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EXPLORING GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAMS, SERVICES,
AND PRACTICES IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS
IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Fatma Anwer Khamis Al-Lawati

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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2003

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Gifted Education Programs, Services, and Practices
in Islamic Schools in the United States

by

Fatma Anwer Al-Lawati, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2003

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This study explored the state of gifted education in Islamic schools in the United States, focusing on school organization and elementary school teachers' practices in planning and implementing instructional and curricular experiences for gifted students and average students. The study utilized mixed methods, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys addressed teacher practices and obtained information about resources available for gifted students in Islamic schools. A focus group method was employed to understand better teachers' practices with gifted students.

The study involved 32 principals and 157 teachers. Five schools participated in the focus group discussions. Descriptive statistics were used to report the presence of identification and program services for gifted students and of classroom instructional and curricular practices. Mean differences, standard deviations, effect sizes, and p values of t tests comparing teachers' practices with gifted and average students were

calculated. Data from focus groups and principal interviews were analyzed using the qualitative methods of memoranda writing and matrix analyses across and within schools and categories.

Findings suggest that Islamic schools in the United States have limited programs for gifted students. A majority of teachers in Islamic schools differentiate little between gifted and average students in instructional strategies. When differentiation occurs, it is very basic. Further, several factors contribute to the general lack of gifted education in the Islamic schools, including conceptual, resource, and organizational issues. Teachers at Islamic schools present Islamic values to all students without differentiation between gifted and average students. Although all the Islamic schools were found to value the teachings of Islamic principles to their students, most Islamic school curricula are not found to integrate these values within content areas.

This study suggests that Islamic schools should articulate a clear philosophical, theoretical, and practical concept in regard to gifted education, which should be supported by professional development. Further, Islamic schools' philosophies should articulate a clear method for curriculum integration that merges secular and religious education.

(156 pages)

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Fatma Anwer Al-Lawati

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement	2
Research Questions	5
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
Theoretical Information	6
Research on Gifted Education Practices	8
Gifted Programs Standards	14
The Cultural Roles in Determining Students' Needs	17
Summary	27
III. METHODOLOGY.....	29
Research Design.....	29
Instrumentation for Survey Study	30
Pilot Study.....	32
Instrumentation for Focus Groups	33
Data Collection.....	34
Data Analysis	41
IV. RESULTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES	48
Respondent Characteristics	48
Serving the Gifted Learners in Islamic Schools.....	52
Classroom Instructional and Curriculum Practices.....	59

	Page
V. RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS	73
Respondent Characteristics	73
Differentiation	76
Integration	83
VI. DISCUSSION	92
Limitation	92
Gifted Learners in the Islamic Schools	93
Conclusions	104
REFERENCES	108
APPENDICES	112
Appendix A: The Invitation Letter to the Islamic Schools' Principals	113
Appendix B: An Explanation Letter and Information about a New Schedule	116
Appendix C: Principal's Cover Letter.....	118
Appendix D: Criteria Used to Identify Gifted Education in the Islamic Schools in the United States (Principal Survey)	120
Appendix E: Informed Consent	127
Appendix F: Practices in Applying Islamic Values (Teacher Survey).....	130
VITA.....	144

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Demographic Characteristics of Teachers in Islamic Schools	49
2. Teachers' Educational Level in Islamic Schools in the United States	50
3. Teacher's Classroom Experiences	51
4. Means and Standard Deviation of the Total Enrollment by Gender and Religion Affiliation.....	52
5. Frequency and Percent of Identification Methods.....	53
6. Frequency and Percent of Schools That Have Gifted Programs	54
7. Frequency and Programs of the Programs.....	55
8. Frequency and Percent of the Enrichment Programs in the Islamic Schools	56
9. Characteristics of the Continuous Programs in the Islamic Schools	58
10. Frequency and Percent of the Early Entrance Program in the Islamic Schools.....	59
11. Means and Standard Deviation of the Students Benefit from Early Entrance ...	60
12. Provision of Information on Both Gifted and Average Students by Teachers Who Claim to Differentiate.....	61
13. Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Instructional Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students	63
14. Means Differences, Standard Deviation, Effect Size, and Level of Significance of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Instructional Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students	65
15. Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Curriculum Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students.....	68

Table	Page
16. Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and Level of Significance of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Curriculum Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students.....	70
17. Frequency of Teachers Participation in Study by School and by Grade	74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Paragraph of the summary memorandum.....	46
2. Matrix related to the theme Islamic values.....	47
3. Comparison and contrast memoranda	47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of individual differences captures educators' attention and becomes an important factor in developing curriculum. In particular, educators from the field of gifted education have sought the optimal match between gifted students' learning needs and various curriculum elements.

The experts from the field of gifted education have paved a way for theoretical and empirical literature to flourish and develop in order to examine the concept of individual differences. Gifted students' characteristics have been examined to gain a deeper understanding for arranging curriculum activities that accommodate learners' needs. Moreover, the movement towards establishing curriculum elements that meet gifted students' needs has led towards setting professional standards to guide practice. However, the theoretical, empirical, and professional literature is not the sole source of information in determining best educational practices. Because education plays a significant role in transmitting and transforming cultural values and roles from one generation to the next, culture also must play a significant role in determining curriculum experiences for individuals.

While the four elements of theory, research, professional standards, and culture play an important role in fashioning gifted education practice in the schools in general, the manner in which these elements influence practice in Islamic schools could be particularly interesting, given the emerging religious prominence of Islam in American

culture. Education is an important value in Muslim cultures in general. Its elements and values are deeply rooted in the Islamic religion.

Problem Statement

According to Haynes (1998), "Islam will become the second largest religion after Christianity in the United States" (p. 17). Furthermore, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States (International Information Programs, 2001). Recent estimates show that the Muslim population is approximately seven million in the United States. Further, Ba-Yunus and Siddiqui (1998) indicated that 36.8% of the Muslim population in the United States is between the ages of 5 and 15.

The rapid growth of the Islamic population in the United States has increased the need to establish schools that foster Muslim children's religion and educational needs that have not been met in the public American schools (Elkhalidy, 1996; Istanbuli, 2000;). Recent estimates indicate that approximately 250 to 300 private Islamic schools have been established in United States (K. Kayworth, personal communication, May 13, 2002).

However, in spite of their recent growth a review of several databases reveals that there are only a few studies carried out on Islamic schools in the United State. For example, Elkhalidy (1996) explored parents' choice for enrolling their children in Islamic schools. Her findings indicated the factor of religion as the primary reason for parents enrolling their children in Islamic schools. According to Istanbuli (2000, p. 2) "Muslim parents in the United States are faced with the dilemma of wanting their

children to be 'Americans' involved in all spheres of American life....At the same time they want their children to be 'good Muslims.'" Muslim students, as members of the Muslim community on one hand and as American citizens on the other hand, are expected to be able to find balance between their rights and responsibilities (Selby, 1994).

In another study, Omran (1993) investigated the Islamic schools' directions, objectives, and roles in the Muslim community. One of those directions was the balance between the individual and the social good. Omran suggested that, in Islamic schools, "at no time has individual excellence been sacrificed for the sake of the social good, nor has the social good been given second place to that of the individual" (p. 249). One may extrapolate from the valuing of the individual in social context that individual differences are to be honored.

Given the rapid growth of the Islamic population in the United States and in light of recent events, a better understanding of Muslims in the United States is essential. Hence, more study of Islamic schools is needed. Further, because the acts of September 11, 2001, involved extremist Muslims, intensified interest in Muslims in the United States has occurred. There is some residual concern that these Muslims constitute a threat to American security. However, young Muslim students in the Islamic schools "are proud both of being Muslim and being American" (Omran, 1993, p. 256).

At times of international threats to the security or primacy of the United States' position in world affairs, the American government has shown an increased interest in

focusing on the capability and leadership of its young gifted students. For example, following the 1957 launch of the Russian rocket, Sputnik, and during the 1980s economic threat from Germany and Japan, increased appropriations of federal dollars were conferred for better provisions in schools for gifted learners (Clark, 2002; Gallagher & Gallagher, 1994). In a similar manner, the highest appropriation in the history of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act followed the attacks of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (J. Clarenbaech, personal communication, June 4, 2002). However, this does not imply a direct cause-effect relationship between moments of crisis and increases in gifted education funding; instead it suggests the belief in gifted learners' potential to contribute to the society in all areas of human effort (Clark). In the post September 11 world, with its increased interest in Muslims in the United States and increased federal funds for gifted programs, it would be worthwhile to investigate the role of gifted education in Islamic schools in the United States.

According to Clark (2002), "Giftedness at the highest level can be found in every cultural group" (p. 497). In the United States there are approximately 250-300 Islamic schools. Among the Muslim students in the Islamic schools, there are some who could be expected to contribute and lead Islamic society in America in order to provide a better understanding of Islamic values and norms in the context of greater American society, to the benefit of both the Islamic community in America and of the nation in general.

This research, therefore, explored the state of gifted education in Islamic schools in the United States. Since the practices of gifted education are more known at the elementary school level, this research explored gifted programs at elementary school level. The focus was on schools' organization and teachers' daily practices in planning and implementing the curriculum experiences of their students. Various surveys were administrated to determine the extent to which the educational practices that have been suggested by the educators in gifted education for meeting the needs of gifted students have been employed in Islamic schools.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research:

1. Do Islamic schools in the United States have a program that serves gifted students' needs?
2. What types of services are provided for gifted students in Islamic schools in the United States?
3. Do teachers in the regular classrooms in Islamic schools modify their practices and differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted students? Are there differences in these practices for the two groups of gifted and average students?
4. Do Islamic values and the Muslim culture have any impact on gifted students in Islamic schools? Specifically, do the teachers integrate Islamic values in their services for gifted students? If so, how?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is organized around four sources of information that can be used to develop quality educational programs. The sources consist of theoretical information, research perspectives, professional standards, and cultural influences. Attention to each of these four is needed to produce programs that are well grounded in best practice and yet realistically address the day-to-day demands of teaching the actual students present in the classroom.

Theoretical Information

The theoretical basis for gifted education relies heavily upon the notion of respecting individual differences in children. Individual differences occur among students as developmental differences and are recognized by educators in the field of education in general, and more particularly in gifted education, through attaining a match between a student's needs and the curriculum offered to the student.

Developmental Differences

For example, Vygotsky's concepts of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) defines an individual's learning process as the outcome of the interaction between two factors, the child's actual development level and his or her potential learning ability under the form of instruction (McMahon, 1996). In other words, "ZPD is that area in which children can achieve a goal with the support and guidance of a knowledgeable

other” (McMahon, p. 60). Determining a student’s ZPD helps to capture the student’s optimal instructional level, helping an educator to plan curriculum accordingly.

Curriculum Match

Likewise, educators in the field of gifted education recognize the importance of the match between students’ ability and the curriculum. Meister and Harold (1977) stated that “educators agree that the optimum learning situation is one in which the tasks set [for] the learner are within the range of his ability but difficult enough to require considerable effort” (p. 70). Furthermore, Tomlinson (1995) has indicated that the similarities among children are due to their characteristics as human beings, yet the differences among children represent their own personality. These similarities and differences require attention. Acknowledging learning differences among the children that can be illustrated in their ability levels such as learning speed and ability for abstract thinking is basically the key to the knowledge that children from the same age group have different educational needs. Hence, “while the goal for each student is challenge and substantial growth, teachers must often define *challenge and growth* differently in response to students’ varying interests and readiness levels” (Tomlinson, p. 2). Additionally, Feldhusen, VanTassel-Baska, and Seeley (1989) have discussed the importance of the optimal match between students’ ability and curriculum planning. They indicate that the curriculum should consider all students’ ability levels, and that gifted students have a right to an appropriate education that matches their ability level.

Research on Gifted Education Practices

While the existence of a right to an optimal curriculum match may be debated, a research base does exist that supports many differentiation practices. In the following section, a brief introduction to research for gifted education that would guide practice is presented. The first part reviews research demonstrating the effectiveness of differentiated education practices. The review then presents studies that indicate that differentiated practices are generally not implemented.

Effectiveness of Differentiation

In a significant review, Shore, Cornell, Robinson, and Ward (1991) investigated the research-based knowledge of 101 practices recommended as important by experts in gifted education. By reviewing a list of a 100 books in the field of gifted education, the 101 practices emerged. Their next step was to conduct an ERIC search to locate journal articles, conference papers, latest materials, and magazines dealing with giftedness. Once the appropriate literature was located, a systematic investigation was employed to examine weaknesses and strengths of the literature related to each practice. Seven categories were then used to classify the practices founded on the strength of their research bases: (a) recommended practices strongly supported by research; (b) recommended practices with some support; (c) recommended practices with elements of both support and refutation; (d) recommended practices on which there is insufficient research to make a judgment about support; (e) recommended practices applicable to all children; (f) recommended practices for which there is some evidence that they are

inappropriate; and (g) recommended practices strongly refuted. To define these categories, the authors defined *strong support* as a research base that demonstrates both efficacy in student outcomes as well as appropriateness for gifted children. *Some support* was defined as a practice that had value either from an efficacy standpoint or for appropriateness, but not necessarily both.

Under the heading of curriculum and policies, acceleration was found to be one of the strongly supported practices. No one specific form of acceleration is best for all gifted students, but among the options supported by the research is content-specific acceleration within a regular classroom setting.

Other recommendations that had some support included (a) adapting the level of intervention to the level of giftedness, (b) grouping by ability, (c) stressing affective as well as cognitive outcomes, (d) using complex, high reading-level materials, (e) providing qualitatively different curriculum, (f) taking learning styles into account, and (g) requiring professional level products.

Beginning in 1989 and continuing through the present, a major research effort has been conducted by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT). The findings of various studies extended further research support to practices supported by Shore et al. (1991). For instance, Delcourt, Loyd, Cornell, and Goldbern (1994) confirmed the importance of a gifted program in enhancing gifted students' achievement and attitudes toward the learning process. They attempted to assess the effects of gifted programs on learning outcomes of gifted elementary school students. Over 1,000 elementary school children in second and third grade across 10

states participated in the study. Several sources were used for collecting data, including students, parents, and teachers. The findings suggested that children who are in special gifted programs, including within-class programs that used differentiated curriculum strategies, showed substantially higher achievement levels than their gifted peers not attending the gifted program.

Purcell (1993) used a qualitative case study of gifted students to determine the effects on children of eliminating a gifted program that had previously existed at their school. To achieve data triangulation, multiple sources were used, such as documents, and more specifically videotapes of educational hearings of individuals' opinions about elimination of the gifted student programs. Nineteen parents were interviewed directly, and in order to verify the findings, surveys were mailed to 49 additional parents of gifted students who have attended a gifted program that was later eliminated. The survey included 10 items that corresponded to the questions used for the parents who were directly interviewed. Two of the study's major findings directly address the issue of the effects of differentiated instruction on gifted students. In this study, when the differentiation provided by the gifted program was eliminated, students (a) experienced a decline in motivation to achieve at the high levels of which they were capable, and (b) began to underachieve on the traditional curriculum.

A quantitative, longitudinal, nationwide study found similar results. This study included 1,010 elementary school students from four districts that required "that teachers have specialized training in the characteristics and needs of gifted learners and encourage their staff to complete graduate courses on topics such as creativity,

characteristics of the gifted, and thinking skills” (Delcourt & Evans, 1994, p. 6). The study aimed to assess students’ changes during their first and second year in a gifted program across four types of program arrangements which were; within-class programs, pull out programs, separate classes, and special schools. The study implemented quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve valuable information about the exemplary model in terms of leadership, atmosphere and environment, communication, curriculum and instruction, and attention to student needs. In addition, the study attempted to provide a comprehensive view of how these programs are implemented. Two evaluation tools were created to document program components. Further, four assessment tools of parallel items were created for students, teachers, and administrators to facilitate the comparison across similar concepts. A triangulation technique was used to check the reliability and validity of the data. The study found several characteristics that were consistent across all four types of programs, including with-in class programs. One of these characteristics was teacher flexibility in matching curriculum and instruction with student needs. Effective teachers employed a variety of “instructional techniques to complement student characteristics” (p. 10).

In sum, the research base for differentiation shows that it has a positive impact on student achievement. Although specific differentiation strategies are not necessarily supported by the research, the fact of differentiation, including the application of a variety of strategies, is supported.

Differentiation Application

A large-scale national study has suggested that classroom teachers make only very minor modifications in their teaching for gifted students (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, & Emmons, 1993). A stratified random sample of approximately 7,300 third- and fourth-grade elementary school teachers from different ethnic groups was selected to participate in the Classroom Practices Survey conducted by the National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT). Teachers were asked to respond to the Classroom Practices Questionnaire (CPQ) to report their classroom practices behavior with average and gifted students. Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, and Emmons found that elementary school teachers from private and public schools make only a few modifications in their classroom instructions to meet the needs of gifted students. The few teachers who modify their instruction indicated that they are likely to assign capable students in their classroom to advanced reading, independent projects, and enrichment worksheets. In addition, a few teachers eliminate materials that students have already mastered and provide gifted students with more opportunities to work at an advanced level.

