



ISSN: 2617-958X

المجلة الإلكترونية الشاملة متعددة التخصصات
Electronic Interdisciplinary Miscellaneous Journal
العدد التاسع والسبعون شهر (1) 2025
Issue 79, (1) 2025

Spiritual Education in the Islamic Studies Curriculum in West

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Abstract

The Islamic studies curriculum in the West is still in its early stages of development compared to the advancements in the number of Islamic centers, schools, teacher training programs, civic education initiatives, and efforts to contextualize Islam for multicultural societies. However, the integration of spiritual teachings of *tazkiyah* (self-purification) and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism), remains largely overlooked. This paper examines three prominent Islamic curricula in the United States—ICO, Safar, and Weekend Islamic Studies—revealing a focus on rational knowledge while marginalizing spiritual teachings and experiential learning of the Divine. The study advocates for the need of *tajdīd* (renewal) as a solution, emphasizing the need to simplify and adapt Sufi and spiritual teachers for development of curriculum that nurtures *maʿrifah* (knowledge of God) and *maḥabbah* (Divine Love). Such integration can enrich students' moral and spiritual consciousness, enabling lives guided by faith (*īmān*), virtuous action (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*), and certainty (*yaqīn*).

Keywords: Islamic Studies curriculum, spiritual education, taṣawwuf, *tajdīd* (renewal)



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Introduction

Islamic Education in the West is still in its early developing stages. Unlike the earlier efforts to develop Islamic Education, the recent movement is led by intellectuals, first and second-generation immigrants, who are trained in the Western academia and well informed about social and educational theories and acquainted with a better understanding of the social contexts. Such development helped in identifying and resolving many major issues that have represented obstacles to providing quality education and helping Muslims contextualize Islam in the West. These issues include training teachers, designing more engaging curricula, integrating civic education, and covering topics related to Muslims in the west. (Hussain, 2004) However, one aspect that is overlooked, or at least not giving enough attention, in the recent development is the incorporation of the mystical and spiritual tradition in the Islamic Studies curricula as well as the lack of a plan to revive of spiritual education.

Thus, this article focuses on identifying one of the problems within Islamic studies curricula in the West: the lack of spiritual education in the core Islamic curriculum. The study highlights the need for a revival of the authentic Sufi tradition as one of the solutions to improve the spiritual education in the Islamic Studies curricula. This revival could include the simplification of spiritual content found in the books of *tazkiyah* and *tasawwuf*, presenting it in a manner that can inspire curriculum writers to integrate it into their materials. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the weaknesses of the Islamic studies curriculum in the West?
- Is there an emphasis on spiritual education?
- How can *tajdid* (revival) contribute to solving such issues?

In this article, I examine three of the most circulated curricula that are taught to Muslim students in Islamic schools in the America. I examine whether these curricula integrate mystical education. I analyze the integration of two of the essential topics in the Sufi tradition and mystical education: knowledge (*m'rifah*) and love (*maḥabah*). I chose the two topics as they best represent Sufi tradition. The analysis shows that Sufi tradition is entirely missing in the Islamic Studies curricula and that the authors failed to contribute to the development of spiritual education. Finally, I discuss the concept of *tajdīd* and its significance in reviving spiritual Islamic education.

Background

Historically, mystical education has been an integral part of Islamic education. The *Sufi* movement, since its emergence as a distinct and legitimate discipline in the fourth/tenth century, has focused on modes of piety, purification of the soul, cultivating an inner spiritual life, and attaining knowledge of God through *'irfān* (knowledge by presence) or *'ilm al-bāṭin* (inner knowledge) (Daun & Arjmand, 2018). While *Sharī'a* teachings were concerned with the rulings of practicing Islam (e.g., prayer, fasting, and giving charity), *Sufi* education focused on developing methods of purification of the soul based on the model of a master-

disciple relationship. This approach led to the establishment of Sufi orders, which enabled Sufism to reach all parts of the Muslim world and transmit mystical knowledge widely (Daun & Arjmand, 2018).

