

## TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON PRINCIPALS' PRACTICES OF 'ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES OF CHANGE DERIVED FROM QURAN AND SUNNAH'

Mohamed Abdullahi Gure<sup>i</sup>, Suraini Mohd Ali<sup>ii</sup> & Harison@Hanisa Mohd Sidek<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Somalia. Phd. Candidate. Faculty of Major Languages Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia Nilai, Malaysia. guure333@hotmail.com

<sup>ii</sup> Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Major Languages Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia Nilai, Malaysia. suraini@usim.edu.my

<sup>iii</sup> Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Major Languages Studies, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia Nilai, Malaysia. harison@usim.edu.my

<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>No doubt that high quality education and knowledge are critical elements for developing nations. However, the current situation of education in many Islamic countries is unsatisfactory as its system has failed to meet the expectations of its citizens in producing a balanced human in terms intellectually, physically and spiritually. To address the short-comings of education in the Muslim world, Muslim leaders are expected to make efforts to reform education. In the struggle to change and improve the quality of education, school leaders need to practice the Islamic principles of change. These principles facilitate and create a suitable environment where the change can take place smoothly, effectively and successfully. This paper aims at examining teachers' perceptions towards their principals' practices in handling the school management. The method employed in this study is quantitative approach. A sample size of 132 full-time teachers from three selected international Islamic schools in Kuala Lumpur-Malays were selected. The Change Facilitator Styles Questionnaire (CFSQ), developed by Hall and George (1999) was employed to assess the perceptions of teachers. The results showed that teachers gave their principals high ratings for their practices of the Islamic principles of change such as Shura (Mutual consultation), Itqan (perfection) and Tafaqud (awareness of the followers). The study also found no statistical significance of differences in the perceptions of teachers of different ages and different levels of education.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Education, intellectually, physically, spiritually, schools.</i></p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to seek all kinds of knowledge even if that requires to travel to far places. The prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said "whoever travels in search on knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to paradise" (Muslim, 1955: 2074). Moreover, the Sunnah clearly, states that educating children is compulsory "seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim" (Ibnu Majah, 2009: 151). Islam also makes education free of charge. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has never taken salary for his preaching and teaching "No reward I ask of you for this (the Quran). It is only a reminder for the *Alamin* (mankind and jinn)" (Al-Quran. Al-An'am 2: 90) and top of that the prophet warned his companion to take salary when teaching people.

These calls for seeking knowledge indicate the importance of education in Islam and Muslims have responded effectively these calls of seeking knowledge for centuries. However, the current situation of educational systems in many Muslim countries such as Somalia, Yemen and others is unsatisfactory. The educational systems in these countries face some challenges such as in adequate supply of

instructional material and text books, poor teaching-learning environment and difficulties to have access to education particularly for students living in isolated parts of these countries. These challenges have negatively affected the quality of education. Assessments indicated poor performance of students in all subjects (Bureau For Policy And Program Coordination, 2004).

Lack of quality education can cause many social problems which can have serious effects on children. Many of the social problems in the Muslim world such as civil wars and other crimes are caused by the lack of quality education. Such situations requires educational change in the Muslim world. Therefore, Muslim educational leaders have to do some efforts to change school policies and practices to overcome the challenges facing the educational system in the Muslim world that prevent schools to make progress and provide quality education which meets the needs of students to improve their performance.

The children of this era cannot be educated in the same way of the children in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is because the children of this era and those lived in the past centuries are different and educators need to use all methods and tools that meets the needs and interests of children. For instance, teachers are expected to use computers and the other current technologies that make the delivering of lessons in classrooms easy and very interesting. "A great deal of organizational for schools to fully adapt and take advantage of the promising new technologies" (Wanger and Schorger, 2006: 2).

The Quran clearly states that without making change one cannot expect a better situation while continuing the same policies and practices "Verily, Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state..." (Al-Quran. Ar-Ra'd. 13: 11). No question that educational change play important roles in the future of all nations including the Muslim nations. However, people always fear to make changes and try to stick their old styles and practices as they assume that change can cause failure and produce negative outcomes (Dagistani, 1428H).

In implementing change, educational leaders might face some challenges that hinder the implementation processes successfully. Therefore, Muslim educational leaders are expected to follow the example of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when trying to make educational reforms. This is because the life of the prophet is full of good leadership examples where he led the Muslim Ummah (the Muslim nation) successfully in all situations; situations of war and situations of peace. The prophet also characterized all the good qualities of leadership such as honesty, optimism, confidence, motivating and encouraging, empathy and acting as a role model (Admin, 2015).