Follow-up research was conducted by the NRC/GT to examine 46 elementary school teachers' practices in delivering curriculum and instruction in the regular classroom (Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993). Structured observations and semistructured interviews with the classroom teachers were carried out to determine the extent to which gifted students received curriculum modification in the classroom across the five subject areas of reading, language, mathematics, science, and social

studies. The findings indicate that gifted and talented students receive a limited amount of curriculum differentiation across the five subject areas. They spent 84% of the time in activities that involve no differentiation experiences.

A study by Gentry, Gable, and Springer (2000) puts the results of Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, & Emmons (1993) and Westberg et al. (1993) in the greater school context. Gentry et al. used a survey instrument to measure 787 gifted and non-gifted middle school students' on the variables of interests, challenges, choices, and enjoyment in learning. A MANOVA was used to determine if gifted students differ from other students who are not identified as a gifted. Statistical significance ($F = 3.02$; $df = 4,781$; $p = .017$) was found between gifted and non-gifted students on all four variables. However, the R^2 value was .015, which indicates a very small effect size. While these findings suggest that the gifted middle school students did not have an opportunity to participate in problem solving activities or other activities that aroused their curiosity or that they rarely were given any choices, their attitudes toward school were essentially much the same as their non-identified classmates. In other words, differentiation does not occur for any student on any particular dimension—ability, interest, or need.

A recent study that was conducted by Johnsen, Haensly, Ryser, and Ford (2002) used qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the kind of changes that teachers make in their classrooms for gifted students. The sample of the study included 8 principals, 74 teachers, 17 mentor teachers, and 18 community representatives. Six sites participated in the study; one was urban, and five were rural. The finding of the

study that has been implemented for two years indicated that classroom teachers could learn to make changes in their instructional practice that would be more responsive to the needs of gifted level learners. Where those changes were more transformational (i.e., significant and numerous alterations of classroom practices), students experienced “more satisfaction with school, increases in confidence, feelings of acceptance, and self-esteem” (p. 61). Where changes were merely conservational (i.e., supporting what the teacher was already doing), students reported little or no satisfaction.

Corresponding with the theoretical perspective of individual differences as suggested by Vygotsky, educators from the field of gifted education have conducted research concerning the optimal match between gifted students’ characteristics and the needed curriculum and instruction. The findings from the empirical data suggest that gifted students’ learning styles and characteristics are different from that of their age-mate nongifted learners. Therefore, their needs for curriculum differentiation are significantly important in helping them to achieve. The research has shown that classroom teachers tend to make only minor modifications in their practices to accommodate gifted learners’ needs. However, it also shows that differentiation has a positive effect on students both academically and affectively.

Gifted Program Standards

Given the growth and continued development in the field of gifted education, there are grounds for scholars to establish standards of excellence in gifted education. Standards serve as guidelines for the development and improvement of programs (Reis,

2001), and make up the third basis, following theory and research, for the discussion of gifted education in Islamic schools.

In 1998 the National Association for the Gifted Children (NAGC) established standards that permit education professionals to assess the degree to which their programs for gifted learners meet a level of excellence. The NAGC standards are divided into seven essential criteria of gifted education programs: (a) program design, (b) program administration and management, (c) socio-emotional guidance and counseling, (d) student identification, (e) curriculum and instruction, (f) professional development, and (g) program evaluation. In the standards document, each criterion is described first, and then followed by guiding principles that are stated at two levels, minimum and exemplary. In addition, Landrum, Callahan, and Shaklee (2001) have provided extended guidelines for each principle, establishing a description, rationale, benefits, potential barriers, standards and sample outcomes. In the following section, some of these criteria are discussed, based on their relation to the purpose of this study.

Shaklee (2001) discussed the importance of comprehensive services in designing a program for gifted education that is supported philosophically, theoretically, and empirically. In order to design a program that serves gifted individuals, the author emphasizes the importance of providing a continuum of services for gifted learners. Her discussion is based on evidence that giftedness is multi-faceted, and can be manifest in different ways and degrees. Therefore, a single program for gifted education will lack the power to reach each child's needs or to ensure appropriate educational opportunities that address gifted and talented children's educational

requirements. "The services for gifted learners are not an addition to their school day; they are the means by which students learn, grow, and develop" (p. 4). Gifted education should be embedded in the philosophical foundation that reflects the community's beliefs and values in order to identify specific needs for gifted learners.

Program management is one of the issues that concern experts in the field. Landrum, Cox, and Evans (2001) advocated for the importance of establishing "a systematic means of developing, implementing, and managing services" (p. 15). They indicated the importance of the dual relationship between the school program and the gifted education program. The related services of gifted education should be integrated with the whole school program to help create an environment that encourages the exchange of ideas and enhances positive outcomes. However, because of the additional demands placed on teachers to differentiate for gifted students in their classrooms, resources and materials that are not typically a part of the grade level should support gifted education.

The importance of the curricular and instructional opportunities to serve the needs of gifted learners also was discussed. Chandler (2001) indicated the significant role of curriculum elements in shaping talent development. Adopting differentiated curriculum strategies and modifying classroom structures to meet the unique needs of gifted populations could achieve this. An effective approach in meeting gifted learners' readiness is the combination of the three elements: acceleration, enrichment, and individualization. "While these elements should certainly be present in programming for all children, the difference for gifted learners is related to the need for a greater

depth, complexity, and so forth” (p. 56).

These standards, then, provide an additional basis, beyond theory and research, for evaluating gifted education practices in a given school. That these standards point out the need to match curricular practices to needs of individual students is important.

The Cultural Roles in Determining Students' Needs

Culture represents the fourth source that contributes to the developmental of gifted programs in a particular school. Culture can be understood as a group of people who share values, traditions, social and political relationships, history, and religion (Nieto, 1996). Cultural values and beliefs are transmitted from one generation to the next through education. Education also transforms “the cultural values, and legacy of a particular society”, consequently, “education plays both a conservative and a radical role in the progress of civilization” (Hashim, 1999, p. 27). Islamic schools, the focus of this research, would have an obvious role in raising American Muslim students. Particularly, Islamic values do not just occupy a small portion of a Muslims' life; they often shape every aspect of the Muslim's personal and social being. The school would play a significant role in transmitting the Islamic culture through its education. This section highlights key values and their significance in outlining educational characteristics in an Islamic gifted educational system.

The Value of Education in Islam

The call for education and acquiring knowledge in Islam is based on its

significant role in modifying a person's humanity and its impact on the social life of human beings. The purpose of education, as outlined by Islamic principles, is to produce humans "who are not [only] rich in knowledge but who [also] are noble in character and who can promote righteousness in the society" (Kysilka & Qadri, 1997, p. 7). To reach these goals, it is important to build a sense of accountability and responsibility achieved by a personal, direct connection to almighty Allah (God).

Therefore, the Islamic definition:

[Education] should cater therefore for the growth of Man in all its aspects: spiritual, intellectual, imaginative, physical, scientific, linguistic, both individually, and collectively and motive all aspects towards goodness and the attainment of perfection. The Ultimate aim of Muslim education lies in the realization of complete submission to almighty Allah on the level of the individual, the community and humanity at large. (Ashraf as quoted in Sahadat, 1997, p. 24)

Based on the above definition, education in Islam "is seen as a process through which a child's total personality is developed in preparation for this life and the Akhirah or Afterlife" (Parker-Jenkins, 1995, p. 38).

Therefore, Islam encourages its followers to pursue knowledge. The importance of acquiring knowledge is implied in the first revelation, "Proclaim! (or read!) In the name Of thy Lord and Cherisher who created" (96:1).¹ Islam treats the act of acquiring education as an act of worship. Hence, Muslims, regardless of their race or sex, are obligated to pursue knowledge. The Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammad

¹ The Holly Qur'an is arranged in 114 *Surahs* (chapters). Each *Surah* consists of a number of *Ayah* (verse). The most convenient form to name *Surah* and *Ayah* is (96:1) which means the number 96 *Ayah* from the first *Surah* (Yusuf 'Ali, 1995)

(pbuh)² says, "Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim man and woman" (Parker-Jenkins, 1995, p. 37). Therefore, at Badr, the first Islamic battle against nonbelievers, each hostage from the battle was asked to teach ten Muslim men in order to gain his freedom. Moreover, the first public school in the Arabian Peninsula was established in the Prophet Mohammad's (pbuh) mosques (Al-Otaibi & Rashid, 1997). Islamic rulers established schools and colleges that were accessible to everyone in the community, whether rich or poor, even to slaves (Khan, 1983).

Islam provides its followers with guidelines that help them improve their lives. Several aspects of a Muslim's life are directed towards the teachings of God. These teachings outline the boundaries to which Muslims are restricted. The area between the boundaries is kept empty for Muslims to fill based on their needs, and social and cultural issues, at the same time not defying the boundaries or guidelines. For example, Islamic teaching does not stipulate specific issues that are related to schooling systems, curriculum, gifted education, and special education. On the other hand, it invites Muslims to practice their role as members of the Islamic community and establish an educational environment that is rooted in Islamic teachings and limited within the Islamic guidelines. The following section expands the discussion regarding the value of education and explores the concepts of giftedness in Islam, based on the teaching of Prophet Mohamed (pbuh) in his Hadith, the Holy Qur'an, and other resources such as the sayings of religious leaders whose doctrines stem from the Hadith and the Holy Qur'an.

² To show their respect, Muslims use the phrase "Peace be upon him" after they say or write Prophet Mohammad's name. In this research, I have chosen to indicate this with the parenthetic phrase (pbuh). A similar phrase "Peace be upon him" is used whenever Muslims say or write the names of other prophets.

Exploring the Concept of Giftedness from the Islamic Point of View

What is an Islamic concept of giftedness? Is there anything in Islamic teachings that provides gifted individuals with specific guidelines? Islamic teachings recognize that people are different. Their differences are not restricted to color or physical characteristics. People also are different in their mental abilities and innate characteristics. Islam invites everybody to acquire knowledge without aiming special recommendations at a specific set of people. The effort of acquiring knowledge is related to one's own attainment. Imam Ali (as)³ said: "The worth of every man [person] is in his [or her] attainments" (Nahjul-Balagha as cited in Imani, 1998, p. 69).

"Attainment" includes a strong invitation to obtain knowledge, and indicates that a person's value and "worth would be in accordance with the status of knowledge and attainment he holds" (Imani, 1998, p. 69). Further, attainment also embraces a strong conclusion regarding the person's effort that should be aligned with his ability in achieving a distinctive educational position. However, an Islamic recommendation in any aspects of Muslim life cannot be understood independently from its connection to almighty Allah (God). Likewise, Islamic educational elements are built upon the belief in the ultimate power of almighty Allah, the creator of everything in this globe. In Islamic education, a gifted education system would need to be based on this belief to function at its best. Four components could be used as a foundation for developing gifted education standards in Islam, as presented in the material that follows.

³ Shi'ite Muslims use it for the 12 successors of the prophet Mohammad. It is derived from Arabic for "peace be upon him."

The Ultimate Sources of Knowledge

The source of all knowledge in Islam is almighty Allah, the creator of the whole world, the knower of all things, the Exalted (In power), and the Merciful (see 32: 6-7). It is well illustrated in the holy Qur'an that the ultimate source of knowledge is inestimable. "Say: If the ocean were Ink (wherewith to write out) The words of my Lord. Sooner would the ocean be Exhausted than would the words Of my Lord, even if we Added another ocean Like it, for its aid" (18:109). This simply means that all the writing that could ever be done could not fathom the entire knowledge of Allah.

The Qur'an refers to knowledge in several of its verses as light (*nur*), and almighty Allah also describes himself as the "*ultimate nur*" (Akhtar, n.d.). As stated in the following verse of Qur'an, "Almighty Allah is the Light of the heaven and the earth" (25:35). Ignorance is synonymous with darkness and knowledge is synonymous with light in the holy Qur'an (14:1). Furthermore, Choudhury (1993) describes the Islamic concept of knowledge as

a process of receiving knowledge in quanta, without it being erroneously assumed, that knowledge will ever reach perfection over the Islamization process. At best that can be configured is a well-defined movement of individuals, societies and institutions from lower to higher levels of certainty, and that too, by realistically accepting the chances of mistakes, errors, conflicts and shortcomings of human type. (p. 5)

Therefore, the "true science according to Ibn Sina (980-1037) is science that seeks knowledge of the essence of things in relation to their divine origin" (Iqbal, 1999, p. 28). In sum, knowledge in Islam has a divine origin.

Thus, the Islamic concept of unlimited knowledge is based on the belief that Allah is the sources of all knowledge. Since Allah has unlimited knowledge, an

individual or society that taps into this divine source has the potential for unlimited knowledge as well. This motivates the movement of an individual and society to never-ending learning.

An Ethical Framework

Science from an Islamic perspective "is merely a means to reach the higher truths. It is not an end in itself" (Iqbal, 1999, p. 39). This concept furnishes an ethical framework that reveals elements that characterize the nature of inquiry and its limitations. The ethical framework surrounds the knowledge gained through true science and applies equally over generations or across race and gender.

Since Islam is a complete code of human life, knowledge cannot be divided into two classes, one religious and the other secular (Ashraf, 1983). "Secular and religious knowledge should complement each other rather than conflict" (Parker-Jenkins, 1995, p. 41). However, there are some types of knowledge that are unacceptable such as "magic, the black arts, fortune telling, astrology and anything related to immorality or wickedness" (Parker-Jenkins, p. 41). According to Sahadat (1997), "Knowledge without moral and values may still be powerful, but it definitely is not virtuous. The expression 'knowledge virtue' means that knowledge has the power to create and to make good" (p. 32). Hence, the ethical framework supporting the Islamic concept of knowledge ensures unity within the Muslim's total personality. That is, "the development of personality is seen in the context of man's relationship with God and nature" (Parker-Jenkins, p. 42). Islam focuses on the person's relationship with God. This relationship aims to attain "the status of a true representative of God on the earth" (Ashraf, p. 5).

Therefore, education is seen as process in which a Muslim achieves the status the “true representative of God”— ultimately a person “having faith and the spiritual, intellectual and emotive power...to transcend...personal interests for the sake of the good for all because [he or she] work[s] for the sake of God” (Ashraf, p. 6).

Acting Upon the Knowledge

Knowledge is not just mere facts; it requires the believer to act upon it. In Islamic teachings, “The one who learns knowledge and acts accordingly, and teaches it for almighty Allah, will be called magnificently in the heavens” (Imani, 1998, p. 71).

In addition, Akhtar (n.d.) describes the Islamic theory of knowledge:

In the Islamic theory of knowledge, the term used for knowledge in Arabic is ‘ilm, which...has a much wider connotation than its synonyms in English and other Western languages. ‘Knowledge’ falls short of expressing all the aspects of ‘ilm. Knowledge in the Western world means information about something, divine or corporeal, while ‘ilm is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education. (¶ 3)

Scholars’ characteristics rooted in their awareness and their sense of responsibility that are based on the integration between their actions and knowledge. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, “Knowledge is almighty Allah's deposit on the earth and scholars are His trustees of it. Therefore, he who acts according to his knowledge has really delivered His deposit” (Imani, 1998, p. 69). Furthermore, the sense of responsibility and accountability would be better understood from a context of Muslim’s relationship with almighty Allah (God), nature, and human beings. Ashraf (cited in Sahadat, 1997) stated:

The organization of disciplines and arrangement of subjects are planned with reference to Man as individual, Man as a social being and Man as a being who

has to live in harmony with Nature. His individuality, his collective existence and his existence as a natural entity are all conditioned by his relationship with God. (p. 21)

Unlike the concepts of individual freedom and individual rights, Muslim scholars should practice the sense of accountability and responsibility within their social means as a member of social organization (*ummah*). Accordingly, the Islamic concept of knowledge does not stand independent from a Muslim's actions. Knowledge without action has no value.

Environmental Aspects

Islamic teachings indicate the importance of environmental factors in promoting the follower's personality that could be achieved through "the mutual teachings of truth, and of Patience and Constancy" (103:3). The teachings also advise followers to three critical activities in learning from the environment. The Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) counsels the learner, "Ask (questions from) the learned, speak with the wise, and associate with the poor" (Imani, 1998, p. 127). These three practices provide the learner with a base that would help in creating a balance among the three personality dimensions of affect, cognition, and spirituality.