For example, the Illuminations School (*'irfānī*) is one of the leading schools in mystical education. The Illumination school *'irfānī* “is regarded as experiential, although one should be aware that the notion of experience is not the one obtained through the senses; rather, it denotes the mystical experience” (Daun & Arjmand, 2018, p. 15). In later generations, Al-Ghazālī pursued a similar epistemological approach to the mystical knowledge of God. However, Al-Ghazālī’s perspective on knowledge differed from that of the Illumination School, led by Ibn al-‘Arabī and Suhrawardī, who proposed that knowledge of God is attained through mystical experience and cannot be obtained through the senses.

In contrast, Al-Ghazālī argued that knowledge is not limited to the unveiling of truth to the recipients; rather, it includes how knowledge can be acquired through the senses, reason, and intuition (Daun & Arjmand, 2018). In other words, Al-Ghazālī distinguishes between revealed knowledge, which is exclusive to the prophets, and rational sciences, which are products of the human mind, including theology and understanding of the prophets’ teachings (Daun & Arjmand, 2018).

The Illumination school’s approach and Al-Ghazālī’s approach to education and knowledge were both successful in inducing an inner realization of God and in developing a transcendent state of being, both spiritually and emotionally. This

approach to knowledge became so influential that it reached most of the Muslim world. At the time, “the Sunnī ‘*ulamā*’ often flourished in cities and areas of state power, [while] *ṣūfīs* reached all parts of the Muslim world, particularly remote areas where kinship and tribal organization were paramount” (Daun & Arjmand, 2018, p. 56).

Another essential quality for mystical education is the emphasis on love as a guiding principle for seekers on their journey to God. *Ṣūfīs* were always inspired by the mystical experience and Divine Love, which led many *Ṣūfī* masters and poets to compose treatises, prose, and poetry to convey this mystical experience and instill Divine Love into the hearts of seekers. Some of these notable figures include Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240), Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 1235), Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawīyyah (d. 801), and ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūniyyah (d. 1517), among others.

The theme of love and union with the Beloved—Allah and the Prophet Muḥammad—is one of the most recurring themes in the *Ṣūfī* tradition. For example, Al-Harawī (d. 1088) included in his book *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn* 100 stations (*maqāmāt*) for seekers, with the station of love being central. ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūniyyah, one of the most influential *Ṣūfī* poets in medieval Islam, is particularly known for her praise of the Prophet Muḥammad and her longing for union with him. Her most renowned book, *Principles of Sufism (al-Bā‘ūniyyah, 2016)*, demonstrates her passion for guiding others and leading students toward a spiritual life grounded in love for the Prophet. In her work, she identified four principles as

guiding foundations for seekers: repentance (*tawbah*), sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), recollection (*dhikr*), and love (*muḥabbah*). Her treatment of the station of love, which concludes the book, underscores its critical importance for seekers.

Her writings also reveal her deep influence by another prominent *Ṣūfī* master, Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyah (d. 801), who composed concise yet profound poems exemplifying the relationship of love between God and His servants. This enduring emphasis on love highlights its pivotal role in the Islamic mystical tradition. Love, along with the pursuit of inner knowledge, should remain an integral component of Islamic education at all times.

Development of Islamic Education in the west

In the previous section, I explained the centrality of love and inner knowledge in the history of Islamic education and their significance in the learning journey of seekers. Despite the foundational role of mystical education in seekers' divine experiences and Islamic education, leading organizations involved in developing Islamic curricula in the West and elsewhere have marginalized and neglected *Ṣūfī* traditions. None of the popular curricula taught to Muslim students are designed by organizations affiliated with *Ṣūfī* orders (Daun & Arjmand, 2018). Furthermore, the concept of learning based on a master-disciple relationship is absent in Islamic schools across America.

Organizations invested in the development of Islamic education primarily focus on improving teaching methodologies and pedagogy, training teachers (A.

Hussain, 2004), raising funds, and integrating civic and social education, while placing little or no emphasis on spiritual education. This direction in developing Islamic education is driven, in part, by researchers who have written extensively on the subject. Hussain, for example, argued that the Muslim community in Britain needs British-educated and trained Imams to teach their youth about a Muslim way of life in mosques (A. Hussain, 2004).

I find Hussain's argument for the need for British-educated Imams and teachers to be inconclusive. The theological and ideological inclinations of these Imams are, in my view, of greater significance. For instance, if Imams adhere to a theological school that completely rejects the incorporation or even the mention of *Ṣūfī* traditions and places no value on spiritual education, then the issue lies not in their academic or pedagogical training but in the theological and societal rejection of the *Ṣūfī* tradition. This rejection is driven by the dominant cultural and theological schools of thought.

