

Majelis Pendidikan Daerah  
Aceh

ISSN: 1693 – 7775

Jurnal Pencerahan  
Volume 8, Nomor 1, 2014  
Halaman 67-72

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## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses descriptively the instructional leadership from an Islamic perspective. It also attempts to review the literature pertinent to the instructional leadership and to discuss the concepts and roles of the principal as an instructional leader and their tasks or dimensions. The effective instructional education characteristics comprises the education through good example, education through norms, education through advise and counselling, education through observation and supervision and education through rewards and punishment also discussed in the paper. The paper identified that the leadership model of Mohamad Johdi and Bakare (2009) is an applicable model of Islamic instructional LEADERSHIP (L-Leader, E-Educational, A-Aim, D-Delivery, E-Empowerment, R-Robust, S-Style, H-Humble, P-Piety), and I-Intelligent. The leader with the *Imam* concept is the one who is supposed to be obeyed by the followers.

**Key Words:** Islamic Education, Instructional Leadership, Islamic Leadership, Imam as Leader.

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### INTRODUCTION

Previous studies on instructional leadership have emphasized some dimensions and characteristics that should be possessed by each principal to show that they act as instructional leaders within their schools. All of these characteristics are more concerned with academic improvement. Therefore, some characteristics of instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective need to be addressed as an alternative to or in support of the previous characteristics of instructional leadership.

Education in Islam (*ta'dib*, disciplining; some still prefer *tarbiyah*, upbringing) is *adab* (proper way or virtue), progressively instilled in man. *Adab* refers to the discipline of body, mind, and spirit. It endows the possessor with the knowledge of the proper places of things or objects (*hikmah*) in the scheme of Creation and subsequently to act in a just manner (*`adl*) (Rosnani, 2004).

Al Attas (1990) defines education as the progressive instilling of the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgment of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence of humanity. Therefore, the primary goal of education is to lead man to recognize and acknowledge his Creator. This acknowledgment is manifested in obedience and adherence to His commandments. In other words, the primary goal of Islamic education is to produce the good being, who, by developing all his/her potentials accordingly, ensures himself or herself to be the servant (*`abd*) and the vicegerent (*khalifah*) of Allah who



has undertaken the *amanah* (trust) of maintaining prosperity on earth.

To this effect, education is designed to produce the God-fearing (*taqwa*) servant of Allah who is aware of his individual vertical relations with Allah (*hablun min Allah*) and his social horizontal relations with his fellow man (*hablun min al-nas*). Thus, in effect the primary goals of education include spiritual, moral, social, intellectual, and physical development with specific goals. There is no conflict between societal and individual aims because there is unity of purpose (Rosnani, 2004).

In enforcing the importance of education, Allah Almighty has emphasized in the Holy Quran in the first revelation (*wahy*) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in Surah al-Alaq: 1-5:

*“Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Read! And thy Lord is most bountiful. He Who taught (The use of) the Pen. Taught man that which he knew not”* (Surah al-‘Alaq 96:1-5)

It is clear that Allah Almighty in these verses commands man to read which is the important pre-requisite to gain the knowledge. The scholars in education declare that reading is the best step in the learning process because it involves the identification of learning materials, spiritual, memory, thinking focus and psychology (Che Noraini, 2008).

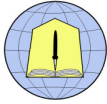
The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had shown many wise decisions in terms of improving Muslim knowledge as was seen in the battle of *Badr* when the Prophet Muhammad made a decision regarding the prisoners of *Quraish* by asking each of them to teach seven Muslim children. It is proven how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had implemented instructional leadership at the early of Islam.

In other words, the Prophet received the divine guidance and was its exemplar and practitioner *par excellence*. For this reason, the Prophet himself was the best enunciator and explicator of the Quran. Therefore, the best commentary on the Prophet's life is the Quran itself. When asked about his character, Aishah, the Prophet's wife, said, *"His character was the Qur'an"* (Muslim as cited in Che Noraini, 2008: 67). Addressing the Prophet, Allah Almighty says *“And surely you (stand) on an exalted standard of character”* (Surah al-Qalam 68: 4).

In fact, the Quran and its teachings cannot be entirely understood and practically adhered to apart from the Sunnah of the Prophet. The reason is that the Prophet's exemplary life was the Quran's realization in human life. Therefore, for all practical purposes, the scope of the Sunnah is as it was contiguous with that of the Quran. Allah Almighty also says in Surah al-Ahzab (33): 21, *“Indeed you have in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day and who engages much in the praise of Allah”*.

