

Reforms in Islamic Education

Abstracts

Citizenship Education: Muslim Students in Ten Islamic and State Secondary Schools in England

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Educators in Muslim schools, and in schools containing a high proportion of Muslim students, face challenges posed by curriculum innovations in Citizenship Education. We have studied Citizenship Education in 10 secondary schools in Northern England, including 5 Muslim schools and 5 state schools, analysing data from 336 pupils and 28 teachers, on attitudes to citizenship, and how these reflect religious education curricula in these schools. These are 'best practice' schools in terms of their development of curriculum initiatives in the teaching of citizenship. The Muslim pupils studied were especially receptive to teaching about being 'a good citizen', acting in a civic-minded and socially responsible way. In this and in further work we found that the teaching of religion in Muslim schools was for pupils often a mutually reinforcing process through which the idea of the responsible citizenship was fostered by teaching about Islam. We offer ways forward for teachers in Muslim schools in this interesting and sometimes controversial area.

Key words: Muslim, Education, Citizenship

Santichon Islamic School: Model for Islamic Private School in Minority Context

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Islam is Thailand's largest religious minority. Thailand's Muslim community comprises of two groups: The Malay Muslims of the southern provinces and the naturalized Muslims of different ethnic backgrounds residing throughout the country. Thai Muslims maintain, express and symbolize their identity mainly through religious institutions. Not only have the Thai state tended to consider Islamic education out-dated, but they have failed to recognize their moral-cultural relevance. This prompted the promulgation of policies that sought to streamline these along modern-secular educational lines. Through protests, Muslim successfully persuaded the government to recognize the religio-moral benefits of an integrated education through which Muslim identity could be maintained and Muslim young people morally prepared for modern professional life. This led to the establishment of Islamic Private Schools in Thailand. Contemporary Islamic education in Thailand combines a religious education with the national Thai curriculum. All this is sponsored by the government, with the latter coming under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Islamic private schools face the following two problems. Students are not adequately prepared to either compete in the country's modern job market, or gain entrance into university. Countrywide, the test scores from Islamic private school are below the national average. Secondly, whilst most Islamic private schools teach the Thai national curriculum,

they only receive a small fraction of their operating budget from the government. Financial restrictions led complicate the creation of standardized lesson plans, the ability of teachers to engage with the government curriculum. Both of these adversely affect the quality of instruction. This article highlights how *Santichon*, a private Islamic school located in Bangkok, Thailand, have addressed these problems thereby preparing Muslim students enter Thailand's universities and competitive job market.

Reforms of the Curricula and Appropriation of Religion in the Muslim Middle East

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Education reform in the Muslim Middle East, including reforms of religious components of the curricula, is at the crossroads of globalization, social change, rapid economic development, and the presence of religious ideologies. The diverse pattern of the reform across various countries is the reflection of the complexity of the region which on one hand is affected by the domestic factors and on the other hand by the nature and extent of the linkage to the global forces. In spite of the contextual characteristics and diversity, the reforms share a number of common features. In general there are four interlinked key categories of factors affecting the trend of the education reforms and religious content of the curricula in the Middle East: a. socio-economic development, and new concept of civil society; b. state and new modes of governance; c. cultural (traditional/religious) and political factors; and d. international factors. In all countries:

1. Various elements of 'religion' and 'tradition' have been reinterpreted and appropriated in education both in the official discourse and at the grassroots level and have been introduced into the reform.
2. The needs for reform have come, on one hand, through 'domestic actors' and, on the other hand, endorsed by 'external actors', and in many cases through their mutual interactions. It has also informed the 'borrowing' (of policies and practices), in both regional and global levels.
3. A slow process of democratization within education is proceeding across the region. A series of top-down democratization initiatives attributed to the global trend of (social and economic) liberalization and the bottom-up demands of the local stakeholders have affected the process of educational reforms and resulted in re-interpretation of religion in the curricula.
4. A new concept of 'civil society' is born which has challenged the Islamic *waqf*-based notion of civil society and has introduced a new domain for social activities. The emergence of the new civil society contributed to a socio-economic development which in turn is reflected in the form of democratization (including recognition of minority rights, greater social roles for women, and the like) within these countries and an escalated need for the changes. It could be argued that the recent redefinition of the objectives of education and content of the curricula across the Middle East is the outcome of such a development.