Hussain further states that "they [teachers and Imams] as a generation have to be able to understand the British society they live in; they can only do so when they fully comprehend their own Islamic way of life" (A. M. Hussain, 2007, p. 271). However, Hussain does not define what he considers the "Islamic way of life." Is it a way of life devoid of mystical experiences? Is not the *Ṣūfī* way of life integral to the Muslim way of life?

I agree that preparing qualified teachers who are familiar with modern educational theories and the cultural contexts of the West—and who can relate to young Muslims born there—is essential. However, the theological orientations of these trained teachers, as well as the individuals and organizations leading and funding these training programs, require further investigation.

Other researchers, such as Niyozov and Memon (2011), in their study *Islamic Education and Islamization: Evolution of Themes, Continuities, and New Directions*, highlight that emotional and spiritual education is essential for the development of Islamic education in the West. Niyozov explains that, according to Badawi, “a true Islamic education aims at (i) awakening religious intuition and inner readiness for transcendental experience (e.g., the *Ṣūfī* emphasis on the transient nature of this world); (ii) enablement for living in a culture (e.g., citizenship education); and (iii) providing specialist education, i.e., the transfer of knowledge and skills, which correlates with working in the marketplace” (Niyozov & Memon, 2011, p. 18).

While Badawi’s model emphasizes relevance and civic education, it also underscores the centrality of inner and mystical education. Niyozov further concludes that “the success of Muslim educators will be based on whether their proposals enable the students to: (i) excel in the broad educational sense (academic, social, spiritual, and emotional); (ii) develop and harmonize the multiple dimensions of their identities; (iii) feel a genuine sense of belonging to their schools and communities; (iv) collaboratively live and work with their other

Muslim and non-Muslim fellow citizens; and (v) constructively understand and contribute to the societies where they live and the globe they co-inhabit.”

Niyozov stresses the importance of spiritual and emotional education in shaping identities. Moreover, the spiritual and emotional well-being of individuals is essential to their academic and social success and significantly influences the roles they play in their communities and the contributions they make to the well-being of humanity.

Analysis of Islamic Curricula in America

A study of the curricula used by Islamic schools in America can provide insights into where these schools stand regarding spiritual education and shed light on the systemic rejection of mystical education by leading organizations in the field. In the following section, I examine three of the leading curricula in Islamic education in America: The International Curricula Organization Islamic Studies Curriculum (ICO; ICO Team of Authors, 2016a), the Safar Islamic Studies Curriculum (Ali & Ahmed, 2018a), and the Weekend Learning Series (Ahmed & Nuri, 2018).

I selected these three curricula for several reasons. First, they are among the most widely circulated and popular in America and the West, as well as in English-medium schools in many countries in the Middle East and Africa. For instance, the ICO Islamic Studies Curriculum, according to client information listed on its website, is taught in 31 countries across six continents, with the U.S., Saudi



Arabia, the U.K., and Turkey topping the list in terms of the number of schools using the ICO curriculum, each having more than 60 schools (ICO Network, n.d.).

Second, each of these curricula is designed and produced in different parts of the world by individuals and organizations with diverse ideological and cultural backgrounds. The ICO curriculum was designed and published in Saudi Arabia by a team of authors heavily influenced by Salafi ideology. The Safar curriculum is based in the U.K. and was designed by a team led by Shaykh Hasan Ali. Safar was founded in 1997 by Shaykh Hasan Ali, a graduate of the *Dars-e-Nizami* program in London, holding an *Ālimiyyah* degree (equivalent to an M.A. in Islamic Studies). Finally, these curricula represent both full-time Islamic school curricula (ICO and Safar) and weekend school curricula, represented by the Weekend Learning Series.

1- ICO Islamic Studies Curriculum

The International Curricula Organization (ICO) curriculum is the oldest and most systematic curriculum published in English, which has contributed to its widespread popularity. Additionally, being produced in Saudi Arabia has gained it greater acceptance among many communities worldwide, as it offers Muslims in the West what they perceive as authentic teachings of Islam, free from theological deviations.