Wisdom is a critical characteristic that has always been paired with knowledge in the Holy Qur'an. "Islam is a religion that invites its followers to exercise their intellect and make use of their knowledge to attain the ultimate truth" (Akhtar, n.d., ¶ 13). In describing how wisdom, or ultimate truth, can be obtained, the Qur'an teaches, "And Allah will teach him The Book and Wisdom, The Law and the Gospel" (3:48). Therefore, wisdom in the Islamic point-of-view can be taught as well as knowledge,

referred to as “The Book” in the preceding passage. Knowledge is not a single element that could be reflected in an educational degree. It is an accumulation of pieces; that is, an effort of acquiring pure knowledge through struggling against darkness and obtaining thinking skills that promote understanding. “Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, And the alternation Of Night and Day There are indeed signs For men [people] of understanding” (3:190). Thus, Islamic teaching invites its followers to obtain certain characteristics and dispositions that furnish them with critical elements to function in their social environment effectively. These include the overlapping characteristics of questioning and critical thinking skills.

The strategy of raising questions could help one overcome doubts. According to Akhtar (n.d.), “Skepticism is a philosophy that has three different meanings: denial of all knowledge, agnosticism, and a method to approach certainty. Skepticism in the general sense of the impossibility of knowledge is not compatible with Islamic teachings. It is acceptable only when it leads from uncertainty to certainty” (¶ 16). Questioning was used by the prophet Abraham as illustrated in the Holy Qur’an. “When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, He said: ‘I love not those that set’. When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: ‘This is my Lord’. But when the moon set, He said: ‘Unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among those who go astray’. When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: ‘This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)’. But when the sunset, he said: ‘O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to God’” (6: 76-78). According to Yusuf (1995), “The story of Abraham is highly

instructive for all men [people] in quest of truth....What does he care? He found the truth. He is free from superstitious fears, for has he not found the true God” (p. 315). Knowledge from the Islamic point of view is considered to derive from two sources, “Unmediated [that is reasoning and questioning] and direct knowledge acquired through mystic experience” (Akhtar, n.d.).

Critical thinking skills are encouraged in Islamic teachings as a way to resolve doubts and approach the truth. There are many unexplained phenomena in the world that encourage individuals to think. “Men [people] who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the [wonders of] creation in the heavens and the earth (With the thought): ‘Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire’” (3:191). According to Akhtar (n.d.), “Exercise of the intellect (*aqil*) is of significance in the entire Islamic literature which played an important role in the development of all kinds of knowledge, scientific or otherwise, in the Muslim world” (¶ 12).

Hence, Islamic teachings paved the foundation of such thinking by acknowledging the social and environmental pressures on personal freedom of choice and by inviting the individual to “stand up before almighty Allah--(it may be) in pairs, Or (it may be) singly--And reflect (within yourselves): Your Companion is not Possessed: he is no less Than a Warner to you, In face of a terrible Penalty”(34:46). According to Yusuf (1995), “A crowd mentality is not the best for the perception of the final spiritual truths” (p. 1097).

Thus, Islam acknowledges the importance of the environment in promoting the

Muslim's personality. Wisdom and education are both required in order to achieve the balance among the personality's dimensions. Therefore, raising questions and critical thinking are some of the strategies that are encouraged from the Islamic perspective.

Summary

Theory, research, standards, and culture are four sources found to contribute to the development of gifted programs in any society. For the present study, the theoretical foundation of gifted programs is based on the Vygotsky's concept of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). This concept helps to determine a student's optimal instructional level that facilitates the match between a student's ability and the appropriate curriculum that fosters his or her educational needs.

From a research perspective, significant work has established the value of differentiated education for the gifted. Much of this work has been done recently at the NRC/GT. The findings from the empirical data suggest that gifted students' learning styles and characteristics are different from that of their age-mate nongifted learners. Therefore, their needs for curriculum differentiation are significantly important in helping them to meet their educational needs. However, little differentiation that can benefit gifted student is currently being done.

Standards for gifted and talented services were established by NAGC in 1998 (Landrum, Callahan, & Shaklee, 2001). These standards permit the scholars to assess the degree to which their programs for gifted learners meet a level of excellence. The importance of comprehensive services in designing a program for gifted education that

is supported philosophically, theoretically, and empirically was one of the most essential standards related to this research. The standards highlight the importance of curricular and instructional opportunities to serve gifted learners

Culture is the final source of information for good program development. In reviewing best practices in gifted education, no particular discrepancy has been found with Islamic teachings. Indeed, Islamic teachings encourage providing an educational environment that motivates gifted students and offers them challenging educational opportunities. However, there are a few points that are the core of any education in Islam but that are not emphasized in the professional gifted education literature. Gifted education under Islamic teachings would have a unique focus on building noble characteristics in addition to its attempt to provide for the educational needs of the gifted learner. These noble characteristics include acknowledgement of almighty Allah as the ultimate source of knowledge, working within a solid ethical framework that would guide the educational effort and help build a sense of accountability, acting upon the knowledge one has gained, and responding to one's environment with wisdom. Educational elements are not enough to build the feelings of responsibility and accountability in human beings. To reach scholarliness from the Islamic perspective, gifted education in Islam would have a distinctive focus in providing gifted students with a strong foundation that helps them make connections between secular education and religious knowledge, thus establishing a direct connection to almighty Allah. Under this connection to Allah (God), gifted students, further, would develop a responsible relationship toward themselves, nature, and society.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study explores and analyzes the state of gifted education in Islamic schools across the United States. The focus of the study was to investigate Islamic schoolteachers' daily practices in planning and implementing curriculum experiences for gifted students versus average students. The study also investigates the availability of various educational services in Islamic schools that meet gifted students' needs. The purpose of this section is to describe the research design, methodology, and procedures used in this study. This chapter is divided into four sections. Research design and instrumentation are described in section one. Data collection is described in section two, while sampling is described in section three. Section four contains the methods of data analysis.

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methodology that combined quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys addressed the Islamic schools teachers' practices with gifted students versus average students. Moreover, they were used to obtain information about the resources that are available in the Islamic schools for gifted students. In addition, a qualitative component employed a focus group method to gain a better understanding of the Islamic schools' teachers' practices with gifted students.

Instrumentation for Survey Study

Three instruments were used to collect data. One was directed at the principals to determine the existence of any organizational structure for gifted programs in their schools. The other two were used by teachers to rate their practices with gifted students and non-gifted students in their classrooms, and their application of Islamic values in their classrooms.

Scale for Rating Schools Services for Gifted Students

An adaptation of the Richardson Study Survey (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985) was used to explore the kinds of services available in Islamic schools that could serve gifted students' needs. Principals were asked to respond to this survey. The survey focuses on programming options that are available. Questions about sixteen programming categories were asked, including enrichment in the regular classroom, part-time special class, full-time special class, independent study, itinerant teacher, mentorship, resource room, special schools, early entrance, continuous progress, radical acceleration, and fast-paced courses. All the responses are nominal categories. For example, on the items that ask if the school has an enrichment program for gifted students, the participants would check either (1) yes or (2) no. Since this study deals with elementary school teachers, a few items that concern service options related to a junior high school or a high school were removed from the original questionnaire. No information about the instrumentation's validity was found.

Scale for Rating Teacher's Practices in the Classroom

The Classroom Practices Questionnaire (CPQ; Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, & Zhang, 1993) was developed by the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) in cooperation with Market Data Retrieval. The CPQ consists of four sections that solicit information about: (a) teachers' backgrounds; (b) gifted education policies adopted by the school; (c) classroom issues faced by the teachers, and (d) participants' practices with gifted and nongifted students in his/her classroom. According to Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, and Emmons, several field tests were conducted to ensure the CPQ's reliability. In order to increase interpretability of the results, CPQ items related to classroom practices were reduced to the six factors of: (a) Questioning and Thinking; (b) Providing Challenges and Choices; (c) Reading and Written Assignments; (d) Curriculum Modifications; (e) Enrichment Centers; and (f) Seatwork. Alpha reliabilities for these factors range from .53 to .83. Items in each of the factors employ a Likert-type scale with response ranges from 0 to 5. A rating of 0 means never, and a rating of 5 means more than once a day. As with the Richardson Study Survey, no validity information was provided by the authors of the CPQ.

Scale for Rating Teacher's Curriculum Practices in

Applying Islamic Value

The third questionnaire was developed according to the format of the CPQ in order to rate the teachers' behavior towards applying Islamic values in the classroom.

The questionnaire seeks information about how teachers integrate Islamic values while teaching gifted and non-gifted students in the regular classroom. The items were divided into four sections: (a) The Ultimate Source of Knowledge; (b) The Ethical Framework; (c) The Believer to Act upon Knowledge; and (d) Environment Aspects.

Pilot Study

Following a careful review, no existing instruments were found to be adequate in measuring the application of Islamic values in serving gifted Muslim students. Therefore, a suitable instrument that reflects these values was developed. Based on a thorough literature review, items that reflect the Islamic values were listed. The instrument measures the modification of teachers' practices to meet the needs of gifted students in the teaching of Islamic values.

Prior to carrying out a pilot study, educators either from general education or gifted education and Muslim scholars were asked to review the instrument in order to determine the content and face validity. A few corrections were made regarding the wording of specific questions. In addition, some items needed more clarification.

At the end of November 2002, a pilot study was carried out in four Islamic schools in Canada to evaluate the instrument's reliability. Conducting the study in Canadian schools did not create any validity issues with American Islamic schools because various factors are shared by Canadian and American Islamic schools in term of school population, teachers, and school organization (K. Kayworth, personal communication, June 13, 2002). The purpose of the pilot study was explained to the

Islamic schools in Canada that participated in the study. Following the data collection procedure, the instrument's reliability was obtained.

After the pilot study's surveys were received from the Canadian schools, it was found that most teachers indicated that they do not modify their curriculum practices to meet gifted students' needs. Therefore, the questionnaire's reliability was calculated based only on the information that was gathered from teachers' responses in the average students' column. The overall alpha reliability for the instrument was .96. Each section's reliability was also high; (a) The Ultimate Source of Knowledge (.93); (b) The Ethical Framework (.90); (c) The Believer to Act Upon Knowledge (.88); and (d) Environment Aspects (.74). Thus, all alpha reliabilities are in an acceptable range for instrument of this type.

Instrumentation for Focus Groups

Prior to conducting the focus group discussions, an Islamic school that was in a convenient distance from Utah State University agreed to help in evaluating the focus group questions' validity. The school participated in the survey portion of study, but was not selected to participate in the focus group method. Three teachers from the school participated in evaluating the focus group questions. The focus group question evaluation started with a concise introduction of the purpose of the study. The following questions were evaluated for their potential to appropriately guide discussion of the focus groups.

1. In the survey of the *Scale for Rating Teacher Practices in Applying the*

Islamic Values, there were four principles, which are: (a) Allah is the ultimate source of knowledge, (b) the concept of the ethical framework, (c) the need for believer to act upon the knowledge, and (d) environmental aspects. The question is to what degree do you agree that those principles are important Islamic values that should guide your teaching of young gifted Muslim students? Please explain?

2. In your experience, how have you included these values in your teaching to meet gifted students' needs? What modifying has this required in your teaching methods?

3. What kind of barriers hold you back in teaching any subject such as Islamic religion, math, or science from differentiating your teaching practices to meet gifted students' needs?

At the end of the discussion, the teachers expressed their understandings of the focus group questions. They felt that the questions were sequential and organized in a way that helped them think about their practices. They indicated the importance of integrating Islamic values in their teachings and were looking forward to applying some strategies to help their gifted students. At the end of the meeting, four Arabic children's books were presented to the school's principal, and the researcher read one of them to a group of first and second grade students.

Data Collection

Participants in this study were elementary school principals and teachers in Islamic schools across the United States. All Islamic schools in the United States are

nonprofit organizations that are developed to serve the Islamic community in the respective states. These schools are similar to American public schools in terms of their organization and structure. The small differences between the Islamic schools and the public American schools are in some of the subjects offered, such as Arabic Language and Islamic Studies that are core courses in an Islamic school's curriculum (K. Kayworth, personal communication, June 13, 2002).

Survey Procedures

In April of 2002, I had the opportunity to attend an Islamic forum in Chicago organized by Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). At the conference, I had the chance to meet several Islamic school principals, teachers, and the Islamic Schools League (ISL) founders. This opportunity helped me to develop a link and introduce the research project to the Islamic schools' principals and teachers. It was thought that many Islamic schools that attended the conference would be willing to support and participate in the study.

In June of 2002, an invitation letter was mailed to 100 private full-time Islamic schools in the United States through regular and electronic mail. A post-paid return envelope and participants' agreement forms were included in the regular mail package. The list of the 100 Islamic schools was obtained from the ISL. All schools on the list with elementary school grades received an invitation letter to participate in the study. The participants' agreement asked for information about the school type, number of elementary grade classes at each level, and number of students (see Appendix A). Six

schools responded to the invitation letter.

Therefore, at the beginning of August 2002, a phone call was made to each of the principals who attended the ISNA Forum and showed their interest in participating in the study. Following the phone call, the invitation letter was faxed to the school. In September 2002, the second list was obtained from the ISL that included more than 250 schools and other Islamic centers in North America. After reviewing all the names on the list and eliminating repeated schools' names, another invitation letter was mailed to more than 200 Islamic schools including a postage-paid return envelope and participants' agreement forms to participate in the study. It was found through returned mail that approximately 1/2 of the addresses were changed or did not exist anymore. Hence, a phone call was made to all the names on the list. It was clear that the list included some schools that do not exist anymore and Islamic centers that are not affiliated with an Islamic school.

At the end of November 2002, all the schools that indicated their interest in participating in the study received an explanation letter explaining factors that contributed to hindering the study's schedule and informing the schools about a new schedule for data collection as well as thanking them for their interest in participating in the study (see Appendix B).

A final effort was conducted in December 2002 when a copy of *Schools 4 Us: Islamic Schools Guide USA and Canada* (Edustarz Internation, Inc., 2002) was obtained. The booklet includes 130 private elementary full time schools in the United States. The booklet is updated on a regular base. It listed some Islamic schools that

were not included in any of the aforementioned lists. Hence, a phone call was made to each school that had not been previously contacted. Through the phone call, I was able to communicate with the schools' principals. Invitation letters were faxed to the schools whose principals demonstrated the interest in participating in the study.

Ultimately, 47 Islamic schools accepted the invitation letters and return it with the needed information. At the end of January 2003, packages were sent to 47 Islamic schools in the United States. The package included surveys, along with a cover letter (see Appendix C) directed to the principal explaining the package's contents. The package also included: a prepaid large sized envelope labeled "Principal Envelope" and smaller sized envelopes labeled "Teacher Envelope." The Principal Envelope consisted of a principal survey (see Appendix D), an informed consent (see Appendix E), and a post card from Oman. Each school received different number of "Teacher Envelope" packets based on the information provided by the principal regarding the number of teachers interested in participating in the study. The Teacher Envelope included a teacher survey (see Appendix F), an informed consent, a postcard from Oman, a thank-you letter, and a prepaid envelope.

The principal was asked to distribute the "Teacher Envelope" to every teacher who was interested in participating in the study. She/he was also asked to complete the principal's survey. Since the principal and teachers were provided with individual prepaid envelopes, they were able to choose either to send their survey directly or include it in the bigger size prepaid envelope provided to the principal.

By the due date for returning the questioners, few schools had responded.

Therefore, two weeks from the due date, a phone call was made to all schools that did not respond to the survey. After that, a phone call was made every two weeks to each school had still not responded to the survey. During the phone call, the school's contact person was asked if they want the surveys re-sent to them. Two schools indicated their desire to receive the package again and three schools indicated they would like the two surveys, principal and teacher, to be faxed to them.

Survey Sample

Ultimately packets were received back from 32 principals and 161 teachers at the elementary school level. All schools used in the study were private full-time Islamic school in the United States. After reviewing the return surveys, four of the teacher surveys were eliminated because the participants were not K-6 grade level teachers. The eliminated participants included two principals, one preschool teacher, and the last survey was not filled at all. Therefore, the sample of this study consists of 32 (67%) principals and 157 (38%) teachers.

Focus Group Procedures

The focus group method was used to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of gifted programs in their schools. It was also used to gain a better understanding of nonsignificant results that were found through the statistical analysis of teachers' curriculum practices with gifted students versus average students. A purposeful sampling strategy for extreme cases, based on their practice in differentiating

the curriculum, was implemented to select the participants in the focus group discussions. The focus group meetings lasted about 60-90 minutes with a group of 4-8 teachers. The focus group meeting started with a brief introduction of the research purpose, encouraging participants to express their opinions. The discussion was taped and recorded using videotape and transcribed verbatim. At the end of the meetings, refreshments along with a thank-you message were presented to all participants. The content of the discussion was based on the following questions that were used as a guide to organize the discussion topics (Morgan, 1997).