5. There is synchronization between domestic actors (both state and civil society) and international actors which inhibit or enhance the chance for and/or process of the education reforms. This has resulted in internationalization of the local reform discourse. The local changes, thus, are accommodated within larger international discursive practices such as EFA (Education for All), MDG (Millennium Development Goals), and LLL (Lifelong Learning).

Reforms in Islamic Education: A Global Perspective Seen from the Indonesian Case

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Reforms in Islamic education is one of the most important 'projects' of renewal and reforms of Islam—or better, Muslim societies—since the early twentieth century onwards. The logic behind the reforms is that in order for Muslims to be able to cope with the modern world and achieve progress there is no other way but reforming Islamic education. But one should recognize that reforms in Islamic education have met some resistance from some Muslim societies that are suspicious that the reforms would only lead Muslim students to move away from Islam to secularism.

However, the idea and efforts to reform Islamic education is in fact gain new momentum in post-Nine/Eleven 2001 events in the US. It has been supposed by many that one of the most important root-causes of radicalism among Muslims is that their Islamic education remains an archaic institution. Therefore, Islamic education has been held responsible for failing to provide a better perspective for Muslim children to look to their surrounding world. For that reason, Islamic education, particularly *madrasah* and other Islamic traditional educational institutions such as *pesantren* in Indonesia have been misperceived as the 'breeding ground of radicalism' or 'talibanism'.

Responding to that kind of perception or misperception, there is an urgent need to revisit reforms in Islamic education after one century passed. Even though reforms have been conducted in such a long time in various Muslim societies and countries, it is clear that the extent of reforms in Islamic education is different from one place to another. There are cases that reforms in Islamic education have been very successful; but there also cases where reforms of Islamic education have failed. The success and failure of reforms in Islamic education have a lot to do with various religious, political and social factors working within particular Muslim societies and countries.

This paper is a preliminary attempt to map reforms in Muslim societies and countries; the success and failure of reforms and their impact on the future of Muslim societies. The paper will take Indonesia as a show case of a successful reform in Islamic education. Indonesian case will show that reforms in Islamic education are influenced by many factors that make reforms possible and even necessary.

Madrasa Education in Afghanistan: A Choice between Reform and Obliteration

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In late 1870s, Amir Sher Ali founded a civil and a military school during the second term of his Amirship (r. 1868-1878)¹ in Afghanistan. The foundation of the two schools marked a minor but symbolically significant rupture with traditional madrasa education. At this stage, it was not the actual curriculum, but the model and vision behind these schools that differentiated them from the madrasa system. The civil school was patterned after the British educational model in India, and the military school was even supervised by a British army general. Although these tentative changes in education were then destroyed during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1881), they left a legacy of a new form of education. Schools were then restarted at the dawn of the next century and gradually sidelined madrasas from the mainstream formal education system. The schools were called *makatib-e asri* (modern schools), and the newly founded form of education came to be known as *talimat-e asri* (modern education).

This paper explores the plight and reform of madrasa education in Afghanistan, and its choice of standing between reform and obliteration, through the questions of why the madrasa system was unable to meet the educational, scientific and economic demands of modern era in Afghanistan; how madrasa education degraded to the extent that countries like Afghanistan, where the madrasa system produced contemporary beacons of knowledge and scholarship, had to opt for a different educational model; and how Afghanistan's experience may help to understand and explain these questions and contribute to the increasing demand for the reform of the madrasa system.