The introduction of each book in the series emphasizes the importance of adhering to the authentic teachings of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. To its credit, the ICO series has filled a critical gap in the development of Islamic education in the



West over the past two decades. Moreover, the early 21st century witnessed a significant rise in the population of American-born young Muslims who needed education about their faith. Consequently, Muslim communities established Islamic schools to teach and preserve the identity of the younger generation. However, these communities faced challenges due to the lack of qualified teachers or Imams with adequate knowledge to educate the students.

The ICO curriculum provided an ideal solution, as it was designed for individuals with little or no background in Islamic disciplines to teach Islam effectively. Furthermore, the ICO curriculum is well-structured, consisting of 12 books, starting with Book 1 for 1st grade and continuing to the 12th grade level. Each textbook includes illustrations, comes with a workbook, a digital CD, and a teacher's guide. These features made the ICO curriculum the ideal choice for many schools worldwide, particularly in America.

What are the topics taught in each book in the series? And how are the topics classified? Is there any emphasis on spiritual education? From a first glance at the cover page, before the introduction, it becomes evident that spiritual education is not a priority. The cover page includes five colored boxes—blue, green, yellow, orange, and red—representing the five categories that are the focus of each book: belief, Qur' ān, history, worship, and manners, respectively.

The area of belief ('aqīdah) is central to the theme of the ICO series, as belief is the foundation for establishing and preserving religion and faith. The ICO

team appears acutely aware of the rise of atheism and external ideologies influencing Muslims globally. As a result, the authors focus heavily on establishing the authentic beliefs of Islam and warning against deviations from the faith. However, in covering the topic of faith and beliefs, the series takes an approach that lacks any emphasis on the inner and experiential knowledge of God.

For example, the discussion of the concept of *ihsān* focuses on the idea that God is watching over us and that we should never disobey Him because He is Ever-Watchful (ICO Team of Authors, 2016b; ICO Team of Authors, 2016d). A spiritual approach to this topic would emphasize the inner realization that God is always present with us. This realization could be nurtured through contemplating God's Beautiful Names and Attributes, which induce Divine Love in the hearts of believers and establish a relationship with the Divine that is rooted in love. Such a relationship serves as the foundation for a deeper, higher knowledge of the Divine and, consequently, leads to *ihsān* in actions.

Similarly, the discussion of God as the only deity worthy of worship focuses primarily on the duty of worship and the corresponding rewards for obedience or punishment for disobedience (ICO Team of Authors, 2016c). The emphasis is placed almost entirely on outward acts of worship—such as prayer, fasting, and *zakāt*. There is only a very brief mention of inward acts of worship, with greater emphasis on fear of God and His punishment rather than on Divine Love.

A mystical approach to worship would instead highlight the inner state of the heart during worship, which ultimately leads to the perfection of outward actions. For instance, Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah (d. 801) exemplified this perspective through her worship, which was founded on a relationship of love with the Divine. She composed short yet profound poems illustrating the love between God and His servants:

I love You with two loves:
passion’s love and a love you deserve.
Passion’s love is my constant recollection
of You and no one else,
While the love you deserve
is Your raising the veil for me to see You.
But there is no praise in this or that for me,
for in this and that the praise belongs to You! (Homerin, 2019, p. 72)

Drawing inspiration from Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya, *‘Ā’ishah al-Bā‘ūniyyah* composed the following verses:

I love You, only You, and when my heart turns
to those I love, this is only out of love for You,
And when I must speak to someone else,
my heart is still recalling only You.
But there is no praise in this or that for me, my Lord,

for in both, my praise is for Your face.
This sweet love and recollection, I did not earn,
for they flow from Your pure and perfect grace.
You are the True God, all else is false;
You alone abide, all else will pass.
So please don't shun me, this would be Hell,
even if my misdeeds would merit that!

(Fayd, ed. 'Arar, 90–1) (Homerin, 2019, p. 73)

Similarly, the ICO curriculum's discussion about the Prophet Muḥammad focuses on narrating his *sīrah* and emphasizing the importance of following his *Sunnah*. A unit in Book 9 of the ICO series addresses the rulings regarding the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*) and their esteemed status (ICO Team of Authors, 2016e). Additionally, a unit in Book 7 is dedicated to the topic of loving the Prophet, listing *ḥadīths* that command believers to love the Prophet Muḥammad. This unit is the closest in the ICO series to adopting a spiritual and mystical approach to learning about the Prophet.

