

A Reflection in American Muslim Character Education: A Literature Review and Future Prospect

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Abstract

This article highlight the background and the growth of American Muslim with their need of Character Education. As the super power nation, American culture of education rest on secular and multicultural social system and society. Become the minority, the growth of muslim in American may face several constraint as prejudice and other, then they began predicted to be alienated – especially after 9/11. But I analyze the good action and morality performed by several american muslim public figures which attract and spread the peace as very message of Islam. This literature review seek the publications and works published concerning the Islam and Character Education in America. I also reflect on several facts with al-Attas perspective on Islamization with comparing its phenomena in Indonesian sense of character education. This study found the good prospect of educational institution and character education activities, beside the increase of private islamic schools caused by the culture of Western-American society.

Key words: *American Muslim, Character Education, American Islam, Islamic Education*

Introduction

The educational institution in America closely resembles our country in the importance of character education. But their beginning may not be as lucky as we experience in Indonesia. The emergence of Islamic Education in that country began after the end of slavery in America.¹ Avoiding the debates about how and when the arrival of Islam in Indonesia,² I prefer to believe in al-Attas'

¹ Muhammad Fraser-Rahim, *America's Other Muslims: Imam WD Mohammed, Islamic Reform, and the Making of American Islam* (Lexington Books, 2020), 11–12.

² Gerardus Willebrordus Joannes Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde*, no. 4de Afl (1968): 433–59.

theory those who provided a linguistic analysis concerning the use of Malay-pegon Arabic and its closest relationship with modern Indonesian language. I also agree with such proof, because Malay-Pegon Arabic was practiced in old Indonesian-pesantren traditions, especially to educate the santri's character.³

But, can we generalize that in an American context? Based on facts above, quoting al-Attas' theory of islamization of language; I found in Fraser-Rahim statements about how the spreading of Islam in American context are explained. Fraser also quoting al-Faruqi's *Toward Islamic English* which elaborate the proper use of English without desacralizing the values and religion in Islamic character education context.⁴ I also found that the process of developing Islamic Education in American context between 1930-1990s referring to the curriculum of that school established the inculcation of Islamic values in its own language (Arab), and also used it in daily English communication activities.⁵

I may challenge the hypothesis that Islamization was only converting mankind to Muslim, but the details may be needed: do Islamic language play a role in developing that educational institution? What are the constraints of educational institutions and communities in America? Can the first of two factors contribute to predicting the future prospect of Islamic Education in America? Here I propose a conceptual approach to understanding the very idea of American Islamic Education with some reflection of Indonesian Islamic Education, especially arguing the pattern of outcome relating to character education.

The formation of certain characters must start from the family. Several studies stated that the family is the initial foundation for a child's character to develop and be integrated into the school and

³ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, "Traditional Islamic Education in the Malay Archipelago: Its Contribution to the Integration of the Malay World," *Indonesia Circle* 19, no. 53 (1990): 19-34; Moh Ashif Fuadi, "Islamization and the Transition of Power in Nusantara According to Kiai Abul Fadhol's Aḥlā al-Musāmarah," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 16, no. 1 (2021): 80-104.

⁴ Fraser-Rahim, *America's Other Muslims: Imam WD Mohammed, Islamic Reform, and the Making of American Islam*, ix.

⁵ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Adair T Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1987), 3,8,30, 41-43, 48, 65-66; Caroline Seymour-Jorn, "Arabic Language Learning among Arab Immigrants in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: A Study of Attitudes and Motivations," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2004): 109-22.

community environment.⁶ According to him the family is a place where children grow and develop optimally, therefore parents must be able to be the main profile in how children can imitate their parents' behavior at home. A child's basic routine from waking up to going back to sleep depends entirely on the role and function of the family. In short, the family is the main miniature of a country. A nation that has shown a certain character must have its government provide understanding and implementation of how to educate children's character in their homes. Parents at home are the first agents who can influence children's socialization as well as being a medium for forming their morals and character. Here I find that the parents may infuse their children with proper language to understand and communicate with others. Besides the fact, that several anti-mainstream scholars are criticizing the implementation of character education in that region; by calling them an instant generation equal with drive-thru in Mc Donald.⁷

Moreover, parents play a pivotal role in molding their children's character by serving as positive role models, fostering a moral environment at home, guiding the formation of conscience and habits, teaching effective decision-making, exemplifying discipline and wisdom, mediating conflicts impartially, providing avenues for altruistic acts, and promoting involvement in religious practices.⁸ Thomas Lickona emphasizes the necessity of recognizing children as individuals undergoing character development, a sentiment echoed by Stenson in his publication, *A Handbook of Parental Leadership*. Lickona urges parents to consistently exhibit virtuous conduct to positively influence their children.⁹ Additionally, based on my previous studies the importance of parental influence on children's thoughts and behaviors in character education. Employing logical and consistent disciplinary approaches aids in fostering children's potential and cultivating sound decision-making abilities, all while maintaining a nurturing environment filled with parental affection. It is vital for

⁶ Imam Tabroni and Sania Rahmania, "Implementation of Akhlaqul Karimah Through Islamic Religious Education Approach In Early Children," *East Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 1, no. 1 SE-Articles (February 10, 2022): 33–40, <https://doi.org/10.54259/eajmr.v1i1.454>.

⁷ Suzanne S Hudd, "Character Education in Contemporary America: McMorals?," *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* 8, no. 2 (2004): 113–24.