This paper entertains these questions through the following debates. First it discusses the concept of knowledge in Islam as the most important element that influenced Muslim scholarship and education. Next, it discusses the traditional structure of madrasa education that has an important share in the sustainability as well as degradation of madrasa education. Then it presents a debate on the reform of madrasa education, followed by conclusion and implications for a new direction.

Key words: knowledge, concept of knowledge, traditional education (mosque, madrasa and home-based education), modern education, modernist, *'ulama*

Singing and Music as Part of Islamic Religious Education in Sweden

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In Sweden the first independent Muslim school opened in 1993. At present there are 16 such schools, all financed by the state. As other independent schools in Sweden, they are obliged to follow the national curriculum, but are allowed to add an extra curricular subject, Islamic Religious Education (IRE), to the weekly schedule.

¹ Amir Shir Ali ruled the country twice, from 1863 to 1866 and from 1868 to 1879.

In Muslim schools, singing appear to make up a good part of IRE, but the attitude to the use of music and songs varies widely, ranging from prohibition of all instruments but hand drums to the use of Hiphop and pop-music within IRE.

In this paper I will discuss the different interpretations of Islam that lead up to the schools' different choices whether or not to use singing and/or music when teaching Islam to the pupils. I probe into the sources of authority/legitimacy that they use in order to motivate and legitimate their specific opinions in this matter. The paper shows that there are a wide variety of sources and interpretations at hand in the Swedish context, illustrating a multitude of Islamic interpretations.

Theoretically, the paper is inspired by Kenneth Gaurdly's distinction between music and non-music when defining different kinds of sound art traditions. Methodologically, the paper is based on fieldwork in three of Sweden's Muslim schools as well as additional interviews in six schools.

Islamic Character Education in the Face of Childhood Consumerism

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The study of childhood consumerism, materialism, and excessive marketing to children as a vulnerable group has been in focus worldwide on both practical and theoretical levels. The study of the adverse physical and psychological impact of materialism and consumerism on children has lead countries and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), to regulate marketing practice to this vulnerable group. In this research, both Islamic character/ethics education and the important role of parents are featured as two critical antidotes and countervailing power against unethical marketing practice to children in light of excessive materialism and consumerism. The research starts by defining materialism and its adverse effects on children based on international literature. Highlights of the modules encompassing Islamic character education are defined; especially the important role of citizenship education in preparing Muslims to be at the forefront of social and civic engagement. The role of parents is then stressed. The results of the empirical research (qualitative and quantitative) conducted with both parents and children on childhood materialism and consumerism in Egypt are then portrayed. The research thus pioneered a new study featuring the relationship between two theoretically-isolated worlds; Islamic Character/Ethics Education and Childhood Materialism and Consumerism. The research implications are not only important for Islamic schools, future development of Islamic character building curricula, but also for public policy makers and parents.

New Interdisciplinary Approaches to Islamic Education in Germany

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“Only the people of understanding are mindful” (Quran 39:9)

This paper presents a novel, interdisciplinary approach to Islamic education by taking into due consideration both the humanistic ideals and the increasingly diverse multicultural frameworks of modern societies in Europe and elsewhere.

Thus, the main objective of the paper is to present and analytically discuss innovative research conducted at the newly established research centre “**Education and Religion**”: From Early Imperial Roman Times to the Classical Period of **Islam**”, **EDRIS**.

The paper shows that such a historical, interdisciplinary view of Islamic education is not only immediately relevant for a period and geographic area of fundamental importance for the rise and growth of both “Western” and “Islamic” civilizations. Moreover, it also helps uncover and highlight key concepts, theories, and philosophies of Islamic education and wisdom in ways that contribute to raising the much needed awareness of Islam as a natural constituent in the canon of the great civilizations that have decisively shaped historical developments in both Europe and the Middle East and whose impacts are very much present in contemporary discourses and intercultural presuppositions.