However, the unit primarily serves as a compilation of *ḥadīths* commanding believers to love the Prophet without elaborating on why and how to cultivate this love, nor does it explore the virtues and spiritual benefits of praising the Prophet. A mystical approach to this topic would provide a deeper perspective, such as that found in 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyyah's poem at the conclusion of her book *al-Muntakhab* (al-Bā'ūniyyah, 2016). Following the fourth and longest chapter on

love, she expresses her profound love by praising the Prophet and yearning for union with him. Her verses embody a heartfelt longing that transcends mere commands, offering a more intimate and spiritually enriching perspective on love for the Prophet:

“They grazed near Him
in the garden of union,
and drank from contemplation’s cups
Filled as promised
with a pure wine
from the vision of true oneness”(al-Bā‘ūniyyah, 2016, p. 159)
“They are the masters!
I was joined to them
and we stood alone in oneness,
And drank the wine, not from cups,
but from jars, in the tavern
where the oath was sworn.
We drank it until we were drunk
in pre-eternity where drunkenness
lasts forever.
So you see us drunk on wine,
though appearing sober
to disguise the affair.

And gracing us by passing round wine
is the most praised noble one,
Muḥammad, chosen from the best,”(al-Bā‘ūniyyah, 2016, p. 163)

2- Safar Islamic Studies Curriculum

The 2018 edition of the Safar Elementary Curriculum, Books 1–6, covers topics in five areas: Beliefs, *Fiqh*, Islamic History, *Sīrah*, and Personal Development (Ali & Ahmed, 2018b). Unlike the ICO series, the Safar curriculum does not include a section on the Qur’ān within its Islamic Studies series; instead, the Qur’ān is taught separately. Additionally, Safar splits its history section into two parts: “Islamic History,” which covers the stories of prophets who preceded Prophet Muḥammad, and “Sīrah,” which is dedicated to the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. The “Manners” section in the ICO series is rebranded as “Personal Development” in Safar’s curriculum.

Most notably, the revised edition of Books 7 and 8 for secondary students (ages 11–16) introduces three new sections: Contemporary Issues, Lifestyle and Communities, and Spiritual Development. This addition suggests that the editors have become more aware of the importance of making Islamic education relevant to Muslims living in the U.K. and addressing the need for spiritual education.

Of particular importance is the new section on spiritual development. What is Safar’s approach to achieving spiritual development? What topics are included in this section?

In Book 7, the section on spiritual development includes a lesson on the Qur’ān and a lesson on the soul. The discussion on the Qur’ān emphasizes the human need for divine guidance and highlights that the Qur’ān is a means to build a relationship with the Creator. However, the book makes no mention of the spiritual benefits of reciting the Qur’ān or its role in the purification of the soul and the inner realization of truth. Furthermore, the critical practice of *dhikr*—a core component of the mystical tradition and an indispensable means for seekers on their journey to the Divine—is entirely absent from this section. In mystical education, *dhikr* is one of the four core principles of Sufism, as emphasized by ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūniyyah.

The section also includes a lesson on the soul. While this addition is promising—since knowledge of the soul is crucial for the process of purification, which is essential to the unveiling of truth (*irfān*)—the discussion is limited. It describes the stages of the soul, from its creation in the pre-conception realm to its final destination in Paradise or Hell (Ali & Ahmed, 2018c, pp. 158–164).

Book 8 builds on this topic, focusing on the purification of the soul. For the first time in the entire Safar series, the term *tazkiyah* appears (Ali & Ahmed, 2020, pp. 202–212). While this development is encouraging, dedicating only 10 pages

out of a 200-page book to spiritual development and purification of the soul is insufficient to achieve effective spiritual education.

While the Safar Curriculum shows promising improvements in the development of spiritual education, I think dedicating only 10 pages in 200 pages book for spiritual development and the purification of the soul is insufficient to achieve a successful spiritual education.

In mystical education, knowledge of the soul is the starting point of the spiritual journey and an essential prerequisite for attaining inner and experiential knowledge. Al-Ghazālī explains in his *Alchemy of Happiness* that the process of spiritual refinement consists of four parts: knowledge of self, knowledge of God, knowledge of the world as it truly is, and knowledge of the next world as it truly is. In this treatise, Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that knowledge of God begins with knowledge of the self (al-Ghazzālī, 2017).