This means that the believers must take the Prophet as their role model in all spheres of life. Allah Almighty has decreed that the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) should necessarily serve as a practical demonstration of the precepts laid down in the Holy Quran. In this respect, Allah Almighty says in Surah al-Hashr (59): 7, *“And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it. And whatsoever he forbids, abstain (from it). And keep your duty to Allah, for Allah is strict in punishment”*.

These are all very powerful words from Allah SWT about the norm set by the Prophet as the expression of Allah's own will. Anyone who has studied the Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) can see how this Quran groomed the Prophet step by step until he became not only the



spiritual leader of his people and the whole of humanity but also the temporal head of a new educational system particularly in terms of educational leadership.

According Ahmad Zabidi and Fathiah (2006), there are five responsibilities in instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective:

- a. Education through good example
- b. Education through norms
- c. Education through advice and counselling
- d. Education through observation and supervision
- e. Education through reward and punishment

These five approaches are appropriate to improve the effectiveness of instructional leadership, and at the same time, these will help to shape good morals of students. Islam does not only focuses on academic achievement, but it also focuses on a more important aspect of student development which is moral development.

One of the rights of children, according to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), is the rights for a proper education as cited in Asmaa` (2003: 2).

*Educate your children (addibuauladikum) in possessing three qualities: love of your Prophet (hubbnabiyikum), love of his family (hubbahlbaitihi) and the Quranic recitation (qiraat al-Quran)*(Hadith narrated by al-Thabrani)

*Ta'dib*, in the framework of al-Ghazali, is a process of disciplining the physical and spiritual aspects of man which involves the acquisition of knowledge and the transformation of the personality, in order to possess good character traits (*husnal-khuluq*). Character formation thus becomes the focal point of Islamic education particularly in the early years, due to the child's imitative nature and his immaturity in reasoning (Asmaa', 2003).

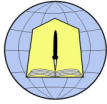
The five responsibilities in instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective will be discussed here:

### ***1. Education through Good Example***

The first dimension of instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective is education through good example. Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1981) emphasized that education through good example means that students will imitate what the principal does. In Islam, a good example will have a strong influence on education and individual moral development, especially among children and teenagers. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a person who established a good example for his *Ummah* as was mentioned in Surah al-Ahzab: 21.

Therefore, Hafidhuddin and Tanjung (2006) noted that there are at least four abilities that an Islamic leader must have:

- a. Ability to motivate subordinates;
- b. Ability to give responsibility to subordinates according to the skill of each or the ability to put subordinates in the right place;



- c. Ability to give reward. It does not necessarily need to be in the form of property or material, but may also be in the form of appreciation or whatever is possible for the purpose of increasing the spirit and motivation of subordinates;
- d. Ability to establish a good example. It will not be effective if one directs others to do something while one is not doing it oneself. This has, indeed, been pointed out in al-Quran in Surah Al-Baqarah: 44; and
- e. Enjoin you *al-Birr (piety and righteousness and every act of obedience to Allah) on the people and you forget yourself, while you recite the scripture! Have you then no sense?* (Surah al-Baqarah: 44).

## **2. Education through Norms**

The second characteristic of instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective is education through norms. According to Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1981), education through norms means man is conceived to be intrinsically good by nature (*fitrah*). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said as cited in Ghazali (1900):

*“Every child is born endowed with the sound natural disposition (al-fitrah), it is only his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian”* (Hadith narrated by Muttafaq 'Alaih).

The above hadith is very important in determining two factors: nature and nurture that influence the formation of character (Asmaa', 2003). Meanwhile, the principal who practises instructional leadership from the Islamic point of view which stresses the fundamentals of *Tawhid*, obedience to Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), will create a student as the Perfect Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) who obeys all the commands of Allah and avoids all His prohibitions. Teachers and students will follow this culture or norm, which ultimately will create a positive school climate and culture which improves student performance and achievement.

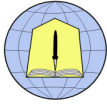
## **3. Education through Advise and Counselling**

The third characteristic of instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective is education through advice and counselling. According to Nasih Ulwan (1981), al-Quran has emphasized that advice has a big impact on individual personality. Allah says in Surah Adz-Dzariyat (51): 55, *“And continue to remind, for surely the reminder profits the believers”*.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace is upon him) has stated the duty of advice and remembrance in his hadiths as cited in Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1981: 9):

*The Deen (religion) is advice. They asked, to who O Prophet (peace be upon him)? He (peace be upon him) said, to Allah ((peace be upon him)), His Book, His Prophet (peace be upon him), to the Leaders of the Muslims and to the Muslims in general”* (Hadith narrated by Muslim).