⁸ Imam Tabroni and Rahmania, "Implementation of Akhlaqul Karimah Through Islamic Religious Education Approach In Early Children."

⁹ Thomas Lickona, *Character Matters: How to Help Our Children Develop Good Judgment, Integrity, and Other Essential Virtues* (Simon and Schuster, 2004), 34, 36, 48, 59.

children to feel emotionally supported by their parents during various challenges, including illness, academic hurdles, and personal struggles.

I see that these aspects were to be implemented in both America and Indonesia. I am currently back to my focus about how far the 'Islamic Language' of Islamic key concept became important in children's character education and also its constraint in the process of developing educational institutions. But I also examine the external factors such as scientific developments in both countries as the very factors of development after the infusion of Islamic teaching. Considering about this reflection on Islamic Education theme, I also add several comparative aspect with Indonesian sense of Islamic Character Education.

Historical Aspect

The very beginning of Islamic Children's Education marked the emergence of African-Islamic Community in Detroit in the early 1930s. A pivotal moment occurred in 1932 when a group of African Americans in Detroit, led by Elijah Muhammad, established the University of Islam School. This institution aimed to instill pride and resilience in African American youth, countering the pervasive segregation and discrimination of the time. Through teachings rooted in Islam, students were encouraged to embrace self-reliance and community upliftment. This educational legacy attracted notable figures like Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X, shaping their paths towards leadership and social change.¹⁰

The legacy continued into the modern era under the leadership of Imam Warithudeen Mohammed, who integrated the community into mainstream Islam. Renaming the schools after his mother, Clara Muhammad, symbolized a shift towards inclusivity and broader moral education.¹¹ Despite facing ongoing challenges, including the rise of hate groups and systemic inequalities, the Clara Muhammad Schools remain steadfast in their mission. By nurturing critical thinking and moral consciousness, they empower students to strive for excellence

¹⁰ Hakim M Rashid and Zakiyyah Muhammad, "The Sister Clara Muhammad Schools: Pioneers in the Development of Islamic Education in America," *The Journal of Negro Education* 61, no. 2 (1992): 178–85; Claude Andrew Clegg III, "Rebuilding the Nation: The Life and Work of Elijah Muhammad, 1946–1954," *The Black Scholar* 26, no. 3–4 (1996): 49–59.

¹¹ Warith Deen Muhammad, "The Other Nation of Islam Story: Some Questions Answered," *Fellowship* 60, no. 5–6 (1994): 9.

and contribute positively to society.

Imam Warithudeen Mohammed's vision extends beyond religious boundaries, emphasizing the universal quest for moral enlightenment.¹² The curriculum, inspired by the Quran's teachings, encourages students to explore the wonders of creation and cultivate empathy and understanding towards others.¹³ This holistic approach to education not only equips students with academic knowledge but also instills values essential for building harmonious communities. In a world fraught with division and injustice, the Clara Muhammad Schools stand as beacons of hope, nurturing the potential for human excellence in every child.¹⁴

African Muslims in America, during the slavery, were conspicuous not only for their presence but also for their literacy, a necessity in Islam as followers are required to read the Quran. This proficiency was attained through schooling and, for the more educated individuals, through local or overseas institutions of higher education.¹⁵ This distinction distinguished them from non-Muslim Africans and many illiterate Americans, both enslaved and free. An example of this emphasis on education is evident in an 1805 runaway notice, where a slaveholder described a 30-year-old recent arrival as a man "of serious demeanor who is proficient in writing the Arabic language."¹⁶

In contrast to autobiographies penned by formerly enslaved individuals, such as Africans like Olaudah Equiano, the Muslims were writing primarily for their own community rather than for a Western audience¹⁷ In the United States, Bilali composed a 13-page manuscript, a segment of a work by the 10th-century Tunisian scholar Ibn Abu Zayd al-Qairawani. Notably, this manuscript was inscribed on paper manufactured in Italy for the North African market, prompting

¹² Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Indiana University Press, 2003), 152, 226, 232, 235.

¹³ Fraser-Rahim, *America's Other Muslims: Imam WD Mohammed, Islamic Reform, and the Making of American Islam*, 20.

¹⁴ Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 226–27.

¹⁵ C Eric Lincoln, "The Muslim Mission in the Context of American Social History," in *African-American Religion* (Routledge, 2013), 278–94.

¹⁶ Lincoln.

¹⁷ Roland L Williams Jr, *African American Autobiography and the Quest for Freedom* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2000), 9, 18, 54, 99; Jerome S. Handler, "Survivors of the Middle Passage: Life Histories of Enslaved Africans in British America," *Slavery and Abolition* 23, no. 1 (2002): 25–56.

intriguing inquiries into how he obtained it.¹⁸ Salih Bilali, as noted by his owner, “was able to read Arabic and possessed a Quran (though I have not personally seen it) in that language, yet he was not adept at writing it.” Similarly, Bilali, who diligently maintained all plantation records in Arabic, was laid to rest with his Quran and a prayer rug crafted from sheepskin. These casual references to Qurans on distant plantations prompt speculation about their origins. It is conceivable that, like other Quran memorizers in the Americas, they transcribed them themselves.¹⁹ Based on several historical facts, I sum up some aspects of how the strong character of African Muslims became a very important factor in developing educational institutions based on Islamic literacy and Islamic family concept in facing the American culture.