1. In the survey of the *Scale for Rating Teacher Practices in Applying the Islamic Values*, there were four principles which are (a) Allah is the ultimate source of knowledge, (b) the concept of the ethical framework, (c) the need for believer to act upon the knowledge, and (d) environmental aspects. The question is to what degree do you agree that those principles are important Islamic values that should guide your teaching of young gifted Muslim students? Please explain.

2. In your experience, how have you included these values in your teaching to meet gifted students' needs? What modifying has this required in your teaching methods?

3. What kind of barriers hold you back in teaching any subject such as Islamic religion, math, or science from differentiating your teaching practices to meet gifted students' needs?

Focus Group Sample

At the beginning of April 2003 after getting the questionnaires back, a careful review was conducted to analyze the participants' responses in order to select the participants for focus groups. A purposeful sampling strategy for extreme cases was used to decide the participants in the focus group. For example, a school at which respondents indicated a total inability to differentiate curriculum for gifted was selected for follow-up discussions. Likewise, a school that was able to carry out certain differentiation practices was selected to participate in a focus group. In addition, to explore the barriers that would hold Islamic schools from not integrating the Islamic values, schools with non-Muslim teachers were selected to participate in the focus group. In all, five schools were selected to participate in the focus group discussions. The five schools will be referred to as Ali School, Zahraa School, Basayir School, Ahmad School, and Ilyas School,⁴ respectively.

Ali School was selected because all the teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they practice curriculum differentiation, while Zahraa and Ahmad Schools were selected because some of the school's faculty members were non-Muslim teachers. Basayir and Ilyas Schools were selected because the majority of the schoolteachers indicated their inability to carry out curriculum differentiation.

After determining the focus groups, the corresponding schools' principals were informed by a phone call and arrangements for time and place were made. The schools'

⁴ To protect confidentiality, schools are named after my children—Ali, Zahraa, Basayir, Ahmad, and Ilyas.

principal were informed that they were not obligated to help in this regard, however, none of the principals declined the request for focus group meetings. The schools' principals were informed that the discussion would be taped and recorded using videotape recorders and that a special arrangement could be made with participants concerned with videotaping so they could avoid being taped if that was their desire.

Prior to the focus group meetings, a short interview was conducted with the school's principal. The school principal was asked to explain the following points: the school philosophy, gifted education in the school, and the integration of Islamic education in the curriculum.

The focus group meeting started with a brief introduction of the purpose, encouraging participants to express their opinions. Each focus group meeting consists of 4-8 teachers depending on the number of teachers in each school. In one school, two focus group meetings were conducted due to the large number of teachers who participated in the study. At the end of the meetings, a thank-you message was presented to all the participants and refreshments were served as well. In addition, several children's storybooks were donated to each school's library.

Data Analysis

Upon receiving each questionnaire, a code was placed on it to identify the respondent and his/her school. Questionnaires were, then, inspected for relevance and accuracy. Data from usable questionnaires were entered into a database using SPSS software, which was used to analyze the data. The following section contains the data

analysis procedures pertaining to the major questions of this study. Each question is presented along with the statistical analysis that was used to analyze the data.

Research question 1: Do Islamic schools have a program that serves gifted students' needs? The Richardson Study Survey (Cox et al., 1985) was used to explore this research question. Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the Islamic schools' principals' responses. For example, if a school reported multiple programming options or a single program option, that school was considered as having a program to serve gifted students. In addition, the CPQ (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, & Zhang, 1993) was used also to determine the presence of identification services in the Islamic schools.

Research question 2: What types of services are provided for gifted students in Islamic schools? The Richardson Study Survey (Cox et al., 1985) was also used to obtain nominal data that described specific program services for gifted students in responding schools. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to analyze the survey and describe the variety of services.

Research question 3: Do teachers in the regular classroom in Islamic schools modify their practices and differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of gifted students? Are there differences in these practices for the two groups of gifted and average students?

Two approaches were used in order to answer the question. First, all the data that was received from the teachers on the CPQ (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, & Zhang, 1993) were analyzed using frequency and descriptive

statistics. Second, the data of the teachers who stated that they modify their classroom practice to meet gifted students needs and who provided information on both average and gifted students was subjected to further analysis. To better understand the teacher-reported differences, responses to each item were coded using three terms; (a) gifted high; (b) average high; and (c) no differences. For example, a comparison of a teacher's response score between gifted column and average column was calculated. If the teacher reported a higher frequency on the use of a strategy for the gifted students, the item was coded "gifted high" and likewise for the average side which was coded "average high." However, if the reported frequency of strategy use was the same for gifted and average students, the score was coded "no differences." This was conducted to explore the practices of the majority of teachers in the Islamic schools. Finally, the data of the teachers who differentiate their practices were further analyzed by calculating the means, standard deviation, effect size, and p values of t-test for each of the items.

Research question 4: Do Islamic values and the Muslim culture have any impact on gifted students in Islamic schools? Specifically, do the teachers integrate the Islamic values in their services for gifted students? If so, how?

Two methods were used to analyze data for the fourth question. Quantitative and qualitative methods were implemented.

In order to answer this question using quantitative methods, the Curriculum Practices Survey was used and the same procedures used in analyzing Question 3 were applied. The data of the teachers who provided information on gifted and average were

analyzed using descriptive statistics, effect size and paired *t* test.

The second approach employed a qualitative method for analyzing data from the focus group discussions and principal interviews. The focus group discussions and interviews with principal helped to get in depth exploration of the differences discovered in the quantitative analysis. The focus group discussions were transcribed and respondents' comments were maintained exactly as heard on the tape recording, avoiding any editing of the data (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). When participants' comments were used in this dissertation, any editing is shown through the standard use of brackets and points of ellipsis.

The data were read several times to determine emergent categories. Color coding was used to identify members of the different categories within the context of the entire transcript (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). As more members of a category were identified, subcategories began to emerge. In addition to the color coding on the transcript, color-coded memoranda were written for each individual member of a category. The memoranda assisted in focusing category definitions, identifying subcategories, and raising important issues. For example, in the transcript from the focus group at Ali School, a participant states, "We keep the prophet Mohammed (*sallah allah alihe wa sallam*)⁵ as the role model, as the locator who brought the word of goodness and kindness and to keep him as the role model and talk about him so that we can actually implement it naturally." A second participant added, "Whenever we introduce any material to the children, they know whatever we're learning, it's because

⁵ An Arabic phrase which means "peace be upon him."

Allah (*subhanahu wa taallah*)⁶ made them. He's given the chance to learn new things and...also gave them the intelligence to be able to understand the subject." Both these quotes were highlighted in pink and coded as belonging to the category *Islamic values*. In addition, a small note was made indicating how these comments belong to the category by suggesting that the teachers "keep prophet Mohammed as a role model" and recognize Allah the "ultimate source of knowledge."

At the end of analyzing an individual transcript, a summary memorandum of the categories and subcategories was attached. These summary memoranda were written to conceptualize the relationship between "different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster" (Miles & Humberman, 1994, p. 72). Continuing the example, the summary memorandum for the focus group transcripts from Ali School combined with the comments given in the preceding paragraph, as well as other comments from the transcript belonging to the *Islamic values* category, to produce the summary shown in Figure 1. It should be noted that this is only one paragraph of the summary memorandum.

Further, the data from the summary memoranda and the analysis of the transcript were used to develop a matrix that was organized with the categories and schools' names in rows and columns respectively (Miles & Humberman, 1994). For example, information related to the theme *Islamic values* is shown in Figure 2. The information from Ali School clearly flows from the category system and the summary

⁶ "This is an expression that Muslims use whenever the name of Allah is pronounced or written. The meaning of this expression is: "Allah is pure of having partners and He is exalted from having a son" (Al-Hussein & Sakr, n.d.)

Teachers at Ali School think that it is important to teach Islamic values. The importance of that comes from several points:

- Help students to be aware of their Islamic character
- Root the religion and cultural strength
- Raise a good citizen to contribute to this country
- All the knowledge comes from Allah, so they are basically explaining what surrounds them (quoted from the summary memorandum).

Figure 1. Paragraph of the summary memorandum.

memorandum. However, it is now seen in combination with similar information from other sites.

Contrast and comparison strategies were then used within each school and across the schools and within categories and across categories “for testing or confirming meanings, avoiding bias, and assuring the quality of conclusions” (Miles & Humberman, 1994). This helped to achieve “a balance that acknowledges the interplay between these two ‘levels of analysis’” (Morgan, 1997, p. 60)—individual and group. Comparison and contrast memoranda were written and placed on the matrix (see Figure 3) to preserve a record of major themes.

Trustworthiness issues related to this analysis were handled through biweekly meetings (sometimes more frequently) with my major advisor who has expertise in both qualitative analysis and gifted education. These meetings provided confirmation of major categories and themes and challenge to analyses on a continuing basis.

Categories		Ali	Zahraa	Basayir	Ahmad	Ilyas
Islamic Values	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the teachings of prophet Mohammad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise a generation of Islamic community leaders Nature the love of Allah and his prophets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with knowledge of Islam Create an atmosphere that is safe, friendly, and nourishing Instill Islamic ethics, fairness, openness to other religions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer both Islamic value and a strong academic curriculum Learn not only by reading .. to be Muslim.. see and watch the teachers and staff interact (modeling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Islamic teachings and an Islamic understanding for our students
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to an Islamic schools'. goals and mission Prophet Mohammad is the role model Religion strength Help students to be able to live in a non-Islamic environment Raise good Muslims Develop Islamic characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish faith in the values of Islam Teach children from the basics Students relate everything to Allah Contrast Islamic values to common sense Encourage students to their faith Reinforce Islamic values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instill some of Islamic aspects Speak about moral issues We are not only teachers but Muslims too (model) Commitment to be in an Islamic school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live the Islamic values Discuss Islamic values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interact with non-Muslim community Teaching by role model (prophet Mohammad as the model) Respect for the rights of others Good Islamic behavior

Figure 2. Matrix related to the theme Islamic values.

Categories		Ali	Zahraa	Basayir	Ahmad	Ilyas
Islamic Values	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the teachings of prophet Mohammad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise a generation of Islamic community leaders Nature the love of Allah and his prophets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with knowledge of Islam Create an atmosphere that is safe, friendly, and nourishing Instill Islamic ethics, fairness, openness to other religions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer both Islamic value and a strong academic curriculum Learn not only by reading .. to be Muslim.. see and watch the teachers and staff interact (modeling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Islamic teachings and an Islamic understanding for our students
	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to an Islamic schools'. goals and mission Prophet Mohammad is the role model Religion strength Help students to be able to live in a non-Islamic environment Raise good Muslims Develop Islamic characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish faith in the values of Islam Teach children from the basics Students relate everything to Allah Contrast Islamic values to common sense Encourage students to their faith Reinforce Islamic values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instill some of Islamic aspects Speak about moral issues We are not only teachers but Muslims too (model) Commitment to be in an Islamic school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live the Islamic values Discuss Islamic values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interact with non-Muslim community Teaching by role model (prophet Mohammad as the model) Respect for the rights of others Good Islamic behavior

Comment: Page 1
Prophet Mohammad as a role model ..environment...commitment

Comment: Page 1
The sense of the community and leadership..love of Allah...reinforce the values

Comment: Page 1
Islamic environment...commitment

Comment: Page 1
The concept of modeling..the importance of Islamic values

Comment: Page 1
Islamic teaching and understanding.. role model...

Figure 3. Comparison and contrast memoranda.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the state of gifted education in Islamic schools across the United States. To meet this purpose, a survey of the availability of various educational services for gifted students in Islamic schools was conducted. The study further investigated the daily practices of Islamic schoolteachers in planning and implementing curriculum experiences for gifted students and average students. The participants in this study consisted of a volunteer sample of elementary Islamic schools' principals and teachers. Since not all the questionnaires returned were useable, the data presented is more tentative than definitive in understanding gifted education in Islamic schools. Usable data of educational services in Islamic schools was returned from 32 (67%) school principals. Usable data on classroom practices was returned from 157 (38%) teachers.

Respondent Characteristics

To provide a greater context for interpreting the responses related to gifted programming in Islamic schools, information on the characteristics of the teachers is given. These data give some indication of the general background of the teachers from both a demographic perspective and from teaching experiences.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondent teachers. As

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers in Islamic Schools

Variable	Categories of variables	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 157)			
Gender	Female	146	94.8
	Male	8	5.2
Religion affiliation	Muslim	123	89.8
	Non-Muslim	14	10.2
Ethnicity	Middle Eastern	48	33.6
	Caucasian American	31	21.7
	Asian American/Pacific Islander	29	20.3
	Other	16	11.9
	African American	13	9.1
	Hispanic American	5	3.5
	Native American	1	.6

Note. Percentages given are based on the total responding within a specific variable rather than of the total numbers of usable questionnaires (157), because not all respondents answered all items.

shown in Table 1, women dominate the teaching field in Islamic schools. Further, 90% of teachers identify themselves as Muslims; only 33.6% listed themselves as Middle Eastern; though Middle Easterners were found to be the largest group within teaching ranks of Islamic schools. Caucasian Americans and Asian Americans comprise other large groups represented with percentages of 22% and 20%, respectively.

Teacher Training

As illustrated in Table 2, the majority of the Islamic schoolteachers have received a bachelor's degree as the highest degree earned. While opportunities for training in gifted education had been available to 49% of them, 44 of the teachers had not received any kind of training. The two most common forms of training were courses at a college or university (27%) and workshops (26%).

Table 2

Teachers' Educational Level in Islamic Schools in the United States

Variable	Categories of variables	f	%
	Teachers (n = 157)		
Highest degree earned	BA/BS	87	55.1
	MA/MS	29	18.4
	Ph.D./Ed.D.	1	.6
	Professional diploma	13	8.2
	Other	21	13.3
Training in teaching gifted	Course(s) at college/university	43	27.2
	Workshop	41	25.9
	District inservice	12	7.6
	Educational degree in area	10	6.3
	Outside district	4	2.5
	None	70	44.3

Note. The frequency response to individual items does not always equal 157 because some teachers did not respond to some items. Also, teachers were allowed to choose more than one option on some items.

Teaching Experience

As shown in Table 3, nearly 40% of Islamic schools teachers have less than 5 years of experience in teaching, while about 10% of the teachers have more than 19 years of teaching experience. The majority of the teachers taught in an intact or self-contained classroom. Most of the responding teachers were assigned to primary grades, with 39% of the sample teaching kindergarten through second grades, while only 23% teach in grades 3-6. It is also interesting to note that about 38% of the teachers in Islamic schools teach in combined classes.

Class Size

The average class size in the participating Islamic schools was about 19

Table 3

Teacher's Classroom Experiences

Variable	Categories of variables	f	%
	Teachers (n = 157)		
Years of experiences	< 5	56	39.4
	5-9	33	23.2
	10-14	25	17.6
	15-19	13	9.2
	>19	15	10.6
Type of class	Intact of self-contained class	97	63.8
	Departmentalized arrangement	55	36.2
Grade level teaching	Kindergarten	25	16.0
	First grade	22	14.1
	Second grade	14	9.0
	Third grade	13	8.3
	Fourth grade	11	7.1
	Fifth grade	5	3.2
	Sixth grade	7	4.5
	Combined	59	37.8

Note. The frequency response to individual items does not equal always add to 157 because some teachers did not respond to some of the questions. Also, teachers were allowed to choose more than one option on some of the questions.

students. According to summary of teacher respondents' data shown in Table 4, the mean number of females in each class was 10.5. However, the standard deviations indicate that there is a great deal of variability in gender mix from class to class.

Finally, the number of Muslim students in an individual class was about 19, indicating almost no non-Muslim students in these schools. Thus, the standard deviation for religious affiliation would be more an artifact of differences in class size than in the Muslim/non-Muslim religious affiliation mix.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviation of the Total Enrollment by Gender and Religion Affiliation

Variable	Categories of variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 157)			
Class size by gender	Female	10.52	6.03
	Male	8.63	4.97
Class size by religion	Muslim	19.08	9.51
	Non-Muslim	.001	.1132

Serving the Gifted Learners in Islamic Schools

There are two basic types of services that any school can provide to its gifted students: (a) identification, and (b) programs. The following sections attempt to answer the two research questions that are related to the purpose of this study, to determine if Islamic schools in the United States provide any services for gifted students. First, the presence of identification services in the Islamic schools will be explored by analyzing the data gathered from Islamic schoolteachers. Then, the presence of programmatic services in the Islamic schools in the United States will be discussed, using the data of principals who participated in this study.

