic foundational principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Governmental supervision must not be carried out in an inspectorial, authoritarian, top-down manner. If governments in the Muslim world conduct supervision in such a manner, they would themselves be falling into the very practices from which they are trying to help Islamic education institutions steer away. This recommendation requires that governments pursue models of supervision based on principles of participation and cooperation with Islamic education institutions.

**Monitor curriculum for education quality and negative messages.** The peaceful revival of Islam has been expanding into the middle and upper classes of most Muslim societies. While the impression about Islamic education institutions among large segments of these classes remains negative, increasing numbers of people among these classes are seeking Islamic education that is combined with modern education. This is resulting in the emergence of new models of Islamic/modern educational institutions that cater to those classes. *While governments should encourage this trend because it provides an attractive educational venue to members of those classes, governments must also carefully review both the general education and Islamic education curricula to ensure that they meet quality standards, and that the religious curricula*

*does not contain negative messages such as the ones described in the previous section on challenges to Islamic education.*

The notion of modernizing in the context of Islamic education institutions must be addressed carefully. Modernization is not simply about the acquisition of modern technology such as computers and access to the internet. If modernization of Islamic education institutions is all about more computers, without modernization of ideas, values and principles, this may lead to catastrophic outcomes. The availability of sophisticated internet websites to preach hatred and oppression is now seen on a wide scale. We have also seen recently how modern media and the internet have been used to widely show atrocities committed against innocent civilians.<sup>144</sup>

The new trend among Islamic education institutions to use modern technology, and to offer world-class education in the use of such technology, for high fees, must not be taken for granted as a step in the right direction. In supervising Islamic education institutions, governments must make it their focal point that these institutions are transforming values and ideas towards the Islamic foundational principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Introducing new technologies, foreign languages, and creating technologically savvy cadres of students are all, of course, positive steps. But they may prove to be problematic if they are not based on the transformation of values and ideas. Modernization must be about developing what we described earlier as civic manners, as well as secular practices of inclusiveness and participation. A combination of radical religious approaches and sophisticated technology in Islamic education institutions may prove to be a devastating combination.

### **Institution-related Approaches/Strategies**

***Encourage the infusion of general education into Islamic education institutions.*** The dual model of education (general education institutions and Islamic education institutions) in several Muslim countries is going through changes in which most Islamic education institutions are incorporating general education curriculum into the Islamic curriculum. In doing so, those institutions are receiving financial support and recognition of their certificates, which increases the choices of their students regarding their future education. *The trend towards infusing general education curriculum into Islamic education institutions must be encouraged, and incentives must be developed to attract more exclusive Islamic education institutions to incorporate general education curriculum.* Further, by gaining modern education, students are capable of expanding their career choices beyond religious-based ones. Bangladesh's Alia Madrasah system is a good example of this.

An important guidance in this regard is to ensure that students in Islamic education institutions that incorporate modern education are allowed to demonstrate their achievement levels on modern subjects. This is best accomplished by establishing national examinations that are equivalent to those implemented with other formal education institutions. Governments also must recognize the degrees attained upon passing those examinations, and make higher education institutions open for them to pursue a variety of undergraduate and graduate

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<sup>144</sup> One example is the showing of the beheading of foreign hostages in Iraq and Saudi Arabia in 2004 on various websites.

degrees. Again, the examples of Egypt's Al-Azhar and Bangladesh's Alia Madrasah demonstrate how the education system may preserve the need for Islamic education while opening new horizons for graduates of those institutions.

**Support/promote new student-centered, action-oriented classroom instruction.** The quality of teacher preparation, pedagogical approaches, and teacher-student relations in Islamic education institutions has been of concern to all involved. The traditional approaches based on memorization are depriving students of creative thinking and addressing new challenges and contemporary issues. Corporal punishment concerns many students in those institutions. At the same time, administrators and teachers in those institutions welcome learning new approaches to education.<sup>145</sup> *Encourage efforts to provide teacher training programs, and exchange programs to introduce more participatory, less memorization-based, approaches to education and teaching.*

Among the consequences of the societal division of education into modern and Islamic was that Islamic education institutions continued to reproduce and regenerate archaic models of teaching and interaction between students and teachers. While modern education institutions have been open to new approaches to education, as they continuously looked up to the West to provide up-to-date models, those in Islamic education institutions had looked to the past.