In subsequent times, the Sister Clara Schools evolved and embraced American culture without losing their Islamic identity. Interestingly, it was precisely through the democratic ethos of America that Islam flourished, especially in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery as I mentioned earlier.²⁰ Furthermore, the role of women also contributes to advancing the educational aspect - in line with the culture of gender equality in America - which ultimately attracts supporters from across races, ethnicities, and religions. This demonstrates the similarity of the role of Muslim mothers in various countries, both majority and minority Muslim populations.²¹ Such practices appear to be appreciable as a form of social justice upheld through the democratic culture in America. The notion that freedom, though often perceived negatively within the majority Muslim community, actually fosters the educational institutions in America.²²

Method

¹⁸ Sylviane A. Diouf, “Muslims in the Americas: The First 500 Years,” *Pennsylvania Legacies* 18, no. 1 (2018): 6–11.

¹⁹ Edward E. Curtis IV, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 57–58.

²⁰ Amaarah DeCuir, “Islamic Antiracist School Leadership,” in *Islamic-Based Educational Leadership, Administration and Management* (Routledge, 2023), 89–104.

²¹ Chernoh M. Sesay Jr, “Gender, Power, and Religion: Orientations of the Self in African America and the Black Diaspora,” *Journal of Women’s History* 32, no. 1 (2020): 156–62.

²² Miriam D. Ezzani et al., “Islamic School Leadership and Social Justice: An International Review of the Literature,” *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 26, no. 5 (2023): 745–77.

Using a carrot website (<https://search.carrot2.org>) for data search and clustering, I define a keyword such: 'islamic character education', 'islamic education', and 'american muslim' where i entry the words: islamic character education america. But the result may lead us to use several keywords to adapt it in my research, here are the result:

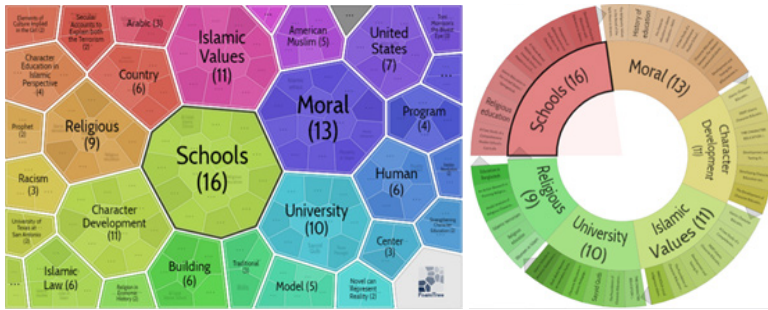


Figure 1 and 2: Carrot’s classification of keywords defined in search bar.

Carrot provides two modeling of classification: treemap or pie-chart. After gaining the mapping of previous literature, I would like to analyze it with al-Attas perspective on Islamization which emphasizes the very idea of ‘islamization of language’ as the first step, and the ‘islamization of worldview’. To enrich the discussion, I also reflect on Indonesian phenomena of islam, islamization, and character education performed here.

Character Education in America

Parents often strive to instill religious virtues in their children, motivating them to embrace a spiritual outlook in their daily lives. Typically, mothers play a pivotal role in shaping this character.²³ Mothers provide guidance about a caring God who accompanies virtuous children, offer encouragement that all goals are attainable, attentively listen to their children, communicate effectively, allow freedom for children to chart their own paths and set goals in life, motivate them, foster habits that inspire, serve as consistent and positive role models, impart the value of perseverance, and encourage

²³ Benaouda Bensaid, “An Overview of Muslim Spiritual Parenting,” *Religions* 12, no. 12 (2021): 1057.

innovation.²⁴

The behavior of children's parents in US families is more likely to give them freedom to develop their interests. The function of parents is only to facilitate children's activities to get what they want. US parents are more likely to let their children be as creative as possible according to what they want.²⁵ During the process of forming a child's character, parents often take courses in developing their child's potential and consult with child development experts. This makes it easier for parents to find sources of information to support the development of their child's potential. If the consultant makes a recommendation to train their child to swim, then parents quickly give the child that opportunity.²⁶ This cycle has a positive impact on children to foster a sense of love. Lickona emphasized success at this stage. Children's understanding of their environment encourages motivation, love, and enthusiasm to develop their abilities.²⁷

The concept of behavior plays an important role in fostering a creative and innovative environment that can encourage children to continue to be creative about what they achieve. Parents' consistency in supporting and providing full facilities to their children increases their determination and strength to achieve what they aspire to. Demonstrations and mentorship through training expedite the development of character.²⁸ American families have long been proactive in grooming their children from an early age, nurturing their growth in daily life. Moreover, the economic, social, and cultural environments in the USA extensively foster children's development.²⁹

²⁴ Michael S. Merry, "Advocacy and Involvement: The Role of Parents in Western Islamic Schools," *Religious Education* 100, no. 4 (2005): 374–85; Faras Puji Azizah and Mona Aprilia, "Historical Studies: The Social Life Of Muslim Minorities In The United States," *Tanjak: Sejarah Dan Peradaban Islam* 4, no. 1 (2024): 13–24.

²⁵ Catina Miller and Brigitte Vittrup, "The Indirect Effects of Police Racial Bias on African American Families," *Journal of Family Issues* 41, no. 10 (2020): 1699–1722.

²⁶ Olivia N. Saracho, "Theories of Child Development and Their Impact on Early Childhood Education and Care," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 51, no. 1 (2023): 15–30.

²⁷ Mark A. Pike et al., "Character Development through the Curriculum: Teaching and Assessing the Understanding and Practice of Virtue," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 53, no. 4 (2021): 449–66.