The Quran commends all Muslims including educational leaders to make the prophet as their role model "indeed, in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) you have a good example to follow..." (Al-Quran. Al-Ahzab. 33: 21). Not only Muslims recognize the prophet as a great leader, but there are non-Muslim sholars who also recognized the leadership qualities of the prophet. For instance, Hart (1978) listed prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the number one out of the most influential persons in humanity history.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Muslim educational leaders are expected to follow the example of the prophet particularly when implementing change. Following are some of the Islamic principles which educational leaders in the Islamic countries need to practice when implementing educational change.

### **Shura (Mutual Consultation)**

Mutual consultation is a very important Islamic principles which the prophet had practiced constantly in a variety of ways. Moreover, the prophet was commended in the Quran to consult with his companion and consult them in the affairs. "Then when you

have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah...” (Al-Quran. Al ‘Imran. 3: 159). In response to this Quranic teaching, the prophet was practicing the shura regularly in all his decisions. The prophet was receiving wahy (revelation) and he was guided by this revelation, but he was practicing the shura so that Muslims follow his examples by practicing this important Islamic principal which if Muslims practice they can come up with the best decisions.

There a lot of examples where the prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) with his companions. He listened the voice of the companions in all issues even those related to war and he was taking the opinion of the majority. For example, in the battle of Badar which is the first battle between the forces of the Islamic state in Madina and Makkan forces. Before the prophet left Madina to the battle field of Badar he asked his companions to give their ideas and suggestions. After Muslims reached the battle field of Badar the prophet accepted a suggestion from one of the companions who was expert on military issues. This expert suggested that Muslims move from a place to a strategic place in the battle field (Ibn Hisham, 1955).

Furthermore, in the third year of Hijra a three thousand Makkan forces marched towards Madina to destroy the Islamic state in Madina. The prophet consulted with his companion of the ways to defend the city from enemy of Islam. The prophet and some of his companion suggested to wait the enemy in Madinah. But many of the companions particularly those companions who could not participate in the battle of Badar were eager to fight the enemy outside of the city. Therefore, the prophet accepted the opinion of the majority and it was decided to meet the Makkan forces outside of the city (Al-Albani, 2002).

These stories show how leaders can benefit from the different abilities of their followers. For example, in the case of educational reform school leaders are expected to have the right skills that enable them to utilize the different abilities of teachers. Teachers have different abilities in different areas of education. Some educators may have more skills in handling discipline problems and others can have more knowledge about curriculums. Hence, principals can utilize these various abilities for different purpose.

According to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2008) teachers are agents of change and school innovations can take place perfectly by their support. However, teachers can perceive educational change negatively if they are not given the chance to give their ideas and suggestions when initiating change and instead they are imposed the change processes which is prepared by others. Therefore, leaders are expected to be wise to avoid to commit such mistakes as this can affect the collaboration between school leaders and teachers in implementing school change.

All stakeholders have the right to share their ideas among the school community. All individuals in the school community have interests and they need their voices to be heard. By consulting different individuals of stakeholders, problems and areas that need improvement can be discovered easily. Moreover, these individuals can provide more information which is related to many aspects of school and which can be used to make the best decisions for educational change.

### **Itqan (Perfection and Proficiency)**

Another task of educational leaders in the Muslim world is to make teachers to realize that itqan (perfection) is a duty of Muslim. Muslims are expected to do things in a perfect way. The prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said “verily Allah has prescribed Ihsan (proficiency and perfection) in all things. So if you kill then kill well; and if you slaughter, then slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters” (Muslim, n.d: 1548). In another tradition, the prophet said “verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does a job he should perfect it” (Abi Ya’la, 1984). These sayings of the messenger of Allah encourage Muslims to do things in a perfect manner. Therefore, by working to improve

school performance Muslims gain all the benefits of school improvement such high academic achievement and beside that Muslims gain rewards from Allah because trying to make things perfect is considered an act of worship.

In the way of struggling to reach the level of perfection, it is very important to change old practices and behaviors into new practices that can facilitate to reach the level of perfection. The Quran emphasizes this meaning "... Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves..." (Al-Quran. Al-Ra'd). This means that changing the practices and behaviors that could not offer any solutions to the problems is pre-request to achieve school improvement. This verse also indicate that it is impossible to experience better situation while maintaining the bad behaviors and practices.