This kind of systematic, multidisciplinary analysis of the goals and values that inspired and animated educational and religious traditions in a region as important as the later ancient and medieval Mediterranean world will lead to a better understanding of the cultural and intellectual foundations of the Western and Islamic worlds during their “shared past”. In essence, this collaborative work on Islamic education as conducted at the EDRIS Centre will significantly contribute to establishing a sounder footing on which to build our “shared future.”

The core of the paper offers insights in the four main areas of the EDRIS Centre’s research on the history, development, and specifics of Islamic education during the early and classical periods of Islam (that is, the seventh to the thirteenth century CE). These are: (1) Quranic exegesis and its foundational role in Islamic education; (2) historical writing as a major educational tool and the search for Muslim identity; (3) philosophies and ethics of classical Islamic education; and (4) the impact of great educators on early medieval Muslim society.

Breaking the Headscarf Ban in Secular Turkey: An Alternative Educational Establishment in Istanbul

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In this paper I want to talk about Akademistanbul which runs several educational programmes, including one on the Islamic sciences. It is a programme that runs as a franchise of the Islamic University of Rotterdam, which has earned its accreditation in 2010. In its mission statement IUR declares primary concerns to be ‘Islam and cultural diversity in

the Netherlands, International perspectives on Islam, Islam and Citizenship, Islam and Public Ethics, and Islam and Environmental Education'. The mission statement is differently highlighted in the Turkish context, and reads 'for those students who have not been able to continue their high school or university' and the reason these students have not been able to pursue their careers becomes apparent when one visits their buildings. They are all female, and they all wear the headscarf. As such, Akademistanbul is one of the institutions of higher-learning that has its doors open to hijabi women, but different from other enterprises that have capitalized on the 'hijabi market' and that offer degrees in 'secular' sciences, Akademistanbul offers an Islamic curriculum, and thus presents an interesting shift in how girls who are barred from going to secular universities may pursue higher learning. My paper will look at the curriculum of the school and include interviews with the students and staff to see where they place it in the constellation of the alternative institutions of higher learning (none of which, incidentally, have accreditation with the Turkish authorities) and also in relation to theology faculties at 'secular' universities and the Islamic University of Rotterdam. I argue that Akademistanbul is an establishment in which one can observe the tension not only between secular and religious education, but universities and their enfranchises which is becoming a more and more common phenomenon.

Transformative Islamic Education through a Transformative Pedagogy

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Muslim education has been experiencing transformation ever since the period of contact with the West in the eighteenth century in an attempt to face global challenges and position Muslims in the world community. Among the reforms attempted were introducing "modern" sciences into the religious school curriculum, establishing integrated curriculum and integrated schools, Islamization of Contemporary Knowledge, and establishing Islamic schools and universities. The challenges continue and its nature has changed since the invention of the internet. This paper examines the Islamic Studies curriculum in schools to see its ability to respond to new challenges. It argues that the aims of the curriculum do not have problem but the content and the pedagogy of the teaching of Islamic studies or education suffer from some shortcomings especially its pedagogy. The paper ends with a proposal for the more transformative Hikmah pedagogy that could awaken the Muslim minds and souls.

Key words: Islamic Education, transformative pedagogy, philosophical inquiry, Hikmah pedagogy, Islamic curriculum

Training Objectives for Islamic Studies at German Universities: 'What Sort of Academically Trained Personnel are Needed by Muslim Congregations in Germany?'

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We are talking about producing academically trained personnel to meet the requirements of Muslim congregations in Germany. No doubt, such Islamic training must be to academic

and professional standard. This would advance the legal recognition of Islam in Germany, and it is necessary for Muslims to feel at home in that country. However, no concept for such an institutionally consolidated, theologically trained functionary elite, which would be expected to work towards integration and recognition, is available so far. This paper shall serve as an initial input to think about such concept.