The Presence of Identification Services

Nearly all teachers (90%) surveyed in this study could identify one or more specific measures used in identifying gifted students in their classrooms. Table 5

Table 5

Frequency and Percent of Identification Methods

Identification methods	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 157)		
Achievement Tests	104	65.8
Students Products/Portfolios	95	60.1
Grades	92	58.2
Creativity Tests	68	43.0
Teacher Nomination	63	39.9
Students Interview	49	31.0
IQ Test	39	24.7
Teacher Rating Scales	39	24.7
Parents Nomination	12	7.6
Peer Nomination	10	6.3
Don't Know	9	5.7
Other Criteria	5	3.2

Note. The frequency response to individual items does not always add to 157 because some teachers did not respond to some of the questions. Also, teachers were allowed to choose more than one option on items.

presents the frequency with each identification method is used. Teachers indicated the use of achievement tests (66%), students' products/portfolios (60%), and grades (58%) as most frequently used in identifying gifted students in their classrooms. They also indicated that the measures least frequently used were parent nomination (8%) and peer nomination (6%).

The Presence of Programmatic Services

This section describes the programmatic services available in Islamic schools in the United States. The Richardson Study Survey (Cox et al., 1985) was used to answer

the following two research questions: (a) Do Islamic schools in the United States have a program that serves gifted students' needs?; and (b) what types of services are provided for gifted students in Islamic schools in the United States?

Programs for Gifted Learners

As seen in Table 6, 59% of the Islamic schools claim to have some sort of programs for the gifted students. Some schools reported multiple programming options. Other schools indicated a single program option. Schools were considered as having services if the principals reported that any of the following programs are available: (a) Enrichment in the regular classroom; (b) part-time special class; (c) full-time special class; (e) independent study; (f) mentorship; (g) resource room; (h) early entrance; and (i) continuous progress. Table 6 presents the frequency and percent of Islamic schools that have some gifted program.

Services for Gifted Learners

Table 7 presents further details about the gifted programs, by providing the frequency each gifted program offered in the Islamic schools in the United States. The

Table 6

Frequency and Percent of Schools That Have Gifted Programs

Gifted program	<i>f</i>	%
Principals (<i>n</i> = 32)		
Yes	19	59.4
No	13	40.6

Table 7

Frequency and Percent of the Gifted Programs

Program option	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Principals (<i>n</i> = 32)		
Enrichment program	16	50.0
Continuous progress	14	43.8
Early entrance	14	43.8
Independent study	5	15.6
Mentorship program	4	12.5
Recourse room	3	9.4
Part-time special classes for gifted	2	6.3
Full-time special classes for gifted	1	3.1

most commonly applied program options offered in Islamic schools are enrichment (50%), continuous progress (44%), and early entrance (41%). The least frequent options were part-time special classes (6%) and full-time special classes (3%).

Since the most common program options available in the Islamic schools are enrichment, continuous progress, and early entrance, the following section will highlight some of the detailed information regarding those three options. These details show how implementation of the various options can be different from school to school.

Enrichment

As shown in Table 8, enrichment programs offered to the entire classroom constituted half of the sample. The majority of Islamic school principals indicated that the program is offered for 3-5 hours per week. It was also found that the enrichment program option is most likely to be used in the subjects of language arts (81%),

Table 8

Frequency and Percent of the Enrichment Program in the Islamic Schools

Program option	Categories of variables	f	%
Principals (n = 16)			
Students involved	Entire classroom	8	50.0
	Identified as gifted	5	31.3
	Identified as gifted and others	3	18.8
Time per week	3-5	12	75.0
	More than 5 hours	1	6.3
Content area	English/language arts	13	81.3
	Math	12	75.0
	Islamic studies	11	68.8
	Arabic	10	62.5
	Science	9	56.3
	Social studies	8	50.0
	Multidisciplinary	4	25.0
	Arts and music	2	12.5
	Curriculum material	Basic and enrichment material	11
Only enrichment material		4	25.0

mathematics (75%), Islamic studies (69%), Arabic (63%), science (56%), and social studies (50%). In addition to the basic curriculum used with regular students, the majority of schools (69%) indicated that gifted students are provided with a different curriculum as well.

Continuous Progress

The second option that is more likely to be used in Islamic schools in the United States is continuous progress. It was interesting to find that 44% reported the accessibility of the program in their schools; equally 44% reported that the program is

not available to their gifted students. It is also found that is more likely to be practiced at the elementary grade level 86%. Furthermore, the program is mostly utilized in the subjects of math (86%), language arts (79%), Islamic studies (79%), English (71%), foreign language (57%), and social studies (50%) and is less likely to be applied arts and music (14%).

As reported in Table 9, a teacher-made test (86%) is most likely to be used as criteria for moving students to a higher level. Next come demonstrated competency (79%), and finally standardized tests (71%). The use of the grouping for integrating to achieve continuous progress is more common (79%) than is using individual instructions (64%). Most Islamic schools (57%) indicated that the continuous progress option has been implemented in their school for less than 5 years; only 14% indicated that the program has been implemented in their school for more than 10 years.

Early Entrance

Early entrance was one of the options that is more likely to be used in the Islamic schools that participated in this study. Forty-four percent verified that this kind of program was available for their gifted students.

As is shown in Table 10, early entrance was more likely to be practiced at the kindergarten level (86%) and first grade (64%). As further noted from the table, early entrance decisions are more likely to be made based on the teacher's recommendation (86%), ability testing (71%), achievement tests (64%), and finally parent's request (57%).

Table 9

Characteristics of the Continuous Program in the Islamic Schools

Program option	Categories of variables	f	%
	Principals (n = 14)		
Operational level	Preschool	9	64.3
	Elementary (inc. K)	12	85.7
	Middle school	10	71.4
	Senior high school	5	35.7
Content area	Math	12	85.7
	Language arts (inc. reading)	11	78.6
	Islamic studies	11	78.6
	English	10	71.4
	Science	9	64.3
	Foreign language	8	57.1
	Social studies	7	50
	Arts and music	2	14.3
	Other	1	7.1
	Criteria for student promotion	Teacher-made tests	12
Demonstrated competency		11	78.6
Standardized tests		10	71.4
Other		2	14.3
Grouping strategies	Grouping instruction	11	78.6
	Individual instruction	9	64.3
	Other	1	7.1
Frequency	Less than 5 years	8	57.1
	More than 10 years	3	21.4
	5-10 years	2	14.3

Note. The frequency response to individual items does not always add to 14 because principals were allowed to choose more than one option on items.

Table 10

Frequency and Percent of the Early Entrance Program in the Islamic Schools

Program option	Categories of variables	f	%
	Principals (n = 14)		
Operational level	Kindergarten	12	85.7
	First grade	9	64.3
	Middle/junior school	7	50
Early entrance policy	Teacher recommendation	12	85.7
	Ability testing	10	71.4
	Achievement test	9	64.3
	Parental request	8	57.1
	Other	5	35.7

As indicated in Table 11, more kindergarten students benefited from the early entrance policy than at other grade level. The average number of kindergarten students provided with early entrance at the Islamic schools survey is more than twice the number at the first-grade level.

Classroom Instructional and Curriculum Practices

Whether or not a school has specific schoolwide services for its gifted and talented students, teachers can often play an important role in meeting the needs of their students in their regular classroom. In this section, classroom curriculum and instructional practices used by Islamic schoolteachers in meeting the needs of their gifted students are explored. This section first elaborates on the presence of gifted students in the regular classroom. It then analyzes the data pertaining to teachers' differentiation practices. Finally, classroom practices related to Islamic values are

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviation of the Number of Students Benefit from Early Entrance

Variable	Categories of variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Principals (<i>n</i> = 32)		
The level of early entrance policy	Kindergarten	4.38	1.77
	First grade	2.13	1.46
	Middle/junior school	1.00	0.82

considered. These analyses provide answers to research questions 3 and 4.

The Presence of Gifted Students in Regular Classroom

Before teachers can modify their practices for individual gifted students in their classes, they must first believe that they have gifted students in the class, and they must be able to recognize who these gifted students are. In their survey responses approximately 74% of the teachers in Islamic schools believed they had gifted students in their classroom. Interestingly, only about 27% had gifted students who had been formally identified, while nearly 64% of the teachers believed that they had gifted students who had not been formally identified. Only about 13% of the teachers indicated that they did not know whether or not they had any gifted students.

Differentiating Practices

Although a majority of teachers indicated having formally or informally identified gifted students in their classroom, only about 60% of them indicated that they modified their practices to meet gifted students' needs. Furthermore, four teachers who

had claimed not to have any gifted students in their classrooms indicated that they modify their practices, while 29% of the teachers who claim to have gifted students indicated not to modify their classroom practices. Another 10% claimed that differentiation was not relevant to their classroom practice.

The data from the 73 teachers who stated that they modify their practices to meet gifted students needs were further examined. The study aimed to compare teachers' practices with gifted and non-gifted students in their classroom. It was expected that all 73 teachers would provide information on their practices with both their gifted and their average students. As shown in Table 12, approximately 88% of the teachers provided information on both gifted and average groups on the Instructional Practices Survey, while 79% of them provided information on both groups on the Survey of Curriculum Practices.

Classroom Instruction Practices
(Research Question 3)

Do Islamic schools in the United States have a program that serves gifted

Table 12

Provision of Information on Both Gifted and Average Students by Teachers Who Claim to Differentiate

Surveys	Gifted only		Average only		Both	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 73)						
Instruction practices	3	4.11	6	8.22	64	87.67
Curriculum practices	6	8.22	2	2.74	58	79.45

students' needs? Frequency and percentage of the participants' scores were calculated and are reported in Table 13. The items have been ordered according to the frequency of their use with gifted students.

Table 13 indicates that the majority of teachers do not differentiate in their use of strategies between gifted and average students. They generally offer the same type of instructions to the gifted as well as to the average students. However, most Islamic schoolteachers reported that they use the assignment of advance level readings (see item 3) more frequently with gifted students than with average students. This was the only practice in which "no differences" was not in majority.

To look from a different angle, the means, standard difference, effect size, and p values of t -test were calculated for each of the items, testing for significant differences. These statistics are reported in Table 14.

The paired t -test results in Table 14 reveal that around 50% of the items are shown statistically significant mean differences at the level of $\alpha = .05$. The magnitude of the difference between the means was calculated by dividing the mean difference for each item by the standard deviation of the average group for that item. It ranged from .95 to .18. In addition, for an independent t test, the probability of getting a Type I error is $P = 1 - (1 - \alpha)^c$ (Glass & Hopkins, 1995) where c = the number of item tested. This Classroom Instruction Practices survey consisted of 39 items and alpha was set at .05. Thus, the probability of at least one Type I error occurring would be .86. This means that it is likely that there is at least one Type I error among the 20 items found to be statistically significant. However, there is no way to determine where the Type

Table 13

Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Instructional Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students

#	Item	Gifted high		Average high		No differences	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Teachers (<i>n</i> = 64)							
3	Assign advanced level reading	38	59.4	3	4.7	18	28.1
15	Different work for students	28	43.8	2	3.1	30	46.9
2	Use enrichment worksheets	28	43.8	1	1.6	31	48.4
27	Textbook for higher grade level	23	35.9	3	4.7	35	54.7
6	Assign projects	20	31.3	3	4.7	37	57.8
11	Time for self-selected interests	20	31.3	1	1.6	41	64.1
28	More advance curricular unit	19	29.7	1	1.6	40	62.5
13	Eliminate material mastered	18	28.1	2	3.1	39	60.9
7	Assign book reports	18	28.1	1	1.6	40	62.5
5	Assign reports	17	26.6	2	3.1	40	62.5
23	Teach a unit on thinking skills	16	25.0	1	1.6	43	67.2
10	Creative writing student topic	15	23.4	2	3.1	42	65.6
19	Homework based on ability	14	21.9	5	7.8	44	68.8
33	Programmed materials	14	21.9	4	6.3	42	65.6
17	Locations around classroom	14	21.9	1	1.6	48	75.0
4	Use self-instructional kits	13	20.3	4	6.3	35	54.7
9	Creative writing teacher's topic	12	18.8	3	4.7	44	68.8
8	Use puzzles or word searches	12	18.8	1	1.6	44	68.8
21	Use enrichment centers	12	18.8	1	1.6	45	70.3
24	Competitive thinking skills	12	18.8	1	1.6	46	71.9
34	Encourage long-range projects	11	17.2	3	4.7	45	70.3
36	Ask open-ended questions	11	17.2	1	1.6	51	79.7
25	Contracts for independent study	10	15.6	4	6.3	46	71.9
35	Encourage reasoning	10	15.6	1	1.6	49	76.6

(table continues)

#	Item	Gifted high		Average high		No differences	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
22	Thinking in the curriculum	9	14.1	3	4.7	51	79.7
30	Higher grade for instruction	9	14.1	2	3.1	46	71.9
16	Modifying instructional	8	12.5	10	15.6	43	67.2
29	Group by ability	8	12.5	5	7.8	48	75.0
20	Learning centers for basic skills	8	12.5	2	3.1	50	78.1
31	Establish interest groups	8	12.5	2	3.1	44	68.8
38	Encourage discussions	8	12.5	1	1.6	52	81.3
12	Pretests to determine mastered	7	10.9	3	4.7	52	81.3
18	Work in other locations	7	10.9	2	3.1	51	79.7
32	Allocating time	7	10.9	1	1.6	53	82.8
26	Time for independent study	6	9.4	3	4.7	50	78.1
1	Use basic skills worksheets	5	7.8	11	17.2	44	68.8
39	Use computers	5	7.8	3	4.7	53	82.8
14	Repeat difficult concept	4	6.3	24	37.5	34	53.1

I error may have occurred. The likelihood that all 20 items would be Type I errors is remote. Thus, it is legitimate to accept the statistical significance of the various items, but with caution.

The data indicate that Islamic school teachers are more likely to focus on enrichment and acceleration activities for gifted students that emphasize reading and writing assignments (items 2, 3, 6, 7, 5, and 10). Islamic schoolteachers were also found to provide their students with some activities that involve thinking skills (items 23, 8, 24, 36, and 37). Some teachers indicated that they modify their curriculum to differentiate based on individual learners' profiles (items 15, 13, 19, and 28). They are less likely to involve gifted students in activities that involve questioning skills or challenging independent work.

#	Items	Gif-Ave ^a		ES	df	T	P
		M	SD				
4	Use self-directed kits	0.38	1.48	0.21	51	1.87	0.07
38	Encourage discussions	0.11	0.48	0.12	61	1.84	0.07
9	Creative writing: teacher's topic	0.24	1.06	0.17	58	1.73	0.09
35	Encourage reasoning	0.18	0.85	0.18	60	1.66	0.10
33	Programmed materials	0.25	1.27	0.16	59	1.52	0.13
25	Contracts for independent study	0.18	1.04	0.11	60	1.35	0.18
32	Allocating time	0.15	0.87	0.10	60	1.32	0.19
20	Learning centers for basic skills	0.12	0.80	0.07	59	1.12	0.27
34	Encourage long range projects	0.15	1.09	0.10	59	1.07	0.29
22	Teach thinking in the curriculum	0.10	0.78	0.09	62	0.97	0.33
31	Establish interest groups	0.13	1.12	0.08	53	0.85	0.40
12	Pretests to determine mastered	0.10	0.91	0.07	62	0.83	0.41
16	Alternative instructional formats	-0.11	1.24	-0.09	60	-0.72	0.47
18	Other location than classroom	0.05	0.67	0.03	59	0.57	0.57
29	Group by ability across class	0.05	0.89	0.03	61	0.43	0.67
39	Use computers	0.03	0.75	0.02	60	0.34	0.74
26	Time for independent study	0.03	0.80	0.02	59	0.32	0.75

^aGif-Ave refers to the mean differences between teachers' reports of the frequency use with gifted and the frequency of use with average students and the standard deviations for those mean differences.

The effect size was also computed for each item to determine the size of the differences between two means. According to Cohen's rule of thumb, an effect size of .20 is considered small; an effect size of .50 is a moderate, and an effect size of .80 is characterized as a large (Howell, 2002). Thus, for the data shown in the Table 14, effect sizes ranges from less than small to greater than large.