By making teachers understand that trying to work effectively to make improvement is a duty of Muslims, they will collaborate in implementing the needed change. In other words, leaders need to prepare teachers and other staff in the school for the change. "Your employees also need to understand the bigger picture. There is no point introducing the "how" if they do not appreciate the "why" (Implementing Change in the Workplace, n.d).

### **Ukhuwah (Brotherhood)**

Teachers experience difficulties during change as they are expected to change their old practices and techniques to new practices. Hence, they need more support from the school administrator. There are many ways that school administrators can provide support to teachers. One of these important ways is to be friendly to them. This is because teachers cannot work unfriendly environment which is full of hate and suspicion. The Islamic teachings instruct Muslims to show smiling faces when they meet each other which is a sign of being friendly. The Messenger of Allah said, "you will never be able to contain people with either your houses or your money, so contain them with smiling faces and good manners" (Morals and Manners in Islam, 2007).

One of the challenges of education is leading people towards change and towards quality teaching. It is the human nature to refuse change and stick with old practices. However, people do not refuse change by itself, but they fear from the consequences that might the change produces such as demands of extra work and losing opportunities. According to Hammond and Busick (1994) it is very common to see people feeling stress, anxiety and fear. They fear to make mistakes as they try to do new things. In such situations, educational leaders are required to create suitable environment where people can accept new ideas and new concepts. Similarly, Foo Son (2004) believes that when teachers serve the school they expect service from the school. Without these exchange interests between the two parties, teachers will not offer their service.

A Muslim principal who meets his or her teachers with happy and smiling face gains reward from Allah as it is a form of worship. The prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "when you smile to your brother's face, it is charity" (Al-Tirmidhi, 1975: 339). Moreover, this act can be considered as a kind of appreciation from the principal for the hardworking of teachers which can motivate them to continue to excel their work and improve the organization. Therefore, it is clear that teacher perform well in friendly environment and consequently school improvement will be achieved.

### **Tafaqud (Inspection)**

Different teachers have different personalities and beliefs. Based on these differences they make decisions about what they should do and how they should do to implement the desired change and improvement (Naidu and Walt, 2005). Every one of your employees will react differently to change and during the process, it's important to provide support and training to facilitate change (Implementing Change In The Workplace, n.d: 1).

School principals are required to give careful attention to implementation of change to prevent deviation from the desired change. The processes of change affect all teachers at school and special attention should be given to the behaviors of those involved in the processes of change (Kenny, n.d).

Allah states in the Quran the responsibilities of the leader in knowing the conditions of the follower and it is clear from the Islamic history that early Muslim leaders were feeling this responsibly. Allah mentioned in the Quran the story of prophet Suleyman when he was observing his followers and he realized that one bird is missing "He inspected the birds, and he said: what is the matter that I see not the hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees? I will surely punish him with a severe torment, or slaughter him, unless he brings me a clear reason" (Al-Quran. An-Naml. 27: 20-21). By interpreting this story, al-Qurtubi says that this verse is a strong evidence of the importance of inspection. Another example of inspection in the Islamic tradition is the saying of khalifah Omar bin Khatab when said: "if a mule is stolen in Iraq I will be asked on the day of Resurrection (al-Qurtubi, 2006).

The above story of prophet Suleyman and the sayings of khalifah Umar bin al-Khattab states the duties of leaders in inspecting and observing the performance of the staff. Principals of Islamic schools are expected to inspect the performance of teachers particularly during change by making regular visits in classrooms to discover the needs of teachers and students.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This research employed a survey research design whereby data was collected from the teachers of the three selected international Islamic schools in Malaysia. Since this study examines teachers' perceptions about their principals' Change Facilitator Styles, survey was a suitable method to collect data as Hall and George (1988) believed. By explaining and making justification for why the questionnaire was addressed to the teachers, they believed that researchers can obtain more information about the Change Facilitator Styles from various sources. However, teachers have more information about their principals' behavior than any other individuals in the school as they experience the facilitating styles of the principal on day to day basis.

### Participants

The total number of all fulltime teachers of the selected three International Islamic Schools was 207. According to the table for determining sample size which developed by Krecie and Morgan (1970) the sample size of a population between 200 participants to 210 participants is 132. Thus, 132 participants were needed for this study which is 64% of whole population. The number of teachers of the three schools was not equal. Some schools had more teachers than others.