Key words: Muslims in Germany, Islamic Theology, higher education

A New Approach: Developing Educational Standards for Islamic Religious Education

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The status of Religious Education in general and in Islamic Education in specific differs in German-speaking countries and especially in federal states of each country. While there is no denominational religious education in many German states and only few federal states established Islamic Religious Education in Germany the Austrian case is considered exemplary because Islamic Religious Education has been established in 1982/83 in Austria and Islam was recognized officially by law.

After the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) were published in 2000 a lot of discussions concerning the quality of education were sparked. That was one of the reasons for the disastrous outcome, which caused this tremendous damage to education in general, and religious education in specific. Thus the input-oriented approaches and curriculums turned into a more outcome-oriented approach. In addition, a general debate sparked about the justification of religious education in modern societies.

Several research projects concerning an output-oriented education were funded in Germany. In times of 'evidence-based policy making', research and surveys plays significant role in shaping and implementing educational reforms. Moreover universities and different institutions carry out projects concerning the development of educational standards and teachers are trained to implement these standards at schools.

Educational standards define the abilities the students must be able to show in each subject. These standards are already defined and developed for several subjects (Math, Languages, Sciences). Therefore the students have to generate certain skills and competences, which are also defined for each age cohort. The federal state Baden-Württemberg is working first with educational standards in Islamic Religious Education at state schools whereas in Austria an interdisciplinary research project of the University of Vienna is probably going to start in spring 2011 that aims to develop educational standards for several denominations. This paper will focus on the ongoing discussion in German speaking countries that concern the development of educational standards: In general concerns for religious' education and specifically Islamic Education.

Key words: Islamic Religious Education (IRE), Competences, Educational Standards

Islamic Education in Europe & North America: old and new developments

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Islamic education in Western societies is witnessing unprecedented growth and 'success' but also many challenges. Successes include the sheer number of Islamic schools to have been established in recent years. In both Britain and North America in particular, the number of Islamic schools has roughly doubled since 2000. More persons than ever before are involved in establishing Islamic schools – both full time and part time – and maintaining them. Meanwhile, growth of Islamic schools on the European continent has stagnated; a number of schools have been closed down. Several challenges in particular emerge, including mainstreaming pressures and staff recruitment and retention. The second is a nascent interest in Islamic homeschooling. To illustrate the latter of these, the author examines the present situation of roughly one hundred orthodox Muslim parents who are petitioning authorities for permission to homeschool in the Netherlands, a country where homeschooling barely exists.

Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society: Substance and Objectives

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Muslims are living in pluralistic societies either in Muslim-majority countries or in the West. It is critical then to address the issue of the substance of what is taught. What is Islamic in what we call 'Islamic Education'? How do we deal with sciences, human sciences and the broad field of 'secular sciences'? Is there an Islamic way to deal with the diversity of spiritualities and religion? To get a sense of the nature of the potential responses to these complex questions it appears crucial to tackle the central issue of the objectives of contemporary Islamic Education. What are the priorities and the goals helping the learner to be knowledgeable, ethically aware, autonomous and committed as a human being as well as a citizen.

Curricular Reforms in Pakistani Madrasas: The Voices From Within

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The post 9/11 scenario has created an increased interest in Islamic education in general and in Pakistani *madrasas* in particular. An enormous amount of literature has continuously been produced concerning all aspects of these institutions. Most of this literature, however, is not only based on the emotional environment prevailed after these unfortunate events but also a continuation of the 'capitalist' approach of the former writers on the subject. *Madrasa* education, henceforth, is claimed to be responsible for the inculcation of hate and irrationality in Islamist terrorists. The reforms suggested are more or less on the same lines by including secular subjects in the curriculum to prepare the graduates of these institutions for the 'job market'. What is widely ignored in all this process is the centuries old 'ideational background' and core purposes of these institutions. Thus for *ulama* the reform suggestions are in total contrast with the 'ideational background' of *madrasas* and are therefore faced

with severe resistance. Additionally, the reforms suggested by *ulama* themselves even well before the 9/11 incidents did not seem to get wider attention in the academic literature. Hereinafter, this paper questions the relevance and applicability of current reforms suggested by modern scholars. The paper argues that how and why the reforms suggested by *ulama* may have more usefulness and legitimacy. This paper adopts the reform suggestions by two prominent Pakistani *ulama*, Muhammad Yousuf Banuri (1908-1977) and Muhammad Taqi Usmani (born 1943), and analyse their approaches to the reforms to see if they are more relevant and applicable than the ones propagated by the modern scholars.