Although 20 of the 39 items on the CPS were found to have significant differences at $\alpha = .05$, a close look at the effect sizes indicates that Islamic school teachers differentiate only in basic ways. For example, there is a very large effect size

Table 15

*Frequency and Percentage of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Curriculum**Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students*

#	Item	Gifted high		Average high		No differences	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Teachers (n = 58)							
2	Analyzing parts of Qur'an	12	20.7	4	6.9	34	58.6
8	Applying the historical concepts	10	17.2	2	3.4	40	69.0
14	A chance to write about their thoughts	10	17.2	1	1.7	38	65.5
21	Evaluate reading in the light of Islam	10	17.2	2	3.4	42	72.4
3	Encouraging students to explore	9	15.5	2	3.4	41	70.7
4	Connecting Qur'an and a subject area	9	15.5	3	5.2	42	72.4
9	The social concepts in the Qur'an	9	15.5	2	3.4	40	69.0
16	Prophet's teachings and human rights	9	15.5	1	1.7	42	72.4
17	Prophet's actions and human rights	9	15.5	2	3.4	41	70.7
18	Reflecting on the prophet's action	9	15.5	2	3.4	43	74.1
12	Study the universe functions	8	13.8	1	1.7	41	70.7
15	Discussing human rights in Islam	8	13.8	3	5.2	42	72.4
22	Islamic and Western concept of ethics	8	13.8	1	1.7	47	81.0
24	Analyzing Islamic history	8	13.8	1	1.7	45	77.6
31	Developing a habit of self-evaluation	8	13.8	0	0.0	49	84.5
41	Developing wisdom	8	13.8	3	5.2	46	79.3
43	Helping students to think individually	8	13.8	3	5.2	46	79.3
1	Memorizing parts of Qur'an	7	12.1	3	5.2	35	60.3
7	The historical events in the Qur'an	7	12.1	2	3.4	42	72.4
11	Reflecting on prophets' lives	7	12.1	2	3.4	42	72.4
13	The universe functions in Qur'an	7	12.1	2	3.4	40	69.0
23	Evaluating personal practices	7	12.1	2	3.4	46	79.3
29	Cultural practices in the light of Islam	7	12.1	2	3.4	46	79.3

(table continues)

#	Item	Gifted high		Average high		No differences	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
30	Developing a sense of responsibility	7	12.1	2	3.4	48	82.8
42	Encouraging questioning and thinking	7	12.1	3	5.2	45	77.6
44	Protect an Islamic social environment	7	12.1	2	3.4	46	79.3
19	The concepts of good and bad	6	10.3	2	3.4	49	84.5
20	The ethical framework in Islam	6	10.3	2	3.4	43	74.1
25	Develop a sense of awareness	6	10.3	2	3.4	49	84.5
26	Exploring the Arabic term of <i>ilm</i>	6	10.3	2	3.4	45	77.6
28	Evaluate their daily activities	6	10.3	3	5.2	47	81.0
32	Self behavior in light of Islamic values	6	10.3	3	5.2	46	79.3
33	Analyzing Qur'anic verses	6	10.3	3	5.2	45	77.6
35	The barriers of development	6	10.3	3	5.2	45	77.6
10	Reflecting on the God's power	5	8.6	1	1.7	44	75.9
27	Teaching Islamic history	5	8.6	2	3.4	46	79.3
34	Barriers of personal development	5	8.6	2	3.4	45	77.6
36	Hadith about personal characteristics	5	8.6	3	5.2	47	81.0
38	Prophet's behavior with others	5	8.6	2	3.4	48	82.8
39	Analyzing the effects of environment	5	8.6	2	3.4	48	82.8
5	The Qur'anic concepts to the daily life	4	6.9	2	3.4	47	81.0
6	Qur'an and the historical events	4	6.9	3	5.2	43	74.1
37	Studying prophet's characteristics	4	6.9	3	5.2	48	82.8
40	The social environment effects	4	6.9	2	3.4	49	84.5
45	Questioning information resources	3	5.2	2	3.4	49	84.5

without differentiation. Nonetheless, all values that were reported as being presented to gifted students more often than to average students. Though "no differences" were always the majority comparison. Furthermore, the data of teachers' responses to the Classroom Curriculum Practices survey were also examined by comparing mean responses using descriptive and inferential statistics procedures as reported in Table 16.

Table 16

Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and Level of Significance of Teachers' Responses to the Classroom Curriculum Practices Items for Gifted and Average Students

#	Item	Gif-Ave ^a M	Gif-Ave ^a SD	ES	T	df	P
Teachers (n= 58)							
31	Developing a habit of self-evaluation	.23	.68	.15	2.53	56	.01
30	Developing a sense of responsibility	.23	.80	.20	2.15	56	.04
43	Helping students to think individually	.18	.71	.15	1.87	56	.07
16	Prophet's teachings and human rights	.19	.76	.12	1.81	52	.08
29	Cultural practices in the light of Islam	.16	.71	.11	1.7	55	.10
32	Self behavior in light of Islamic values	.14	.67	.1	1.59	55	.12
18	Reflecting on the prophet's action	.16	.76	.11	1.59	54	.12
21	Evaluate reading in the light of Islam	.18	.86	.10	1.56	54	.12
44	Protect an Islamic social environment	.18	.86	.11	1.56	54	.12
17	Prophet's actions and human rights	.19	.86	.11	1.6	52	.12
2	Analyzing parts of Qur'an	.22	1.03	.15	1.5	50	.14
22	Islamic and Western concept of ethics	.18	.91	.11	1.46	56	.15
9	The social concepts in the Qur'an	.22	1.06	.12	1.45	50	.15
1	Memorizing parts of Qur'an	.16	.71	.11	1.48	44	.15
8	Applying the historical concepts	.17	.92	.12	1.35	51	.18
28	Evaluate their daily activities	.14	.86	.12	1.24	55	.20
24	Analyzing Islamic history	.15	.83	.09	1.31	54	.20
11	Reflecting on prophets' lives	.15	.85	.10	1.31	51	.20
14	A chance to write about their thoughts	.14	.76	.09	1.31	48	.20
15	Discussing human rights in Islam	.17	.97	.10	1.27	53	.21
34	Barriers of personal development	.11	.67	.07	1.23	52	.22
12	Study the universe functions	.14	.81	.10	1.23	49	.23

(table continues)

#	Item	Gif-Ave ^a		<i>ES</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
19	The concepts of good and bad	.12	.77	.10	1.19	57	.24
41	Developing wisdom	.14	.89	.09	1.18	57	.24
4	Connecting Qur'an and a subject area	.15	.91	.10	1.18	54	.24
33	Analyzing Qur'anic verses	.11	.69	.07	1.18	54	.24
42	Encouraging questioning and thinking	.13	.81	.08	1.15	55	.25
23	Evaluating personal practices	.15	.93	.09	1.16	54	.25
36	Hadith about personal characteristics	.09	.64	.06	1.04	55	.30
3	Encouraging students to explore	.13	.92	.09	1.04	52	.30
25	Develop a sense of awareness	.11	.79	.08	1	56	.32
26	Exploring the Arabic term of ilm	.09	.69	.05	1	52	.32
20	The ethical framework in Islam	.1	.69	.05	1	51	.32
27	Teaching Islamic history	.09	.73	.06	0.93	53	.36
35	The barriers of development	.09	.75	.06	0.9	54	.37
40	The social environment effects	.09	.79	.06	0.84	55	.40
5	The Qur'anic concepts to the daily life	.09	.81	.07	0.84	53	.40
7	The historical events in the Qur'an	.12	.98	.08	0.85	51	.40
10	Reflecting on the God's power	.04	.79	.06	0.84	50	.40
13	The universe functions in Qur'an	.07	.81	.08	0.84	48	.40
39	Analyzing the effects of environment	.14	.89	.04	0.66	54	.51
37	Studying prophet's characteristics	.13	.81	.03	0.47	55	.64
6	Qur'an and the historical events	.18	.71	.04	0.44	50	.66
38	Prophet's behavior with others	.18	.86	.02	0.34	55	.74
45	Questioning information resources	.02	.60	.01	0.23	53	.82

^a Gif-Ave refers to the mean differences between teachers' reports of the frequency use with gifted and the frequency of use with average students and the standard deviations for those mean differences.

Based on the results, there are no significant differences in presenting Islamic values between gifted and average students, except for two items (see items 31, 30). In addition, a Type I error likelihood was calculated. In this case we make 45 comparisons, each with a probability of .05 for a Type I error. Thus, probability of

getting a Type I error would be .9. Hence, there is a probability that a Type I error could have been made on either of the two items found to be statistically significant. Thus, the two items that have reported statically significant differences may be due to probability alone. Considering Cohen's rule of thumb, the effect size values for the 45 items are comparatively small ranging from .12 to .01.

These results suggest that Islamic values are presented to gifted students without the content or the instruction of Islamic values being modified to meet gifted students' needs. It could be inferred that Islamic values are more likely to be presented to all students, gifted and average, without differentiation.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

As indicated in Chapter III, focus group discussions and interviews with the principals were conducted in five Islamic schools in the United States. The schools represented a continuum of reported differentiation for gifted students and integration of Islamic values into the curriculum for gifted students. The analysis of qualitative data yielded two major themes: (a) differentiation as an important idea, but one that is not being implemented with much sophistication; and (b) an acceptance of Islamic values as important and influential on all content, but not being well integrated into the actual teaching in the content areas. Both of these themes seemed to hold true regardless of the degree of differentiation and integration reported by the school on the questionnaires. Prior to discussing the two categories of differentiation and integration, the respondent characteristics are presented in the following section.

Respondent Characteristics

Although focus group discussions were conducted in five different states in the United States, there are some similarities among the participants across the five schools. Female was the dominant gender among the school faculty. In addition, all the teachers who participated in the focus group teach K-6 grade level. Some of them were teaching multiple grade level or combined classes. Table 17 presents the characteristics of teachers who participated in focus group discussions. Information about each school case is presented to provide some understanding of teachers participating in the study.

Table 17

Frequency of Teacher Participation in Study by School and by Grade

Categories of variables	Ali	Zahraa	Basayir	Ahmad	Ilyas
Kindergarten	2	1	3		1
First Grade	2	1	2		1
Second Grade	2		1		2
Third Grade	2		2		1
Fourth Grade	2				1
Fifth Grade	2				1
Sixth Grade	1				
Combined	3	2	2	4	
Total	16	4	10	4	7

Ali School

Ali School is located in the western part of the United States. In Ali School, two focus group meetings were arranged due to the relatively larger number of participants from the school. The first group included 8 teachers (7 female, 1 male), while the second group included 8 female teachers. All the teachers were Muslim teachers. Teaching assignments can be seen in Table 17.

Zahraa School

Zahraa School is also located in western United States. It is a very small school consisting of students of K-6 grade. Four teachers participated in the focus group meeting. Three of the teachers were non-Muslim and one was Muslim. Teaching assignments are shown in Table 17.

Basayir School

Basayir School has a large student population serving grades K-12. The school is located in the northeast part of the United States. All teachers who participated in the study were Muslim and females. The teaching assignments are shown in Table 17. However, only 8 teachers from this school participated in the focus group. The exact assignments of the two missing teachers are not available because no means of connecting specific teachers with their questionnaires was established. This was done to protect the confidentiality of teachers' responses.

Ahmad School

Ahmad School is located in the midwestern section of the United States. The school was the smallest school that participated in the focus group meetings. The school served K-6 grade level students. The number of the students in the classrooms was very small; therefore, teachers have multiple grade levels in the same classroom. A summary of grade assignments is provided in Table 17. The school is part of the Masjid building. Four teachers participated in the study. Two of the teachers were Muslims.

Ilyas School

Ilyas School is located in the Midwest. The school served Muslim students from K-12 grade level. All the teachers who participated in the focus group meetings were Muslim and female. The teaching assignments are provided in Table 17.

Differentiation

On the teachers' survey, some of the Islamic schools' teachers claimed to differentiate their practices to meet gifted students' needs; others claimed that they do not differentiate their practices. In this section, descriptions of rationale for differentiation, differentiated practices, and barriers to differentiation, as they were articulated in the principals' interviews and teacher focus groups, will be explained.

Rationale for Differentiation

The schools at which focus groups were held claimed to use differentiation to varying degrees, Ali School indicated that the teachers differentiate their teachings to meet gifted students' needs and it is highly committed to this practice. For example the principal at this school stated, "I...knew that I needed to do that [prepare the teachers to differentiate] because many of our students have been identified as gifted." Further, teachers in this same school seemed to understand a basic rationale for differentiation by making statements such as, "Each child takes it [instruction] at his own level;...we know how each child understands, what are their levels in our classroom" or, "We apply [differentiation] to every single student so we can draw the giftedness within each student, because every student is considered to have some type of giftedness." Another teacher at Ali School said, "We really tried to detect the learning styles of each student and by detecting the learning style of each student, you know that a student is not getting it...the ways that you're teaching at the moment. You do try to modify your lesson or the way you're teaching so that every student in the class gets it. So in that

sense we are differentiating.” Another comment from the focus group discussion indicated, “We know how to get each student...so that we do keep their interest in the classroom and really satisfy each student’s educational needs in the classroom on a daily basis.”

In contrast to Ali School, teachers at Ilyas School indicated that they do not differentiate their teaching practices for gifted students. All the teachers seemed to agree when their colleague declared, “I just don’t think that any of us...differentiate our teaching. I am not, I mean, I can’t speak for everyone for sure, but I don’t think most of us, under the time constraints that we have and...[the] large classes,...differentiate.”

At the other three schools, one or two teachers indicated that they differentiate their teaching in some subjects. For instance, a teacher at Zahraa School stated, “If they can spell all the words..., [they are] doing really well....I have other students who are working on more advanced techniques in writing. So I guess in that way I modify but it’s still all together.” A teacher at Ahmad School said, “[For] kindergartners and first graders, it’s more like, whatever they can do at that level, I am trying to make them go to the next level.”

Differentiate Practices

Teachers across all five schools were found to differentiate to a certain extent in some subject areas, especially reading and math. Even a teacher who had indicated that she does not differentiate at all said, “The only thing that we...differentiate...in [is] reading and math.” Teachers from Ali School confirmed, “We can differentiate some

subjects while we are teaching the whole class....We don't have to differentiate everything..., so we don't differentiate on a daily basis. Like on the...weekly spelling words, they are differentiated every week, and for the math as well.”

Teachers from Zahraa School and Ahmad have small classes size. They think this helps them in differentiation. One of the teachers from Ahmad School stated, “I guess with smaller classrooms we're able to work with them more one on one rather than a whole group setting.” Another teacher from the same school added, “In this way I modify, but it is still all together.”

However, when asked about specific differentiation strategies used in their classrooms, it seems the teachers in all the schools differentiate only at a very basic level. For example, at Ali School, which claimed to be committed to differentiation, the strategies used were: acceleration, enrichment worksheets, different levels of assignments, contract with individual and group, and using gifted students to tutor and take leadership roles. At Zahraa School, teachers reported using acceleration, enrichment worksheets, and having their gifted students help in tutoring. At Basayir School, teachers identified exactly the same strategies. This pattern repeated at Schools Ahmad and Ilyas as well. For example, a teacher from Zahraa School said, “Twice a week they do individual work and I work one on one or in a small group with the same thing. This is a student-by-student need, not whether they are gifted or struggling; it's what is appropriate for that student's needs.” A teacher from Ahmad School added, “We...have...them [gifted students] work with the other kids..., but then giving them extra work. Like maybe sometimes I send them homework sheets, so I give students

who I think more gifted...harder sheets to do, that I would think are more challenging for that students.”

A teacher from Basayir School explained the tutoring strategy by saying, “Sometimes one way to keep a child above average motivated is to get...[him to] assess with other child’s struggle and that also gives them a little bit insight to what they are doing.” In addition, a teacher from Ali School explained the differentiation strategy that some of them use, “I make homework packets and...a study guide that is basic... enrichment [for gifted students]....I expect all of my students to attempt all their worksheets, especially the enrichment worksheets, but what I expect from my more advanced students is to actually get them right.”

In addition, Islamic school principals indicated that grade skipping is one of the options that were available in the Islamic schools, but the principal of Ilyas School indicated, “We do have grade skipping but personally I don’t believe a lot in it and the school doesn’t.” The principal of Ahmad School confirmed, “We don’t advocate that generally [and] we try not to do it.” The principal of Zahraa School added, “[There] are some restrictions [to apply it].” The principal of Ali School supported, “There are a lot of requirements....” The principal of Ahmad School explained, “We have to be very careful because some parents might get the feeling that their child should also be promoted too, and it may not be at the student’s best interest, so we’re very careful in this one instance to do testing, to do observation. We also want to be sure that the student was not academically prepared for different grade level or higher grade level, but also socially prepared, being mature enough to work with students who are

chronologically older than that student would.”

Barriers to Classroom Differentiation

There are several barriers that hold these schools back from implementing more advance forms of differentiation. In the following sections these barriers are explored.

Resources

Teacher from Ilyas School stated, “We do not have a program here to tell who’s gifted..., but without resources we do not [know who is gifted]; we do not have [resources].” Ahmad School also found the lack of resources a factor that prevents differentiation. A teacher stated, “In most public schools they have gifted programs where they have a separate teacher who pulls the students out; the school doesn’t have any of those resources. So we don’t have...gifted resources.” A teacher from Ali School said, “Because of our limited resources, basically we can only do so much in the classroom.” At the same time a teacher from Ilyas School thought, “It would be nice to have extra resources where some other teacher could pull them out and work with them because we have tutors for the kids who are below level, but we don’t necessarily have something for kids who are above level.” Another teacher from Ali School added to this, “I think, given some time and more resources, we will be able to do a better job.” Principals share their teachers’ concern, as it is best expressed by the one of them, “Without the fiscal responsibility being met we are not able to really advance the program the way we want...unfortunately.”