Therefore, the participants from each school must also vary in number. Most participants in this study were from Adni Islamic School which had the most number of teachers among these schools. International Islamic School had the second most number of teachers among these schools at the same time the second most participants in this study were from this school. Stratified sampling was used to determine the number of respondents that participated in this study. The table below 3.1 shows the number of participants from each school by using stratified sampling method.

**Table 1: Number Of Participants From Each School**

Three International Islamic schools in KL	Number of Teachers in each school	Participants from each school
Adni Islamic school	100	64
International Islamic	62	39

school		
International Modern Arabic School	45	29
Total	207	132

### Instrumentation

The Change Facilitator Styles Questionnaire which developed by Hall and George (1988) was used to collect data from the teacher of the three international Islamic schools. The questionnaire was selected because all the items of the questionnaire are very relevant to this study. This inventory of change facilitator styles have been used in many studies in various countries including the United States, Belgium and the Netherlands and its validity also has been tested many times. Therefore, this inventory is considered valid by many authors and researchers.

### Analysis

The first aim of this study was to explore the participant's perceptions towards their principals' Change Facilitator Styles. Therefore, the collected data from the three international Islamic schools were analyzed by using descriptive statistics such as Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Percentages and Frequencies. The second purpose of this research was to investigate the degree to which the teachers' perceptions towards the principals' Change Facilitator Styles differ according to the teachers' age, gender, level of study and years of teaching. One-way ANOVA was used to detect any significance differences in teachers' perceptions.

### RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in three parts. Part I: reports the participants' demographic. Part II: shows teachers' perceptions towards their principals' CFS. Part III: differences of teachers' perceptions based on their demographic characteristics.

### Respondent's Demographics

Participants were requested to provide basic information about their demographic such as their gender, age, level of education and years of teaching to record for the independent variable. The following tables show information relating to demographic characteristics of teachers from the three international Islamic schools.

#### Gender

Table 2 shows the number of male and female teachers and their percentage of the three schools

**Table 2: Respondents' Gender**

Name Of The School	Gender	Frequency	Percentage%
Adni Islamic School	Male	19	32.8
	Female	39	62.7
	Total	58	100
International Islamic School	Male	18	52.9
	Female	16	47.1
	Total	34	100
International Modern Arabic School	Male	12	41.4
	Female	17	58.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

**Age**

Table 3 shows the details of the respondents' age distribution.

**Table 3: Respondents' Age**

Name Of The School	Age	Frequency	Percentage%
Adni Islamic School	Less than35 years	43	74.17
	35-45	10	17.2
	More than 45	5	8.6
	Total	58	100
International Islamic School	Less than35 years	19	55.9
	35-45	13	38.2
	More than 45	2	5.9
	Total	34	100
International Modern Arabic School	Less than35 years	15	51.7
	35-45	10	34.5
	More than 45	4	13.8
	Total	229	100

**Level of Education**

Table 4 shows the level of education of the participants from the three Islamic schools

**Table 4: Participants' Level Of Education**

Name Of The School	Level of study	Frequency	Percentage%
Adni Islamic School	Bachelor	37	63.8
	Master	13	22.4
	PhD	5	8.6
	Total	55	94.8
International Islamic School	Bachelor	16	47.1
	Master	13	38.2
	PhD	2	5.9
	Total	31	91.2
International Modern Arabic School	Bachelor	15	51.7
	Master	12	41.4
	PhD	1	3.4
	Total	28	96.6

**Years of Teaching**

Table 5 shows participants' years of teaching

**Table 5: Participants' Years Of Teaching**

Name Of The School	Years of teaching	Frequency	Percentage%
Adni Islamic School	Less than 5 years	35	60.3
	5 - 10 years	14	24.1

	11 - 15 years	2	3.4
	16 - 20 years	4	6.9
	More than 20 years	2	3.4
	Total	57	98.3
International Islamic School	Less than 5 years	11	32.4
	5 - 10 years	13	38.2
	11 - 15 years	3	8.8
	16 - 20 years	5	14.7
	More than 20 years	2	5.9
	Total	34	100
International Modern Arabic School	Less than 5 years	11	37.9
	5 - 10 years	10	34.5
	11 - 15 years	2	6.9
	16 - 20 years	4	13.8
	More than 20 years	2	9.6
	Total	29	100

### The Findings Based on The First Research objective of This Study

Firstly, descriptive statistics such as Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD), frequencies and percentages were calculated. Table 6 shows Means (M) of the following four dimensions (mutual consultation, perfection, brotherhood and inspection).