Islamic Education in non-Islamic State Schools: The Danish Case

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In the Muslim world, the religious education of children is normally a standard part of children's education, and follows local Islamic norms. In some European countries, confessional education is organized by the state, so that Christians receive Christian education, Muslims receive Muslim education, and so on. In Denmark, however, religious education is in effect almost compulsory, and teaches Muslim children—along with other children—Christianity from a Danish Protestant perspective, with some classes covering Islam, again from a rather Danish perspective.

This paper examines the political, legal and regulatory framework within which religious education is delivered in Denmark, discusses the emphases that are revealed by regulations and suggestions for lessons provided by the Ministry of Education. It closes with a consideration of the issues raised, both for the European conception of secularism and for Muslims raised in countries such as Denmark.

Children's Literature: Effective Means of Islamic Education

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Islamic education, very similar to other types of education in our modern world, has undergone significant changes during the past few years. The growing interest in internalizing Islamic principals has intermingled with the quick pace of life and this has given birth to the emergence of various ways to teach Islamic values. Since outside pressure such as restrictions imposed on children by educational authorities and institutions have proved to be a means of creating hatred towards religious codes in them and to have a destructive function, majority of scholars and educators have started to benefit from other methods to motivate children to follow Islamic teachings. The present paper firstly, focuses on major online literature, magazines, and book sources which have become available to the children aged 7-11 in Iran, aiming at inviting children to Islamic codes. Next, these sources are examined based on academic criteria to judge their degree of being considered as a part of 'children's literature', and finally, there is a field study on a population of 140 randomly-selected children from different classes of society to measure the type of literature has been the most effective one(s). The finding of the research can benefit academic authorities to

invest more in the area which is to have the most effective influence in teaching Islamic doctrines to primary school children.

Reforming Madrasah Curriculum in an Era of Globalisation: The Singapore Case

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For madrasah reforms to be effective and sustainable in an era of globalisation, they need to be underpinned by an Islamic discourse that provides a religious basis and integrated framework. This paper presents the research findings based on fieldwork conducted in a madrasah in Singapore from 2007 to 2011. This paper begins by discussing the main Muslim responses to the phenomenon of globalisation, followed by an examination of key curricular reforms in a madrasah in Singapore. The paper highlights two main findings: firstly, the curricular changes in the madrasah are in alignment with the priorities of the modern state educational system; secondly, these changes are grounded in an Islamic discourse that is conceptualised, articulated and accepted by Muslims living in a modern, global and plural society under a secular state.

Understanding Current Curriculum Models of Islamic Schools in the West

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This paper traces the development and growth of Islamic schooling in North America and Europe with particular focus on the curriculum models adopted and developed. The co-authors, both of whom have administered, conducted in-service training and/or researched the needs of full-time Islamic day schools, attempt to raise constructive criticisms of the state of Islamic school curricula to foster further reflection and development. The paper first outlines the process and influences that have shaped the curriculum models that currently exist in Islamic schools. The overview then shifts to a necessary theoretical analysis of how aims of education are often diverted by conventional trends in curriculum. Both the overview and theoretical framework established help situate four case studies of alternatives for integrated faith-centered curriculum development.

The challenge for most curriculum frameworks within western Islamic schooling is the ability to straddle between conventional practices that are informed by a secular worldview and developing frameworks that are authentically grounded in an Islamic philosophy of education or an Islamic worldview. Developing curricula in the absence of an Islamic worldview has frequently led to superficial attempts imparting disconnected information about Islam, its history, and beliefs and practices.