Lack of Knowledge in Applying Differentiation

Although most of the teachers had some training in gifted education, teachers from three Islamic schools who participated in a focus group discussion indicated they need further training on how to better differentiate. This was illustrated by the statement made by the teacher from Ilyas School, "I don't think I have perhaps the training to differentiate...I don't think I've got...the training to get everybody doing what they're supposed to." Another teacher from the same school confirmed, "I don't have the training as well." A teacher from Basayir School had the same opinion, "I cannot. I need to have that kind of classroom background to start that [differentiation]."

Some of the teachers also were confused about the meaning of the term differentiation. For example, a teacher from Basayir School said, "No, I do not differentiate....I cannot....I really do not believe in [the] tracking system." This statement led another teacher to say, "No, we do not differentiate." In addition, one of the teachers from the same school said, "We thought...[by differentiation] you meant separate classes, or another program, an additional program that would...help foster full students who are gifted."

The School Curriculum

Furthermore, teachers found that their school curriculum is geared toward above average students, as it was stated by teacher from Ali School, "Actually a lot of our curriculum is very good, at least I know about math and I know about reading. It is a very formulated curriculum. With respect to this particular aspect, it is geared

towards addressing over-achievers. So that is very helpful for all of us. It just guides you through the whole process, and they have assignments there for them. They have the instruction of techniques as well. So that's very helpful." This same point was expressed by another teacher from the same school, "They give all kinds of activities so you know the curriculum is really well written." A teacher from Zahraa School shared this point also, "Well, our curriculum is actually in the guidebook that we follow, it does give us a program for the gifted." Another teacher from same school added, "To tell you the truth our curriculum is a gifted program."

The Concept of Giftedness

The concept of who is gifted is not well developed at Ali School. When they were asked, "Who is gifted?" The answer was, "In Islam all students are considered gifted, it's not just as in the public schools. There are the psychologists who evaluate students for giftedness. We are applying the gifted program to every single student or trying our best to differentiate and apply it to every single student, so we can draw out the giftedness within each student because every student is considered to have some type of a gift." Another teacher from the same school explained, "The way we're doing it [differentiating]...is that this notion that was brought up before that all students are gifted, so you give all the students these challenging things." This idea also addressed by the principal of Zahraa School who said, "We have a small number [of students] in the classroom. We look to them all as gifted."

Integration

The concept of integration of the Islamic values was found to be one of the main themes that emerged from the focus group discussions. This sections highlights subcategories related to this concept, namely (a) aspects of the Islamic values, (b) the integration of the Islamic values in the content area, (c) differentiating the Islamic values, and (d) barriers in integrating Islamic values.

Aspects of the Islamic Values

All the Islamic schools that participated in the focus group share the same objectives or goals about the importance of developing good Muslims. For example, the principal at Ahmad School indicated that “the philosophy of the school is to provide an Islamic teaching—an Islamic understanding for our students...so they could learn not just by reading in a textbook how to be a Muslim, but they could see that [Islamic understating] as they watch the teachers and the staff interact with one another.” In addition, the principal at Ilyas School explained that “one of things that a lot of us like [is] to...instill community service into our children.” Moreover, the principal from Basayir School indicated, “We have to educate our kids and give them...much...Islamic information....We try to have an atmosphere that is safe for them, that is friendly and warm and trusting atmosphere that kids can nourish and try to instill Islamic ethics, fair, taking care of religions.”

Teachers at the Islamic schools agree with the importance of this philosophy as a teacher from Ali School stated, “I strongly agree, of course. That’s why all of us made

the commitment to be in an Islamic school and work with Muslim children because these are our goals,...our missions.” Another teacher from the same school interpreted the importance of the Islamic values, “Islamically oriented values...we feel are important for our students. Our mission for our students when they leave this school [is] that they should be able to have these qualities as a [Muslim].” These qualities were explained by another teacher, “We keep prophet Mohammed (*sallah allah alihe wa sallam*) as the role model, as the locator who brought the word of goodness and kindness and to keep him as the role model and talk about him so that we can actually implement it naturally.” Further, a non-Muslim teacher from Zahraa School shares the same feeling about the importance of the Islamic school’s philosophy as she said, “I remind them [students] and I try to encourage them to follow their faith and their behaviors...I encourage them if they choose.”

Integration of the Islamic Values in the Content Area

A rationale for integrating Islamic values in the teaching of the content areas was articulated by the principal at Ali School. She stated, “After I introduced our teachers to Islamic Education 101, my task was to bring their level of understanding up to what this model entailed and so I utilized my in-service days.” The integration model she referred to was a direct result of what she called, “an enormous problem in education in the Muslim world.” She stated, “It resulted from colonialism, and it resulted from this bifurcation of the education system. And the system became two systems when primarily there was a religious school which dealt with the Qur’an..., and

then there was a second system which dealt with almost entirely the operational of the professional,...and so that system has continued until today, and it has contributed tremendously to the disparity we see in the status of Islam and Islamic institutions world wide. [We] really follow the model that was connected with *Raswal Allah*⁷ (SA) when the Masjed [Mosque] and Islamic school model was first established. And so it was from that model that the concept of *Tawheed*, the *Twheedian* approach if you will, or the once approach to Islamic education was established and that was what was the impetus for getting that going.” This integration model was clearly reflected in the teachers’ understating and their implementation to the integration to some degree. For example, a teacher from Ali School stated, “These are our goals...providing academic through an Islamic framework...whatever subject matter we’re teaching and especially to our gifted students who are able to inquire.” In addition, another teacher explained, “We tie it [Islamic teachings] into subject. So regardless if it’s math, science, social studies,...language arts, we always tie [them] to Islam through research or evidences in the Qur’an, or the *Sunnah*. [For example], in science, if we study light and sound, we may ask the student to find a Qur’anic *aya* or a *Hadith* that talks about light and sound so that they can study the Islamic perspective while they’re also studying the secular.... We tie in Islam to each subject, so that they understand that Islam is a part of every subject, every aspect.”

Although the main purpose for developing Islamic schools was to educate the Muslim students with the Islamic teachings, the concept of integrating these teachings in the content area has not been well developed and understood by the most of

⁷ “The messenger of God” referring to the prophet Mohammad.

educators in Islamic schools. For example, the principal of Ilyas School indicated that, "We're not at the point yet where we fully integrate the religion into the secular curriculum, but we're working towards that." A teacher from the same school explained her way of integration, "I usually do integrate things....So I just try to reinforce what [The Islamic Studies teacher's] teaching, and I don't usually bring the Qur'an in because I teach the little kids, the kindergarten /first grade...I mean, I might mention something that's taught in the Qur'an....We would just talk about Islam in general." Further, a non-Muslim teacher from Zahraa School indicated, "I think we do integrate it a little bit when something comes up we don't understand, and somehow it evolves into a group discussion where the kids actually teach us." Some Muslim teachers also faced a difficulty in integrating Islamic values, as a teacher who recently converted to Islam from Ilyas School stated, "It's very hard for me myself to integrate anything Islamic." Another Muslim teacher, from Basayir School, expressed the same point by stating, "It is really hard to [integrate] you know, relate Islam and science."

Differentiating the Islamic Values

When teachers were asked if they differentiate their teachings of Islamic values to their gifted students, most of them, across all the five schools indicated they do not. The reason behind this was clearly stated by a teacher from Ali School, "Because they're both Muslims, so they're both responsible,...so we would probably be teaching at about the same level." Another teacher from the same school added, "When we bring Islamic perspective we are addressing all the students." A teacher from Ilyas School

agreed, "I think that's the one, Islamic values, everybody needs it [Islamic values]." Her colleagues completed the sentence saying, "Gifted or not gifted."

However, some of the teachers indicated higher expectations for their gifted students. A teacher from Ali School stated, "The gifted students will take it [the Islamic values] further, understand it further." This concept was also accepted by other schools, such as Ahmad School, where a teacher stated, "They [gifted students] will understand it [Islamic values] at a different level. So I guess I don't modify it necessarily, but when I talk about it I expect that some of the kids will understand it more than others."

Barriers to Integrating Islamic Values

There are several barriers that emerged in the focus group discussions as well as from principals' interviews regarding the barriers to integrating the Islamic values in the content areas. These barriers are explained in the following sections.

Islamic Knowledge

The knowledge of Islam was one of the categories that emerged in the focus groups. Issues discussed in this section are concerned with the knowledge of non-Muslim teachers, Muslim teachers, and students.

Non-Muslim teachers. Non-Muslim teachers in the Islamic schools are provided with the basic elements of Islamic teachings. The purpose of these teachings is best explained by the principal of Ahmad School, "We have at this school at this particular time three non-Muslim teachers, so we've held...workshops and conversations with the non-Muslim teachers to try to help them understand [Islam]. So at the very least, we try

to make sure that they don't do anything that's contrary to Islam in their teaching." The purpose of the training was limited to raising teachers' awareness about issues that contradict Islamic values. Nonetheless, a non-Muslim teacher from same school stated, "I guess you have to have a deeper study of it [Islamic values] to fully be able to integrate it. Because I can't, like she said, I can't say, 'Well, the prophet Mohammed peace be upon him said....,' so I guess in that way it would take years to really be able to fully integrate Islam....So I don't know, I think it would take more than we had—what, a week....It's enough to be able to communicate than to be able to...be a part of the community, but it's not enough to be able to fully integrate the religion into our everyday lessons." In addition, another non-Muslim teacher from Zahraa School indicated her lack of awareness of some Islamic values, "I don't teach the Islamic values but the children, I can see [the Islamic values] in them. Like whenever we use food for our science project..., they don't [like it]. The children tell me that...it's not right to use...food,...[You are] wasting things....Food is made for eating....I respect and I appreciate them telling me even if I don't know. They're always jumping...to tell me that."

Muslim teachers. Some Muslim teachers at the Islamic schools also had difficulty in integrating the Islamic values in their teachings. This is sometimes due to the teachers' lack of knowledge of Islam. For example, a Muslim teacher who has recently converted to Islam from Ahmad School stated "I don't know anything about Islam, I don't know Qur'an, I don't know Arabic,...I'm limited myself, so how could I bring that into the classroom. I have to learn first before I can teach them." In addition,

a teacher from Ali School stated, "I was just going to say it's easy to teach, bring Islam and teach it to them, but what's hard is, or what's challenging is you knowing your Islam. I think that's what's challenging, you as a teacher need to know your Islam before you can even teach it, and that's where I find the challenge...So that's where, as a teacher, I need to increase my knowledge of Islam." The same idea regarding the difficulty in integration was expressed by most of the teachers from all schools.

Students. Another difficulty in integrating the Islamic values in some Islamic schools stems from students' motivation in learning and practicing Islamic teachings. For example, one of the teachers in Basayir School said, "They have a Qur'an time and the teacher comes and they memorize part of *sura* but still they don't understand why they [are] memorizing. It's really hard for them to understand, but we still tell them. They know that they're Muslim and there is only one God they believe in,...but they don't have the interest for the memorizing of the Qur'an." Another teacher from Ilyas School had a similar observation, "It takes me...a long time and it's very hard to let them [students] think. They know the rules [one] hundred percent, but they're not following them."

Time

Time was another factor pointed to by several educators as barriers to integrate of Islamic values and content. For example, the principal from Basayir School stated, "We have to educate our kids and give them as much Islamic information that we are allowed...time wise, because we are also under the Board of Education." A teacher from Ali School stated, "Personally I find it difficult to manage. In [comparison to] public

schools, we have less time spent on the subjects. We just kind of discuss it [Islam] in class when I get to a certain point I'll find a point, and we'll talk about what Islam says, and I told them, 'Well Islam didn't get rid of slavery. It did something much better. It made them [slave owners] change the way they thought about the person who was a slave and saying you're free and then just leaving them. They were free but they didn't have any education. There was no one willing to help them.' And so we talked about this. It only lasted five or ten minutes though, that's all I had time to spend on it and you know other than that, I feel that, for maybe five minutes here five minutes there I really don't have time to spend on such thing[s] [integrating Islamic values]." Another teacher from same school confirmed, "We know how to do [the integration], but it's hard. We don't have time." A teacher from Ali School said, "I know it takes a little bit [of] time, but we know sometimes the students in...[my class] like [the integration]."

Departmental Arrangement

One reason given by many teachers who did not complete the Classroom Curriculum Practice Survey, which specifically dealt with their use of Islamic values in their teachings, was that they do not teach Arabic and Islamic studies. The classes in the Islamic schools follow the traditional departmental arrangement, as explained by the principal of Zahraa School, "We have eight periods every day—six of them for English, science, math, social studies, art. All those different subjects, plus those two classes, ...one for *Islamite*—45 minutes—and one for Arabic for 45 minutes." This kind of class arrangement limits teachers' ability to involve Islamic studies while they are teaching other content areas. This was understood from the statement that was made by a teacher

from Ali School, "We have Islamic information, we do give some things basically to the whole general class...I don't teach Islamic...so I have a cutoff in sense of involving the children what knowledge I do give them," A teacher from Ahmad School explained, "Because we don't teach...the Islamic part of the curriculum, I don't know how to go about it." This was clearly supported by a teacher from Ilyas School who said, "But the actual looking at the Qur'an and looking at the Islamic studies and other things..., we don't personally do."

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the state of gifted education in Islamic schools in the United States. Three surveys and focus group discussions along with principals' interviews were used to discover the state of gifted education in these schools. In this chapter, the limitations of the study are presented, followed by discussion of the findings that emerged from the study will be presented.

Limitations

Prior to discussing these results, it is important to acknowledge limitations that may have affected the results of this research. First, generalizability may be limited due to a small sample size that may not be representative of the Islamic schools in the United States. Furthermore, the method of data collection and analysis also may be a threat to the study's validity. That is, several surveys were used to collect the data, and there is a possibility that respondents misunderstand some of the surveys' items. It is also a possibility that in answering the surveys, principals and teachers tried to respond in a way they perceived to be socially acceptable—either to their colleagues or to the researcher. The mixed method was used in this research specifically to address this concern, triangulating survey responses with on-site oral responses.

However, while on the surveys, teachers and principals reported types of programs options used in the Islamic schools, no attempt was made to compare their descriptions with actual programs. It would be important to address this issue through

classroom observation to determine the classroom curriculum and instruction practices used with gifted students in the Islamic schools in the United States. Some research of this type already has been conducted with public and private (non-Muslim) schools in the United States (Westberg et al., 1993) and would certainly be useful in the Islamic schools as well.

Gifted Learners in the Islamic Schools

In this study, we find that Islamic schools in the United States have limited programs that serve gifted students' needs. These programs include: (a) identification; (b) programs and services; (c) classroom instruction practices; (d) classroom curriculum practices.

Identification

Most teachers in the Islamic schools were found to focus on the use of achievement tests, grades, and student products/portfolios to identify gifted students in their classrooms. This finding is very similar to Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, and Zhang (1993), in which they found that the three most common identification measures teachers use in their classrooms to assess gifted students were achievement tests, grades, and teacher nomination. This finding suggests that the Islamic schools teachers' practices in the classroom are not necessarily different from the practices of the mainstream educators in the United States.

This finding is somewhat unexpected given that 70% of the teachers at the

Islamic schools hold at least a bachelor's degree and most of the respondents have received training in the area of gifted education. Further, 40% of the teachers are relatively new teachers having taught for less than 5 years. The expectation is that the training would have more influence on their teaching skills. Nevertheless, it appears that the influence of typical traditional school methods for assessing in gifted students has a strong impact on the Islamic schools in the United States. The only exception to this pattern is the reported use of student products/portfolios for identification purposes, but how the products/profiles were used was never fully explained by educators at the Islamic schools.

Programs and Services

The findings indicated that Islamic schools have very limited program options that serve gifted student needs. The most commonly applied program options offered in the Islamic schools are enrichment, continuous progress, and early entrance. Shaklee (2001) discussed the importance of comprehensive services in designing a program for gifted education that is supported philosophically, theoretically, and empirically. Her discussion is based on the belief that giftedness is multi-faceted and could be manifest in different ways and degrees. Therefore, to reach each child's educational needs, schools should have more than one program option. Islamic schools claimed to have multiple program options, however, are these programs supported philosophically, theoretically, and empirically?

Although most of the Islamic schools claim to have gifted program options, they

often do not recognize these options as a gifted program. Islamic school principals indicated that they do not provide a special program to serve gifted students. A limited resource is one of the issues that hinder them from establishing a broad program for gifted education. All of the Islamic schools are private schools and have limited financial resources. Shaklee (2001) indicated that in order to design a program that serves gifted individuals, it is important to provide a continuum of services for gifted learners to ensure appropriate educational opportunities that address gifted and talented children's educational requirements. "The services for gifted learners are not an addition to their school day; they are the means by which students learn, grow, and develop" (p. 4). Therefore, from this perspective, Islamic schools in this study lack sufficient program options that serve gifted students.