**Table 6: Means Of The Dimensions Of Islamic Principles Of Change**

Dimensions	Mean (M)
Shura (mutual consultation)	Adni school (4.0)
	Il School (5.2)
	IMA school (4.7)
Itqan (perfection)	Adni school (3.8)
	Il School (5.1)
	IMA school (4.2)
Ukhuwah (brotherhood)	Adni school (4.1)
	Il School (6.0)
	IMA school (5.3)
Tafaqud (inspection)	Adni school (3.7)
	Il School (5.1)
	IMA school (4.1)

Secondly, One-way ANOVA was run to determine whether there are significance differences in teachers' perceptions from the three international Islamic schools towards their principals' Change Facilitator Styles according to the teachers' age, gender, level of study and years of teaching.

**Teachers' Gender And Their Perceptions Towards Their Principals' CFS**

There are no statistically significant differences at the .05 level in teachers' perceptions among all the different gender groups. Table 7 shows the results of ANOVA analysis of the three schools.

**Table 7: ANOVA Analysis: Differences In Teacher Perceptions / By Gender**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.230	1	.230	.338	.564
Within Groups	38.131	56	.681		
Total	38.361	57			

**Teachers' Age And Their Perceptions Towards Their Principals' CFS**

To examine significance differences in participants' perceptions from the three international Islamic schools towards their principals' CFS according to age, One-way ANOVA was used.

There are no statistically significant differences at the .05 level in teachers' perceptions among all the different age groups. Table 8 shows the results of ANOVA analysis of the three schools.

**Table 8: ANOVA Analysis: Differences In Teacher Perceptions / By Age**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.933	2	.966	1.459	.241
Within Groups	36.428	55	.662		
Total	38.361	57			

**Teachers' Level Of Education And Their Perceptions Towards Their Principals' CFS**

To detect significance differences in participants' perceptions from the three international Islamic schools towards their principals' CFS according to their level of education, One-way ANOVA was utilized. There are no statistically significant differences at the .05 level in teachers' perceptions throughout the different levels of education. Below table 9 shows the results of ANOVA analysis of the three schools.

**Table 9: ANOVA Analysis: Differences In Teacher Perceptions / By Qualification**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.101	2	1.050	1.573	.217
Within Groups	34.720	52	.668		
Total	36.821	54			

**Teachers' Years Of Teaching And Their Perceptions Towards Their Principals' CFS**

To investigate if participants' perceptions from the three international Islamic schools towards their principals' CFS varied significantly, One-way ANOVA was performed. There are no statistically significant differences at the .05 level in teachers' perceptions throughout the different length of experience. Below table 10 shows the results of ANOVA analysis of the three schools.

**Table 10: ANOVA Analysis: Differences In Teacher Perceptions / By Experience**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.363	4	.841	1.270	.294
Within Groups	34.413	52	.662		
Total	37.775	56			

## CONCLUSION

By observing the results of this study, it is clear that teachers gave high ratings to their principals in implementing Islamic principles during school change. It was expected that these principals will score high ratings in practicing the Islamic principles as they were leading Islamic schools where all students, teachers and all other staff are Muslims. Moreover, the lack of significance differences across the demographic variables of teachers of the three international Islamic schools also indicate that these groups did not vary so much in opinions in their stand of the principal's Change Facilitator Styles.

And this is confirmed by the high ratings obtained by the school principals. This high ratings can be a strong evidence that the majority of the teachers of these schools had a common stand in their perceptions of the principal's Change Facilitator Styles. The implication of this study is the need to provide motivation and encouragement to the principals of Islamic schools to keep up their efforts to implement Islamic principles. This is because practicing these principles will lead schools to achieve the desired improvement. Beside these benefits for school improvement Muslim principals hope to get rewards from Allah by practicing the Islamic principles.

Ensuring the quality of education in the Islamic schools and encouraging the principals of these schools to improve their practices is a big opportunities for many young Muslim generations. Islamic schools provide an education which fulfils all types of human needs. "Islamic education is a comprehensive process for fulfilling all of human needs. It comprises spiritual education, which develops the human conscience, and mental education which establishes the basis of human scientific thought" (Jorban, 2002: 47).

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