The analysis of the four case studies provides a unique contribution to the field. Since the 1970s, there have been attempts to develop curriculum for Islamic schools. These curricula fall under one of three overarching categories: 1. to impart rudiments of faith within a single Islamic studies course; 2. to integrate Islamic teachings and Muslim contributions across

existing secular curriculum; 3. most recently, to design curriculum from an Islamic worldview while meeting state-based learning expectations. Each of these frameworks exhibit specific influences within contemporary curriculum theory. In this paper we unpack what those influences are and question the effectiveness and authenticity of each approach in imparting an Islamic education.

Constructing the State-Society Distinction: Islamic Education Curriculum Conflicts in Morocco

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In 2003, suicide bombers killed 33 people and wounded hundreds more in Casablanca, Morocco. As a result, the monarchy announced a restructuring of the religious ministries which, among other reforms, involved the creation of a new Islamic education curriculum. Following the announcement of these changes, a conflict ensued between the Ministry of Education charged with crafting and implementing the new curriculum, other bureaucrats such as educators and education inspectors and non-state actors such as religious leaders and leaders of political parties. In this paper, I examine the relationship between state and society in Morocco, as exemplified by this conflict, with particular emphasis on the cleavages both within the state and between state and society made salient by the curriculum reform. Through interviews and archival data, I provide a case study of how this policy, of particular importance to conceptions of national identity, was formed through competition and negotiation between important groups.

I address two assumptions in the paper, one prevalent in the study of religion and politics, and one from the literature on the state. In American political science, the emphasis is usually on religion's ability to influence politics. In this paper, I treat the relationship between religion and politics, or to be more specific, between religious leaders and state bureaucrats, as exactly that, a relationship, where interaction and influence flows in both directions. Secondly, much of the literature on the state assumes a division with society. I treat the division between state and society as an empirical question. This paper thus makes two important theoretical contributions; it examines the relationships between religious and political actors, leaving room in the analysis for actors from different constituencies to influence one another, while at the same time, questioning the categorization of these actors into different spheres, that of 'state' or 'society'.

Pedagogies of the Possible: Re-examining Educational Practice and Value within the Madrasa and the University

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The madrasa as a social institution is often misunderstood as being characterised as a monolithic and archaic educational system (Nadawi, 2003). Studies on the madrasa system thus far have analysed the internally focussed and unvarying nature of their curriculum, concluding that their contributions to current modern and dynamic educational approaches

are at best accidental and at worst deleterious. One of the problems associated with this approach has been a tendency to view the madrasa as a singular entity rather than as a set of institutions composed of diverse aspirations and operations. Arguing that madrasas may yet have much to offer wider educational discourse, this paper examines the madrasa as a node in the educational matrix, counterpoised with the modern research University in order to evaluate their respective 'epistemological integrities' as institutions. I argue that the madrasa system(s) provides a purview into the 'authentic pedagogies' postulated by the Critical Tradition within the sociology of education. Referring to the manner in which knowledge is transmitted into curricula, authentic pedagogies are 'meta-knowledge' narratives creating internally orientated yet outward focussed institutions allowing for the assimilation of new 'forms' of knowledges. Examining the UK Madrasa system as an ideal type, this paper argues for a socio-philosophical analysis of the increasing importance of this system to the broader educational discourse within the UK. This is attempted by firstly focussing on the contemporary literature dealing with the University's difficulty in creating authentic 'meta-knowledge' narratives for itself, spawning the 'crisis literature' within educational studies. Using case study data from madrasas in the UK this paper focusses on their substantive approaches to curricula, society, religion and the National Curriculum, evaluating their academic success. Viewed from an ontological perspective with 'knowledge' at its centre, we are able to provide new insight into ongoing debates such as the 'islamisation of knowledge', cultural pluralism, democratic education and the role of the madrasa in modern society.