²⁸ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Learning to Stand Alone: The Contemporary American Transition to Adulthood in Cultural and Historical Context," *Human Development* 41, no. 5–6 (1998): 295–315; Saracho, "Theories of Child Development and Their Impact on Early Childhood Education and Care."

²⁹ Pike et al., "Character Development through the Curriculum: Teaching and Assessing the Understanding and Practice of Virtue."

The country offers relatively robust character education policies for children within families. The role of parents, backed by strong economic support in a developed nation, coupled with the quality of education and the provision of environmental amenities and infrastructure in various regions, significantly bolsters and encourages the optimal formation of children's character.³⁰ American culture offers a platform for freedom of expression and the practice of customs distinct from those of other nations, including Indonesia.³¹ Unlike Indonesian counterparts, American parents typically refrain from offering guidance on relationships between genders based on formal contracts. Instead, in accordance with American tradition, they permit their children to engage in intimate relationships with the opposite sex, refrain from signaling prohibition of alcohol consumption, and other practices uncommon in Indonesia.³² This divergence forms the backdrop for the advancement of the United States as a superpower, excelling in science and technology yet displaying relative weakness in terms of human values.³³

CEP's Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education are the very standard of Character Education performed in America. There are several important aspects: 1) Promotes core ethical values and supportive performance values as the foundation of good character; 2) Defines "character" in a holistic manner, encompassing thinking, feeling, and behavior; 3) Implements a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive strategy for character development. 4) Fosters a caring school community; 5) Provides students with opportunities for moral action;

³⁰ Marieke Thurlings, Arnoud T. Evers, and Marjan Vermeulen, "Toward a Model of Explaining Teachers' Innovative Behavior: A Literature Review," *Review of Educational Research* 85, no. 3 (2015): 430–71; Matthew A. Hagler and Cyanea YS Poon, "Contextual Antecedents and Well-being Indicators Associated with Children's and Adolescents' Access to Supportive Nonparent Adults," *Journal of Community Psychology* 51, no. 8 (2023): 3328–47.

³¹ Jean Pfaelzer, Doris Friedensohn, and Deborah Rosenfelt, "Intersections: Global Feminisms, American Studies," *American Studies International* 38, no. 3 (2000): 6–15.

³² Douglas E. Foley, "Anthropological Studies of Schooling in Developing Countries: Some Recent Findings and Trends," *Comparative Education Review* 21, no. 2/3 (1977): 311–28; Udiana Puspa Dewi and M. Rizqi Arifuddin, "Communicating with the 'Uncultured': The Study of Conventional Norms in Indonesian Intercultural Communication Context," *The Journal of International Communication* 27, no. 2 (2021): 300–316; Arthur J. Todd et al., "Family and Character Education," *Religious Education* 24 (1929): 437.

³³ Bernard Berelson and Patricia J. Salter, "Majority and Minority Americans: An Analysis of Magazine Fiction," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1946): 168–90; Abdullah Sahin, "Islamic Education Within the Muslim Minority Context of Europe: Pedagogy, Politics, and Future Directions," in *Islamic Religious Education in Europe* (Routledge, 2021), 276–82.

6) Offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and aids their success; 7) Aims to nurture students’ self-motivation; 8) Engages the school staff as a learning and moral community that shares responsibility for character education and strives to uphold the same core values that guide student education; 9) Encourages shared moral leadership and sustained support for the character education initiative; 10) Involves families and community members as partners in the character-building process; 11) Evaluates the school’s character, the staff’s effectiveness as character educators, and the degree to which students exhibit good character.³⁴

That phenomena may be similarly performed by muslim society in America in their educational institutions. They also follow the nation’s regulation of educational institutions. The research conducted by Patricia Zahira Salahuddin find the grade and levels of the practice of character education in muslim schools in America.³⁵

Course Overview		Grade Levels	
3rd Grade	6th Grade	8th Grade	11 th Grade
God-Consciousness	Obedience	God-Consciousness	God-Consciousness
Truthfulness		Islamic ethics	Truthfulness
Steadfastness	Forgiveness		Steadfastness
Faith	Faith		Justice
Trust	Kindness		Kindness
Work ethics	Charity		Charity
Patience			Honesty
Respect			Caring

Note. Collected from Islamic studies curriculum

Figure 3: The Character Traits found in the Islamic Studies Curriculum Course Overview.

I also found the research conclusion about their difficulty after the 9/11 accident. The minority in America and Canada was under pressure

³⁴ Sufia Azmat and Leila H Shatara, “Practitioner’s Note The Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA): An Internationally Recognized Accrediting Agency,” *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 116–26.

³⁵ Patricia Zahirah Salahuddin, “Character Education in a Muslim School: A Case Study of a Comprehensive Muslim School’s Curricula” (Florida International University, 2011), 107.

by media and prejudice, especially relating with the growth of islamic schools numbers with their tremendous students. Hicham Tiflati concluded in his Western Islamic schools as institutions for preventing behavioral radicalization; that the islamic schools did not agree with the terrorism acts associated with muslim community in America - or Canada. Because the finding was vice versa about terrorism teachings which are also against islamic vision of humanity.³⁶ Nadeem A Memon in his dissertation observed that the muslim minority was reflecting the religious moderation in the US, because they also accept democracy and perform the good characteristics based on their belief in God. The output of their educational institution was also recognized by non-muslim community, as well a number of them become politicians, artists, and also work in the US government besides being teachers, educators, and volunteers in non-muslim society.³⁷ I conclude, by the culture of American education and society, the muslim minority still go with their religious identity and practice their faith, which are also gaining success in their career.