Therefore, Islamic curricula must dedicate more in-depth discussions to the soul, its reality, and the process of its purification. Such a focus is vital for nurturing the inner spiritual journey of students and enabling them to acquire a deeper connection with the Divine.

3- Weekend Learning Series

Targeting weekend schools, the *Weekend Learning Series* focuses solely on teaching the basics of practicing Islam in the simplest manner. The series emphasizes four main areas: beliefs, messengers, *ibādāt* (worship), and *'ādāb*

(manners). Lessons on God primarily aim to establish a master-servant relationship between humans and the Divine, with no mention of a relationship based on love (Nuri & Ahmed, 2018a). Furthermore, there is a significant focus on God's punishments, presented as reminders and tests for humanity (Nuri & Ahmed, 2018b).

The discussion about Prophet Muḥammad also reflects a limited approach, emphasizing a teacher-student relationship with the Prophet (Nuri & Ahmed, 2018a). In contrast, mystical education highlights the theme of praising the Prophet as the caretaker of his people in both this life and on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet himself spoke of his relationship with his followers as one of brotherhood and fatherhood, a perspective that fosters a deeper emotional and spiritual connection.

While the *Weekend Learning Series* succeeds in teaching the fundamental practices of Islam, it falls short in incorporating spiritual education. This lack of focus on the inner dimensions of faith, including love for God and the Prophet, limits its ability to provide a holistic understanding of Islam.

Tajdid: Renewal

Tajdīd linguistically is derived from the root word “*Ja-da-da*” which is to renew or to make something new. It is the opposite of old and ancient.(Rawaas, 2010) *Tajdīd* does not denote the renewal of religion itself through addition or

omission, for the principal foundations of the religion are fixed and Islam is not in need of a substantive or essential renewal of this kind. Instead, Muslim thinkers use *tajdīd* to mean the renewal of our understanding of the religion – i.e., renewal of the tradition and updating of interpretations produced in specific historical contexts.(Al-Shamri, 2010)

In Egypt, there have historically been many calls for *tajdīd* in the teaching of Islamic education at al-Azhar. Muhammad ‘Abduh, for instance, criticized the traditional method of instruction at al-Azhar. According to Riḍā, ‘Abduh disliked the older style of Arabic prose used in teaching and emphasized the need for reform in both writing and pedagogy. He aimed to simplify the language of Arab thinkers, stating: “My second goal is reform of the way of writing the Arabic language in government correspondences, newspapers, and communications between people.”(Elston, 2020, p. 166) He also wanted to scholars to write in a simplified language. He criticized al-Azhar graduates for writing in a way that is difficult for people to understand or comprehend using rhymed prose (*al-saj* ‘), Qur’anic rhyming (*fawāṣil*), and assonance (*jinās*).(Emārah, 1988) This older ornate type of discourse was also found in the pedagogical works used at al-Azhar for religious instruction. During ‘Abduh’s time, the textbooks taught at al-Azhar were base texts (*matn*) and commentaries (*sharḥ*). ‘Abduh believed in a need to author new religious textbooks in a simplified Arabic language that is easy to understand. He believed that simplifying the language of religious instruction was one of his main elements for *tajdīd*. But this ideas on *tajdīd* were met with strong

opposition from the traditionalists, who preferred the study of classical texts, base-texts (matn), and commentaries written over the span of thirteen centuries.

Ali Gomaa viewed modification and simplification as essential to *tajdīd* but expressed reservations about some approaches to simplifying *turāth* texts. He identified acceptable simplification as the removal of inappropriate content, superstitions, or errors, provided the original text remains available alongside the simplified version (Gomaa, 2009). For example, Dār al-Kutb al-Masriyah published *turāth* books in two editions: one with the full text, including explicit terms, and another modified version with such terms removed. Gomaa approved of this approach, as it preserved the integrity of *turāth* while making it accessible to readers who might otherwise avoid it due to content unsuited to their age or background.