Therefore, the principal as an instructional leader is responsible to advise and guide teachers and



students in order for them to work and study effectively.

#### **4. Education through Observation and Supervision**

The fourth characteristic of instructional leadership from the Islamic perspective is education through observation and supervision. Al-Qabisi in Abdullah al-Amin (1994) asked teachers as well as principals to be always sensitive and wise while performing instructional practices. Teachers will follow their principals in observing their students in order to supervise their behaviour during the teaching process. Al-Qabisi (cited in Abdullah al-Amin, 1994) also advised teachers to isolate naughty students to prevent their behaviour from influencing other students, particularly moral behaviour.

Both observation and supervision benefit students in terms of academic achievement and also moral development. Ibnu Khaldun (as cited in Abdullah al-Amin, 1994) stated that it is a duty of the principal and teachers to observe students' preparation to follow the teaching and learning process. The purpose of this observation is to adjust and adapt teaching methods to students' abilities.

#### **5. Education through Reward and Punishment**

In motivating students, there is need to consider the concept of reward and punishment. In Islam, there is provision for *bashir* (the bringer of glad tidings) and *nadzir* (the warner) which equate with reward and punishment. These two cannot be separated as Allah Almighty has mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah: 119, regarding the mission of sending the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). “*We have sent you (Prophet Muhammad) forth with the truth, a giver of glad tidings, and a giver of warning. You shall not be questioned about the companions of Hell*”.

Meanwhile, these two types of education had been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself. However, according to Al-Qabasi (as cited in Abdullah al-Amin, 1994), punishment is the last warning to be taken by the principal and teachers after other types such as advice and so on in order to avoid any bad perceptions from parents, the students themselves and society in general.

There are many other types, approaches, strategies and methods of teaching such as *halaqah*, lectures, demonstration and storytelling, that have been used by the Prophet Muhammad SAW to obtain a generation of unique, God-conscious individuals and some proposition of how to obtain optimum results in learning (Che Noraini, 2008).

### **LEADERSHIP FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

This paper has attempted to review the literature pertinent to instructional leadership. It traced the concepts and the roles of the principal as an instructional leader and the tasks or dimensions of an instructional leader. The tasks of instructional leadership mainly related to three major dimensions, i.e., defining the mission, managing the instructional programme, and promoting the school climate. Principals who are instructional leaders help to create the excitement, provide the reinforcement and channel the energy of students and teachers in terms of productivity. These principals bring about an effective school and improve student performance and achievement.

Finally, this study would like to suggest a LEADERSHIP model of Mohamad Johdi and Bakare's (2009) as an applicable model of Islamic instructional leadership. This means: **L**-Leader, **E**-Educational, **A**-Aim, **D**-



Delivery, E-Empowerment, **R**-Robust, **S**-Style, **H**-Humble, **P**-Piety, and **I**-Intelligent. The leader with the Imam concept would be always respected and obeyed by the followers. The nature of education or truth is sacred and cuts across disciplines with reality, facts. The aim as the destination of the institution has to be clearly outlined, such as the International Islamic University Malaysia's vision and mission, i.e., IIICEs or TRIPLE ICE acronym of *Integration, Islamization, Internationalization, and Comprehensive Excellence*. The delivery of subject matter with an attractive methodology is vital for the eager acceptance of knowledge by the students as the immediate clients. The empowerment of rules, regulations, and certification should not be tolerated in order to achieve the desired quality. It is the leader's choice to impose the effective style such as autocratic, democratic, laissez faire, dictatorial, charismatic, transformational and instructional.

## CONCLUSION

Instructional leadership has been widely discussed in the Islamic sources of knowledge, the Holy Qur'an and Hadith and has been practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). A leader (headmaster) of school must provide instruction based on the Islamic practices and norms. In providing instruction, a successful leader must be humble to Allah Almighty or *zuhud* who would be respected and appreciated by their followers and colleagues. Leaders must be smart, intelligent and having a good character. The fundamental accountability of a leader is to bring goodness and prevent evil that makes the individual a pious person (*muttaqin*) who will be absolutely assisted by Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* in the world and hereafter along the road to true success.

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