It may be a question: what is the very motivation of their students' parents who seem to need the development of a private muslim educational institution? Sufia Azmat and Leila H. Shatara concludes that the demand for Islamic schools arises from parents' desire to instill and reinforce their children's Muslim identity. These schools aim to meet this need by providing education within an Islamic framework. A recent study on why parents opt for Islamic schools revealed that a primary motivation was their wish to teach their children the basics of the Islamic faith. Equally significant was the parents' desire to preserve Islamic cultural heritage and give their children the opportunity to develop an American Muslim identity based on Islamic values.³⁸ We can conclude an intersection about the key to the success of children's character in US families depends on the social environment that has been formed into a community of scientific practitioners. Each family member has maturely developed empirical logic and human needs to get what they want.³⁹ This factor

³⁶ Hicham Tiflati, "Western Islamic Schools as Institutions for Preventing Behavioral Radicalization: The Case of Quebec," *Journal for Deradicalization* 6, no. 1 (2016): 180-205.

³⁷ Nadeem A. Memon, *A History of Islamic Schooling in North America: Mapping Growth and Evolution* (Routledge, 2019).

³⁸ Azmat and Shatara, "Practitioner's Note The Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA): An Internationally Recognized Accrediting Agency."

³⁹ Todd et al., "Family and Character Education"; Imam Tabroni et al., "Character

differentiates it from other countries such as Indonesia.

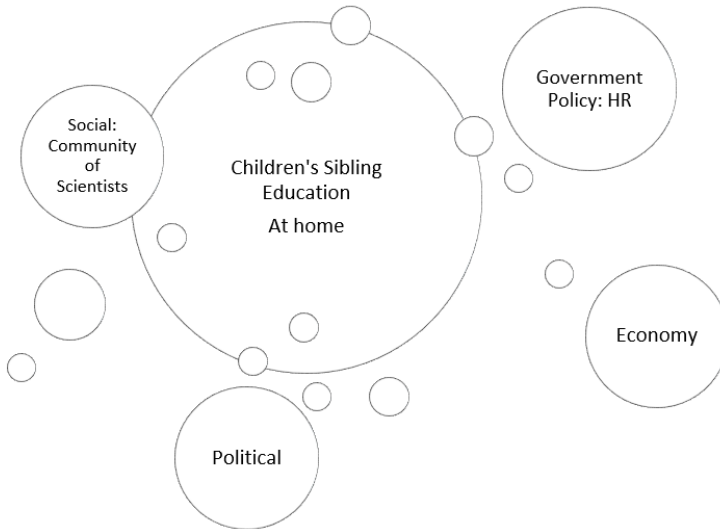


Figure 4: Children's Character Education Scheme in USA Families

It appears there is a paradigm shift regarding the meaning of character in America. In the pre-modern era, being considered 'of character' meant adhering to an education that emphasised politeness intertwined with Christian values. The colonial identity of that time was marked by white supremacy over black people and a social hierarchy dominated by nobility, kings, and the wealthy, who oppressed African populations.⁴⁰ In the American era, we witnessed a transitional phase where colonialism eventually reduced kingdoms to nation-states, paving the way for multiculturalism. Concurrently, secularism eroded the influence of religion and royalty, beginning with the separation of the powers of kings and popes.⁴¹ This shift continued with the decline of monarchies across Europe and Latin America, influenced significantly by the colonial era.⁴²

Education of The History of Islamic Civilization," *At-Tahsin: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2022): 27–36.

⁴⁰ Chernoh M. Sesay Jr, "Gender, Power, and Religion: Orientations of the Self in African America and the Black Diaspora," *Journal of Women's History* 32, no. 1 (2020): 156–62.

⁴¹ Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Beyond War and Contracts: The Medieval and Religious Roots of the European State," *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (2020): 19–36.

⁴² John Gerring et al., "Why Monarchy? The Rise and Demise of a Regime Type," *Comparative Political Studies* 54, no. 3–4 (2021): 585–622; Jack Basu-Mellish, "UN Resolution

Colonialism, alongside industrialisation, fostered new work orientations that impacted educational curricula. Before this shift, educational models like the trivium were popular as they conferred social status through education. However, the advent of industrialisation and the rise of science education made technical professions such as technicians and engineers more appealing.⁴³ Breakthroughs in health, medicine, and food engineering through chemistry, nutrition, and pharmacy also redirected educational focus towards the technical skills needed in industry. Although teaching professions persisted, those who served as educators held esteemed positions in society due to their dedication.⁴⁴ Character education in the West emphasized humanism and secular social relations, supported by legislation often referred to as 'public reason,' synonymous with social contracts. Thus, civil society's perception tended to form around these principles, particularly basic human values like freedom, tolerance, philanthropy, avoiding prejudice, and community service.⁴⁵

These character education values can also be found in Muslim societies. However, due to the influence of secularisation, confusion in thought, the spread of entertainment industries, and idolatry, children tend to mimic these foreign cultures, often not realising they are merely dramas in their countries of origin. This mirrors the social context, as minority communities in Indonesia often pursue superior educational orientations, leading to successful careers.⁴⁶

1514: The Creation of a New Post-Colonial Sovereignty," *Third World Quarterly* 44, no. 6 (2023): 1306–23.