In addition, as Islamic education became synonymous with lower socio-economic, rural living, more traditional values and practices penetrated that system of education.<sup>146</sup> Traditional values of patriarchy, authoritarianism, and license granted to physically punish children, became part of the established norms of education in Islamic education institutions.

Almost all teachers in Islamic education institutions are themselves graduates of those institutions. This is true especially of teachers of religious subjects, Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi. Needless to say, if those teachers have only learned and been exposed to authoritarian, patriarchal, monologue-based methods of education as students, they reenact them when they become teachers. This is how that system with its own methods has continued to reproduce itself in isolation from other educational institutions.

Therefore, teachers and administrators of those institutions need extensive exposure to other methods of education. The good news is that many of them, in research interviews, welcomed learning about those approaches. Governments and donors must encourage and produce various in-service education models for those teachers and administrators. Most significantly, Muslim educators who have been exposed to modern educational approaches must be involved in these efforts. This will ensure that recipients of the training realize that other Muslim educators have used such training models, and that their application is not limited to the Western educational experiences.

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<sup>145</sup> During an interview with a *madrasah* principal in Dhaka, Bangladesh, responding to a question about what he would do to modernize education in the *madrasah*, he stated that the first thing he would do is to visit modern countries to see what educational and teaching methods they are using in order to implement them in his school. Such attitudes were prevalent among *madrasah* staff during the Creative Associates research study in 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Please see the discussion above about Value Systems in the Muslim World.

**Spread the word about successful new models.** The growing interest in studying Islamic education in the Muslim world has led to the discovery of intriguing new models of Islamic education institutions. Several of these models strike an effective balance between providing Islamic education, modern education, and civic education. *A compilation of “best practices” among Islamic education institutions in the Muslim world, and the dissemination of the compilation in various formats (for example, in hard copies and CDs, and on the internet) may expand these models into more countries, especially if the implementation of these models is connected to some form of incentive.* One significant advantage of this process is that those models have been “home grown” within Islamically-credible institutions. This will eliminate the concern that these are Western imposed models.

Further, the research on Islamic education in various Muslim countries shows that several of those countries possess positive examples of Islamic education combining principles and practices that aspire to prepare students for the challenges of the twenty-first century. The examples of incorporating civic education in Indonesia, of composing an all-women school staff in Bangladesh, and of opening wide higher education to Al-Azhar religious education graduates in Egypt, are all positive. Educators in Islamic education institutions, however, lack access to information about such models. Therefore, a best practices research project with a strong dissemination component may inspire more educators to replicate those models. A significant factor that may facilitate the replication of those models is that other Muslim educators have already been implementing them. This fact alone would resolve many concerns that may arise if those models were implemented in non-Muslim settings.

## **VIII. Summary and Conclusions**

This publication has emphasized that understanding issues surrounding Islamic education must take into consideration various social, cultural, and political-historical factors. The state of Islamic education is tied to a great extent to local and international developments. Islamic education, like other institutions in the Muslim world, has struggled with challenges of development and modernization. In addition to “typical” development and modernization challenges, Islamic education institutions have suffered from political manipulation, exploitation and extremism. Recent world affairs obviously set those institutions in the line of media fire as they have been accused of breeding terrorism.

This publication has also provided a glimpse of hope that Islamic education institutions are not immune to positive change and modernization. Despite the many negative aspects related to that education, several Islamic education institutions have demonstrated the willingness and ability to adjust to the needs of today’s world. Nonetheless, addressing the challenges facing Islamic education will require much more than the good will and action of those responsible for them; it will require the support and action of states, the media, and various members of civil society. More profoundly, the success of efforts to address challenges facing Islamic education will require attitudinal changes on the part of those responsible for that education, and those who continue to view it with fear and suspicion. Such transformation is possible as long as its significance and necessity are recognized.

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