Ali Gomaa also approves summarization as a form of modification, provided it preserves the scientific language and key Arabic terminology essential for understanding *turāth*. However, he strongly warns against oversimplification that diminishes the Islamic tradition's value. He disapproves of simplifications that compromise the richness of the Arabic language, as this disconnects Muslims from the 'ulamā' and the *turāth*. (Gomaa, 2009) While figures like Muhammad 'Abduh criticized the complexity of classical Arabic and called for its simplification, Gomaa sees this as a threat to preserving the *turāth*. He emphasizes that the language of *turāth* is integral to its meaning, cautioning against summarization into modern textbooks that lose the form and depth of the original texts. Such practices,

according to Gomaa, harm the tradition by detaching readers from authoritative commentary and undermining the interpretative frameworks central to classical Islamic learning (Elston, 2020, p. 207).

Thus, *tajdīd* serves as a dynamic force for revitalizing human engagement with Islamic tradition, fostering creative and innovative approaches to understanding and addressing contemporary issues. Rather than altering the core principles of Islam, *tajdīd* focuses on renewing how these principles are understood and applied within modern contexts. It encourages the *ummah* to reclaim its position as a leading civilization by harmonizing divine guidance with the universal laws governing human progress. By advancing epistemological, civilizational, moral, and spiritual development, *tajdīd* ensures that Islamic education and scholarship remain relevant and capable of navigating the complexities of the modern world (Imamah, 2004).

Conclusion And Recommendations

Conclusions:

- The analysis of the ICO, Safar, and Weekend Islamic Studies curricula reveals a predominant focus on knowledge attained through rational faculties. Such knowledge is considered incomplete and, as Al-Ghazālī asserts, incapable of producing certainty (*yaqīn*) (Halstead, 2004).
- The analysis of the three curricula discussed in this paper shows that most research on the development of Islamic education in America emphasizes

relevance, social issues, and civic education, with little attention paid to spirituality.

- The study reveals the marginalization of knowledge derived from inner experience. Experiential knowledge is essential to achieve a higher level of understanding and realization of the Divine Truth, Islamic studies curricula must align with the Islamic view of the spiritual nature of knowledge and humanity (Halstead, 2004, p. 219).
- Spiritual knowledge is essential as it awakens moral and spiritual consciousness, guiding individuals toward a life of faith (*īmān*), virtuous action (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*), and certainty (*yaqīn*), which lies at the heart of the Qur’ān's message.

Recommendations:

- The study suggests that the incorporation of Sufi teachings can play a significant role in enhancing the knowledge and awareness of God, nurturing Divine Love of God and Prophet Mohamed, and helpin the Muslim community preserve and maintain the faith, help Muslims lead an Islamically meaningful life in the multicultural society.
- One solution to the lack of spiritual education in Islamic curricula lies in the application of *tajdīd*. If implemented effectively, *tajdīd* can lead to a revival of spirituality and a moderate form of *taṣawwuf* (Ahmad Dallal, 1993).
- This revival can be achieved through the simplification and modification of *Sufi* literature, making it accessible to curriculum developers.

- The study proposes supporting emerging institutions with Sufi inclinations, such as Zaytuna College, as part of reviving spiritual education. These institutions place greater emphasis on the mystical approach to knowledge and purification. Alongside the diverse nature of Islamic education in the U.S. (Daun & Arjmand, 2018), they are well-positioned to play a critical role in revitalizing the tradition of mystical education in the future.
- The author argues that the study of the Qur'ān through the lens of *tazkiyah* can help address these issues and reintegrate spirituality into Islamic education.
- To address the lack of integration of the mystical tradition in Islamic Studies curricula, it is essential to understand the dominant cultural and theological groups that hinder this effort. Niyozov observed that Islamic education has often been oriented toward theology, culture, nation, or civilization (Niyozov & Memon, 2011)
- Finally, further research is needed to explore critical questions surrounding the integration of mystical traditions in Islamic education. These questions include: What organizations and individuals are responsible for designing Islamic curricula? What are the theological and cultural orientations of these groups? Why is the *Sufi* tradition rejected by the majority of leading Islamic schools and mosques? These questions can help deepen our understanding of the challenges and guide the development of solutions to improve the quality of Islamic education.



ISSN: 2617-958X

المجلة الإلكترونية الشاملة متعددة التخصصات
Electronic Interdisciplinary Miscellaneous Journal
العدد التاسع والسبعون شهر (1) 2025
Issue 77, (1) 2025

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