⁴³ Gazi Mahabubul Alam, Abdur Rahman Forhad, and Ismi Arif Ismail, "Can Education as an 'International Commodity' Be the Backbone or Cane of a Nation in the Era of Fourth Industrial Revolution?—A Comparative Study," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 159 (2020): 120184; Sibel Baykut et al., "The Impact of the Hidden Curriculum on International Students in the Context of a Country with a Toxic Triangle of Diversity," *The Curriculum Journal* 33, no. 2 (2022): 156–77; Jane Spiteri, "Early Childhood Education for Sustainability," in *Quality Education* (Springer, 2020), 185–96.

⁴⁴ Ulrich AK Betz et al., "Game Changers in Science and Technology—Now and Beyond," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 193 (2023): 122588.

⁴⁵ Yael Malin, "Humanistic Mindfulness: A Bridge between Traditional and Modern Mindfulness in Schools," *Journal of Transformative Education* 21, no. 1 (2023): 102–17; Yoko Mochizuki, Edward Vickers, and Audrey Bryan, "Huxleyan Utopia or Huxleyan Dystopia? Scientific Humanism, Faure's Legacy and the Ascendancy of Neuroliberalism in Education," *International Review of Education* 68, no. 5 (2022): 709–30; Ana María Vega Gutiérrez, "Building a New Humanism for a Globalised World: The Contribution of Religion," *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* 23, no. 3 (2021): 294–321.

⁴⁶ Thomas J. La Belle, "An Introduction to the Nonformal Education of Children and Youth," *Comparative Education Review* 25, no. 3 (1981): 313–29; James V. Spickard,

Similarly, the Muslim minority in America faces similar pressures from the non-Muslim majority but still strives for high educational and professional standards.⁴⁷ Interestingly, the broader educational phenomena in America resonate with those in Indonesia. Despite the majority status, many in Indonesia face significant barriers to societal integration post-education. Therefore, focusing our discussion on the sociological factors at play seems pertinent.

If we reflect on several discussions above, we can draw a similarity or difference between America in the modern and postmodern sense with reference to their practices in both secular or religious education.⁴⁸ But, I found another perspective: a critical evaluation on both of them. The very straightforward notes given by Suzanne S. Hudd, in his work entitled *Character Education in Contemporary America: McMorals?*⁴⁹ Suzanne states that contemporary education consequently turns the educational process such as the science of producing goods as well as instant fast food. The commentary on contemporary American education that was not ideally realized using democracy was evaluated by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett with psychological analysis.⁵⁰ I also found the same sense in Indonesian educational institutions nowadays.

The Future of Islamic School and Character Identity

By discussing the historical account of islamic education presented above, I highlight some of the important points: 1) how secularism affects the society and identity, and 2) how islamic values can survive to be successfully inculcated through the strengthening of family institutions. The first question may bring us to the very

"Human Rights through a Religious Lens: A Programmatic Argument," *Social Compass* 49, no. 2 (2002): 227–38.

⁴⁷ Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Being and Belonging: Muslims in the United States since 9/11* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 9, 71, 75, 123, 158–59.

⁴⁸ Philip S. Gorski et al., "The Post-Secular in Question," *The Post-Secular in Question: Religion in Contemporary Society*, 2012, 1–22; Timothy L. O'Brien and Shiri Noy, "Traditional, Modern, and Post-Secular Perspectives on Science and Religion in the United States," *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 1 (2015): 92–115.

⁴⁹ Suzanne S. Hudd, "Character Education in Contemporary America: McMorals?," *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* 8, no. 2 (2004): 113–24.

⁵⁰ Arnett, "Learning to Stand Alone: The Contemporary American Transition to Adulthood in Cultural and Historical Context"; Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "The Psychology of Globalization.," *American Psychologist* 57, no. 10 (2002): 774; Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, "Adolescents in Western Countries in the 21st Century: Vast Opportunities—for All," *The World's Youth: Adolescence in Eight Regions of the Globe*, 2002, 328, 336.

debatable question about the role and implementation of 'moderate Islam' by referring to the very essence of Islamic concept of humanity and true religion with both future directions. And the second will lead to another discussion about the facts of unsuccessful predictions about how the Islam will spread in western countries.

Discussing the first point is more meaningful when we remember some aspect of Islamization theory proposed by al-Attas while he states that the Islamization was beginning from language use of understanding about the very concept of Islamic worldview then lead to the shifting of human consciousness to Islam.⁵¹ The increase of human understanding about Islamic concept of worldview improving the 'moderation of religious view' which may be constructed based on intellectual tradition and the praxis was marked by the development of educational activities in family and society.⁵² As long after that phenomena, the society - especially humanity - will lead by the benefit of inculcating the adab and 'ilm; and both will increase the productivity of good custom and socio-political atmosphere and become the ideal of 'Islamic civilization' which in historical context are marked by tremendous of scientific inventions not only in Arab peninsula, but also in several Islamicate society.

But after the decline of Islamic golden age, I marked an al-Attas conclusion that loss of adab occurs and brings the decrease of the civilizational aspect of Islam. But that phenomena does not demolishing Islamic view at all, except the values which had already amalgamated by local culture.⁵³ The local culture, may be tends to be

⁵¹ Mona Abaza, "Intellectuals, Power and Islam in Malaysia: SN al-Attas or the Beacon on the Crest of a Hill," *Archipel* 58, no. 3 (1999): 189–217; Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, "Islamic Philosophy: An Introduction," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2005): 11–43.

⁵² Nuraan Davids, "Islam, Moderation, Radicalism, and Justly Balanced Communities," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2017): 309–20; Muhammad Taqiyuddin, "Tradisi Intelektual Fardhu Ain Dan Fardhu Kifayah Pesantren Dalam Menanggulangi Terorisme," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2021): 1–18. It can be seen from the method of text interpretation and the implementation of over-textual and rigid interpretations in religious studies that are very instant and indoctrinal; which resulted in the spread of 'radicalism'. This aspect forgets the essence of Islamic education which emphasizes tolerance, courtesy, and love for peace. Conversely, Islamic studies that are too contextual, will eliminate the epistemological footing; that is, their identity and essence, because they merely follow all the social changes that continue to occur without regard to the wisdom and wisdom of local wisdom. Thus, the search for knowledge is no longer sacred and then encourages the loss of etiquette (loss of adab

⁵³ Mahmoud Hamid Al Migdadi, "Issues in Islamization of Knowledge, Man and

hereticized because the gap of understanding between its historical and textual context of islamic teaching. But the very tradition of religious sciences education seems to be continued by considering the boarding school (i.e. pesantren in Indonesia) or another forms such as 'sorogan', 'bandongan', and another genre of 'ngaji kitab'.⁵⁴ In America, we can find the 'islamic school' such as I mentioned above as the pioneer of them. Nowadays, the Islamic School in America was developed and increased; for further information, see the work published by Kathryn Clauss, Shamshad Ahmed, and Mary Salvaterra.⁵⁵

In Indonesia, islamic school usually affiliated with the mass organization such Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Persatuan Islam (Persis), Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Perti), Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah (DDI), Nahdlatul Wathan (NW), Wahdah Islamiyah, Hidayatullah, al-Irsyad, al-Washliyah, Sarekat Islam, al-Ittihadiyah,⁵⁶ Majelis Ta'lim al-Qur'an (MTA) and others (LDDI, Ahlul Bait Indonesia, and IJABI);⁵⁷ and several also organized by Political Party as Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) and minority of them organized by tarekat such Naqshbandi, and so on.⁵⁸

But in America, because of the social phenomenon of their minority, they may come from different affiliation and race (such African, Asian, or may be European or American itself) but consolidated as Islamic Schools League of America (ISLA). The ISLA was established by four parents whose children had greatly benefited from attending an Islamic school. Recognizing the positive impact of Islamic education on their own children, these parents became

Education," *Revue Académique Des Études Sociales et Humaines*, no. 7 (2012): 3.

⁵⁴ Ronald Lukens-Bull, "The Traditions of Pluralism, Accommodation, and Anti-Radicalism in the Pesantren Community," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, no. 1 (2008): 1–15; Martin van Bruinessen, "PESANTREN AND KITAB KUNING: MAINTENANCE AND CONTINUATION OF A TRADITION OF RELIGIOUS LEARNING," *Ethnology*, 1994, 121–46.

⁵⁵ Kathryn Clauss, Shamshad Ahmed, and Mary Salvaterra, "The Rise of Islamic Schools in the United States," *The Innovation Journal* 18, no. 1 (2013): 1.

⁵⁶ Masrukhin Masrukhin and Supa'at Supaat, "The Islamic Mass Organization Contribution in Protecting the Religiosity Inclusive and Diversity in Indonesia," *Addin* 12, no. 2 (2018): 407–46.

⁵⁷ Muhammad Najib Azca, Hakimul Ikhwan, and Mohammad Zaki Arrobi, "A Tale of Two Royal Cities: The Narratives of Islamists' Intolerance in Yogyakarta and Solo," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 57, no. 1 (2019): 25–50.

⁵⁸ Martin Van Bruinessen, "Overview of Muslim Organizations, Associations and Movements in Indonesia," *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"*, 2013, 21–59.

interested in the overall state of Islamic K-12 education nationwide. After a year of research, they found that while Islamic schools were rapidly expanding within Muslim communities across the country, the situation was also precarious. For every new school that opened, others were closing due to various challenges and obstacles.⁵⁹ One significant issue identified by the ISLA was that Islamic schools often operated in isolation, lacking connections with other schools and organizations that offered essential services. Many schools were also unaware of available educational resources and information, being too preoccupied with basic operational challenges to seek out such support.⁶⁰

This identified need shaped the ISLA's focus and mission. Their first goal was to facilitate communication and networking among Islamic schools. The next goal was to simplify access to crucial information that could enhance instructional quality and faculty development. Lastly, the ISLA aimed to raise nationwide awareness about the importance of supporting Islamic schools and improving Islamic education in America overall. Trial by fire: Islamic schools after 9-11 Here are their mapping of islamic school in America:

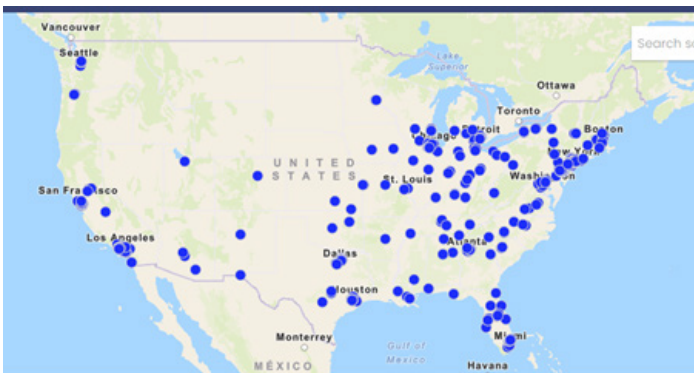


Figure 5: ISLA's map of Islamic School in America

The number of Islamic schools in the United States continues to rise, accompanied by a growing demand for qualified leadership,

⁵⁹ Najwan L. Saada, "Teachers' Perspectives on Citizenship Education in Islamic Schools in Michigan," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 41, no. 2 (2013): 247-73; Melanie C. Brooks and Miriam D. Ezzani, "Being Wholly Muslim and Wholly American': Exploring One Islamic School's Efforts to Educate against Extremism," *Teachers College Record* 119, no. 6 (2017): 1-32.

⁶⁰ Azmat and Shatara, "Practitioner's Note The Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA): An Internationally Recognized Accrediting Agency."

teaching staff, and sustainable funding models. Post-pandemic anecdotal data highlights this increase, as the Council of Islamic Schools of North America (CISNA) consistently receives inquiries from communities seeking guidance on establishing new Islamic schools. Feedback from school leaders indicates that many schools are outgrowing their current campuses and need to expand to accommodate increasing student populations. From 1991 to 2015, Islamic school enrollment surged by 800 percent, rising from 4,482 to 40,485 students (Council for American Private Education, 2017). The proportion of total private school enrollment in Islamic schools grew from 0.1 to 0.8 percent during the same period. Currently, around 300 Islamic schools in the United States serve more than 50,000 students (Islamic Schools League of America, 2021).⁶¹

Type of School	1991	2001	2015
Catholic	53.0	47.1	38.8
Nonsectarian	14.8	16.9	21.8
Conservative Christian	12.0	15.4	13.5
Baptist	5.8	5.9	3.9
Lutheran	4.4	4.1	3.3
Jewish	3.4	3.7	6.1
Episcopal	1.8	1.9	1.8
Adventist	1.5	1.1	1.0
Montessori	1.1	1.6	2.6
Calvinist	0.9	0.7	0.4
Friends	0.3	0.4	0.5
Islamic	0.1	0.4	0.8

Figure 7: Increase of private schools in America

The Islamic organization (which may be equally compared with Indonesian muslim mass organization sense), consist of multicultural: immigrant, inbound students, also the American itself. And i may reconsidering the very difference of islamic arrival in Indonesian and America, which Indonesian Islam are still identified by performing Islam empowered by Nusantara tradition; and American Islam only

⁶¹ Azmat and Shatara.

identified by solidarity of minority without any local - but i may rigidly say as 'native American' which most of them were genocided in the early of European arriving.⁶² With their consciousness as a minority, the American muslim actually follows the 'modern' American culture dominated by secular western traditions. Then, the 'islamization' did not occur culturally as happens in Indonesian muslim culture; but the growth of Islam and its character education - as oriented to be equal with another non-muslim citizen or american race seems to use the power of democracy and humanities culture of modern america. And then, the very identity of character education within the islamic educational institutions may be different in sociological aspects, but may be similar in some essential aspects such as their muslim identity.

As i see with the al-Attas theory on islamization, i can sum up from above elaboration about some of similar identity between Islamic School in Indonesian and America which 1) Teaching islamic studies subjects, 2) Arabic Language - especially related and associated with 'islamic language', and 3) not confronting the local tradition (which can be tolerated in Islamic Theology and Sharia) except with the aim for da'wa strategy. The same facts in both Indonesia and America can be understood using the three identities above. Both Indonesian and American muslim educational institutions may be different in governmental support; being not a secular nation, Indonesia has a ministry specialized in religious authority which accommodates the Indonesian people's need of practicing their faith with reference to six recognized religions. But in the American sense as secular nations, the state and government only accommodates the 'human rights' of practicing their faith and religions without limiting the 'recognized faith' as occurs in Indonesian ministry of religion. The muslim in America, follows the two standards: 1) national standards of educational requirements which refer to government or ministry, and 2) private - as well as islamic religious education. About the orientation of character education, the American muslim takes a big responsibility to be the mission of peace agenda as a part of islamic values.

⁶² Jane I. Smith, "Islam in America," in *Muslims in the West after 9/11* (Routledge, 2009), 38–52.

Conclusion

Arguing with the facts above, the salient feature of American Muslim Character education can be understood through several literature reviews by considering the multi perspective approach. But I think the dominant factor is the sociological perspective by comparing the arrival of Islam in Indonesia and America which provides a divergence of technical aspects about the growth of islamic educational institutions. Hence, the 'islamic language' is the most important indicator which both Indonesian and American identity may be understood. The 'islamic language' and intellectual tradition may become a important factor in developing the muslim society; hence the different constraint may be occur caused by the 'local culture' of majority's supremacy, implementation of democratic culture without any discrimination - but this part usually misused to repress on muslim minority, also the media which lead to the prejudice public opinions against muslim and islamic teaching. The last, about the standard of character education: since the American Government's commitment towards their educational values which oriented to be 'good citizenship'; American muslim follow in their footsteps beside performing the islamic identity which is not confronted with the very islamic teachings. The technical aspects of inculcating the what so called 'character' may be the same: both countries rest on the 1) family and 2) educational institutions with their different culture. About the future of American muslim educational institution, I may predict the increase of their numbers based on the stability of American culture of democracy, multiculturalism, and humanism. American culture can be counted as 'moderate' for them, because the muslim in America practicing the belief beside become the good American citizen.

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