Classroom Instructional Practices

While the majority of the Islamic schoolteachers believe they have gifted students in their classrooms, only some indicated that they modify their practices to meet gifted students' needs. Further, the degree of modification is limited. The majority of teachers do not differentiate in their strategies among gifted and average students. They instruct gifted and average students without differentiation. This finding is consistent with the findings of the Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, and Emmons (1993). However, in this study, mean differences between scores of gifted and average students for each item is higher and with larger effect size compared with the Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, and Zhang

(1993) study of the public schools sample. The Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, and Zhang sample was a large one that consisted of teachers from various parts of the United States, with various backgrounds, and from both public and private schools. Therefore, while the general pattern of limited differentiation in the classroom holds true for the Muslim sample in most cases, the teachers in the Islamic schools apparently are doing more differentiation than was found in national sample. This could be because the entire sample was from private schools, though in the national survey, differentiated treatment was lower for private schools than for public schools. However, another possible explanation is that, given the time elapsed, perhaps differentiation is now more acceptable than it was at the time of the national survey.

Islamic schools teachers appear to be limited in their choice of differentiation strategies. This finding was supported by the questionnaire responses and the focus group discussions. Teachers reported that they use acceleration, enrichment, worksheets, and have their gifted students help tutor. Although acceleration was found to be one of the strongly supported practices in the gifted education (Shore et al., 1991), it is not clear that the term as used in gifted education research reflects the same practices in the Islamic schools. One of the acceleration advantages is to shorten the number of years a child spends in school; however, grade skipping is one of the practices that was not found to be advocated by the Islamic school principals. In addition, this brings up the idea of the importance of gifted education being embedded in the philosophical foundation that reflects the community's beliefs and values in order to identify specific needs for gifted learners (Shaklee, 2001).

This situation also raises a concern in regard to the kinds of training that the teachers have received in gifted education. A training model should be able to illustrate a clear vision that motivates teachers to work towards their goals (Johnson et al., 2002). There is a strong relationship between two factors: teacher's training and the school's philosophical foundation regarding gifted education. If the gifted program is embedded in the school's philosophy, it would reflect favorably on the teachers' attitudes and readiness to experiment and explore. Nevertheless, time, resources, and desirable training are vital factors that would facilitate teachers' understanding and implementation of the curriculum differentiation skills and strategies. Unfortunately, these same things (i.e., time, resources, and training) are the very things that create barriers for teachers implementing differentiation. The identification of these barriers in Islamic schools is consistent with the findings of Johnson et al. for public schools. Clearly, more needs to be done to adapt the learning environment to support curriculum differentiation activities (Shore et al., 1991).

Further, the concept of giftedness in some Islamic schools is not articulated according to the Islamic concept of giftedness. There is a conflict between teachers' training and learning and their beliefs of who is gifted. Some teachers in the Islamic schools believe that "all students are gifted," therefore, they apply the gifted program "to every single student." This raises the likelihood that Islamic school teachers would limit their practices or lower their expectations of gifted students and involve gifted students solely in practices such as tutoring in which other students' academic needs may be met, but not the gifted students'. This lack of understanding of the concept of

giftedness may have played a part in minor differentiation that was reported between average and gifted students.

Delcourt and Evans (1994) have suggested that gifted students have special needs and characteristics that require different strategies. Therefore, program activities should accommodate individual differences and consider gifted students' needs. The inability to accommodate gifted student needs, as suggested by Purcell (1993), results in several drawbacks for the students, such as a decline in their energy, motivation, and curiosity. Thus, the most essential question is, "Do the Islamic school administrators and teachers believe in the importance of having a gifted program?" Based on this question's answer, it would be more likely to have a clear answer for why there is a lack of curriculum differentiation in Islamic schools in the United States.

Despite of the teachers' effort in implementing curriculum differentiation, Johnsen et al. (2002) observed the effect of the administration role in influencing teachers' quality of instruction. In addition, Johnsen et al. findings indicated that a strong collaboration among school members contributed to the efficacy of teachers in the classroom.

Classroom Curriculum Practices

The concept of differentiation influences two sets of practices: instructor (as just discussed) and curriculum. As Shore et al. (1991) indicated, gifted students should be provided with qualitative curriculum differentiation. Further, the qualitative curriculum differentiation should be "consistent with most of what we are learning about the nature

of giftedness and creativity in learning” (p. 95). In addition, Shore et al. pointed to the importance of a multidisciplinary approach that helps students to make “sense out of unfamiliar events” (p. 89). This idea leads to the concept of integration that would help Muslim students to rationalize their religious teachings and values and embed them in their daily tasks. In the following sections, several aspects generated from this study related to curriculum differentiation and curriculum integration are discussed.

Muslim Gifted Students and Differentiation

Teachers at the Islamic schools present Islamic values to all students without differentiation between gifted and average. They do not adjust their teachings of Islamic values to gifted students because they believe that all the students, whether gifted or average, have similar religious responsibilities. However, they acknowledge that students have a different level of understanding of the concepts. Therefore, the identical treatment of students with different abilities limits Muslim gifted students from establishing a deeper understanding of the Qur'an and *Hadith*. According to Ashraf (as cited in Sahadat, 1997), the sense of responsibility and accountability would be better understood from a context of a Muslim's relationship with almighty Allah. The growth of this relationship could be achieved by the continuous development of the person's knowledge. The more educated a person is, the more likely the person is to achieve a higher sense of accountability and develop a closer relationship with Almighty Allah. According to the Holy Qur'an, “Those truly fears Allah, Among His Servants, Who have knowledge: For Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving” (35:28).

Therefore, differentiation would help to broaden gifted students' ability by providing them with different educational opportunities appropriate to their attained levels of learning. In the Holy Qur'an, almighty Allah states, "Say: If the ocean were Ink (wherewith to write out) The words of my Lord. Sooner would the ocean be Exhausted than would the words Of my Lord, even if we Added another ocean Like it, for its aid" (18:109). This Qur'anic verse does not merely illustrate that the ultimate source of knowledge is inestimable, it also invites the scholar to broaden her/his perspectives and strive to fathom as much as one can of Allah's worlds. Hence, the use of differentiating strategies will have a great impact in advancing gifted students' knowledge and providing them with the elements to strive to achieve more.

Islamic Schools and the Concept of Integration

All principals and teachers at the Islamic schools were found to value the teaching of Islamic principles to their students. For example, most of the teachers strive to provide Muslim students a level of teaching that could be achieved not only by academic teachings, but also by presenting a good example to follow. They are also motivated to create a safe healthy environment that helps these students learn and flourish.

However, most Islamic school curriculums have not been found to integrate these values into secular content instruction. This model of separation between religious and secular education has created a difficulty in finding time to integrate Islamic values in subject matters. Because of the separation between the subjects,

teachers find it difficult to manage their time and integrate Islamic values.

According to the principal of Ali School, "In observing the models of Islamic schools in most of the Muslim countries we discovered that those schools were the result of a colonialist system—meaning that the educational system one of the first systems in virtually every Muslim country was bifurcated." This educational system contradicts the view of Islam that assumes a unity between secular and religious education (Ashraf, 1983). The separation between the two affects the main goal of education in Islam outlined by Islamic principles, which is to produce humans "who are not [only] rich in knowledge but who are [also] noble in character and who can promote righteousness in the society" (Kysilka & Qadri, 1997). Further, the separation between the two types of education results in misunderstandings of Islamic teachings. Hence, under the educational system set up by the Islamic countries and adopted by most Islamic schools in the United States, it is expected that most Muslim teachers will not be able to integrate the Islamic values in their teachings.

As a results, some teachers in the Islamic schools indicated that their students do not uphold the Islamic values and teachings due to their lack of understanding. It was found that the schools that provide a lower level of integration were more likely to experience such a dilemma. Because Islam is a religion of life, memorizing Qur'anic verses and *Hadith* without understanding and integrating these values in daily life has limited or no effect on a student. The concept of true science is driven from the belief that "science in Islam is merely a means to reach the higher truths. It is not an end in itself" (Iqbal, 1999, p. 39). Islam forms a complete code of human life; knowledge

cannot be divided into two classes, one religious and the other secular (Ashraf, 1983).

What we see in these schools is the separation between the two sections that could create conflict rather than complement each other.

Therefore, Islamic knowledge becomes sheer facts that students are unable to act upon, because it does not help them raise their awareness and sense of responsibility. However, to be able to raise students' sense of responsibilities, educators in the Islamic schools should create a path for integrating the outer and the inner world of the individual. Yusuf (1995) explained this in his interpretation to the verse (35:28) that was cited earlier.

In outer we can, through colours [sic], understand and appreciate the finest shades and gradations. But in the spiritual world that variation of gradation is even more subtle and more comprehensive. Who can truly understand it? Allah's servants, who know, i.e., who have the inner knowledge which comes through their acquaintance with the spiritual world--it is such people who truly appreciate the inner world, . . . and love-appreciation of all the marvelous beauties of Allah's outer and inner world ('Allah is Exalted in Might') and love because of this Grace and kindness ('oft-Forgiving'). (p. 1109)

Non-Muslim Teachers

Another issue that appears to impede curriculum integration in Islamic schools is the presence of non-Muslim teachers. Although some Islamic schools indicated they provide basic training about Islamic values to their non-Muslim teachers, this type of training is limited to providing the teacher with only the basic elements of Islamic teachings. Therefore, this cannot qualify them to integrate Islamic values in their teachings. On the other hand, to teach Islamic values means to believe in these values. Not having these values as a part of the teacher's beliefs will not be effective and could have undesirable results due to teachers' inability to model the Islamic values to their

students. For example, one of the main practices in the everyday life of Muslims is *salah* (prayers). Non-Muslim teacher cannot insinuate the importance of this practice to Muslim students, as this practice is not a part of the non-Muslim teacher belief system or practice. Even though the non-Muslim teacher may practice prayer within his or her own religious practice, the way the practice occurs and the meaning of the practice would be different for the non-Muslim. Hence, knowledge of Islam is not always sufficient; acting upon the belief is often necessary.

However, this does not suggest that Islamic schools cannot have non-Muslim teachers; rather it invites Muslim educators to benefit from non-Muslim teachers who will enrich the Islamic school environment and enhance students' understanding of other religions. Further, having non-Muslim teachers in Islamic schools serves as a resource that helps students in general and gifted students in particular to challenge their beliefs and traditions; thus, providing a vehicle for the strengthening of faith. Questioning can be used to build faith. "There are so many verses in the Quran as well as the traditions of the Prophet (S)⁸ that emphasize that light [i.e., faith in God] may be attained by those who struggle against darkness [i.e., through questioning]" (Akhtar, n.d., ¶ 16). For example, the prophet Abraham used questioning strategies to help his followers to overcome doubt. Thus, Islam rejects a blind faith, meaning that skepticism can be accepted, but only as it helps to overcome uncertainty.

In addition, knowledge (*ilm*) in Islam embraces socio-political and moral aspects, which combine knowledge and social action. Islam invites its followers to exercise their intellect ability and make a good use of their knowledge to attain the

⁸ Another way to say "Peace be upon him."

ultimate truth (Akhtar, n.d.). Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) emphasized, "Ask (questions from) the learned, speak with the wise, and associate with the poor" (Imani, 1998, p. 127). Hence, having non-Muslim teachers in the Islamic environment would help Muslim students to question their beliefs in a faith-promoting way because the questioning would occur in an environment that provides Islamic resources to help students use their intellectual ability to overcome doubt and uncertainty.

Conclusions

The main objective of the Islamic schools in the United States is "to create the righteous person who can fulfill his role as the vicegerent of Allah on earth" (Omran, 1993, p. ix). This objective corresponds with main purpose of the creation of the human being as stated in the Holy Qur'an, "Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create A vicegerent on earth'" (2:30). For human beings to assume this role, Muslims believe that they are required to pursue education ultimately to elevate and refine their understanding and appreciation of the world. The question is, to what degree are Islamic schools able to achieve their objectives?

Islamic schools created an Islamic environment that provides Muslim students with a strong academic background and at the same time solid teachings of Islamic principals and values. They also help them to instill the importance of community service under a safe, friendly, and warm atmosphere.

Nevertheless, there are several shortcomings in Islamic schools in the United States to achieve their main objective. Although a goal of the Islamic schools is to

provide quality education, this quality of education did not intend to establish a gifted education program in the Islamic schools. While teachers in the Islamic schools have established some of the gifted education elements through identifying informal measures to assess their gifted students, this seems inconsistent with the lack of gifted educational services.

Second, teachers' classroom practices did not correspond with their training and education level. This could be explained in the light of several factors. Most Islamic schools in the United States lack the philosophical and theoretical foundation regarding gifted education. Also, there is an ambiguous understanding of the concept of giftedness. Some of the Islamic school teachers assume that all students in the classroom should be treated as gifted; therefore, they do not foster their gifted students' educational needs. Further, the lack of resources has contributed to some degree in hampering teachers' efforts in providing gifted students with their educational requirements. This has led some schools to discontinue their educational plans. For example, the principal of Ali School stated, "Without the fiscal responsibility being met, we are not able to really advance the program the way we want...unfortunately."

Third, shortcoming seems to revolve around the issue of integrating sacred and secular learning. Despite the real measures directed toward educating and raising Muslim students based on Islamic teachings, it seems that Islamic teachings do not become a part of the students' daily practices. Ultimately the division between the secular education and religious education contributes to students' lack of understanding of the importance of Islamic values and teachings. This is sometimes made worse by

teachers who are unable to build the bridge that would facilitate natural understanding of Islamic values.

It seems that Islamic schools should articulate a clear philosophical, theoretical, and practical concept in regard to gifted education that also honors Islamic beliefs. This endeavor should be supported by professional development that should be carried out more often in the Islamic schools and based on teachers' needs. Professional development should include "modeling and demonstration, opportunity for practice, and a system for providing feedback and coaching" (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Emmons, & Zhang 1993, p. 99). Islamic school philosophy should articulate a clear method for integration of the religious and secular. The division between secular and religion education should be considered carefully in order to produce a unity. Teachers should have time to plan the integration and be able to deliver it in a coherent form. The traditional departmental arrangement in the schools is one of the factors that emphasizes the division between the educational elements; therefore, it would be valuable to arrange the classes in a way that helps to form the integration.

Islam is a religion that values knowledge and considers pursuing education as an act of worship. Therefore, Muslims have been able to develop an Islamic civilization that adopted knowledge that existed at the time and continued to progress with that knowledge and apply it to all facets of life. Thus, the Islamic concept of adaptation and enrichment should enlighten Muslim educators to establish a coherent educational form that optimizes the learning of all students, including the gifted.

Hence, whatever the source of emergent knowledge, be it from the Islamic

teachings, from Western research perspectives, or from personal experience, Muslim educators must seek and apply knowledge in ways that benefit those for whom they have responsibility. My hope is that this research provides new knowledge to my fellow educators that can result in the improvement of educational practices in Islamic schools. Finally, my hope is that I, myself, will continue to seek knowledge and use it to benefit all of humanity. As it says in the Holy Qur'an, "O my Lord! Advance me In knowledge" (20:114).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The Invitation Letter to the Islamic Schools' Principals

Dear Principal

Assalamu Alaykum

My name is Fatma A. Al-Lawati, I am from Sultanate of Oman and am currently a graduate student at Utah State University working on my Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on the gifted education. I have been fascinated with an Islamic theory of education and its broad implications. Recently, I have found that Islam has a unique view about gifted education.

For my Ph.D. research project, I would like to explore the concept of giftedness in the Islamic theory of education and its implications in the Islamic world. With this letter I am asking for your participation in this study. I was glad to have the opportunity to meet Islamic school principals in Chicago at the ISNA conference. I also was able to present my dissertation topic and was pleased with the interest shown.

In my effort to explore an Islamic educational theory, I am exploring the gifted education in Islamic schools in the United States. In other words, are there gifted programs in Islamic schools? Are teachers in Islamic schools able to differentiate their instruction to meet gifted students needs? In an effort to answer these questions, qualitative and quantitative research methods will be implemented. For the quantitative study three questionnaires will be used. I will be asking you, the principals, to respond to one of the three surveys that will be sent to the schools. You will then be asked to distribute to each of your teachers two questionnaires. All materials from each school will be returned to Utah State University in a self-addressed stamped envelope that I will provide to the school. Questionnaires will be mailed to the school in mid January 2003. I am asking that they be returned by February 2003.

Based on results from the questionnaires, four schools will be selected for an on-site visit during which discussion will be held about an Islamic concept of giftedness and how this is implemented in Islamic schools. Selection of the schools will occur in mid March 2003. Once approved by the school principal, arrangements will be made for the discussions at a time and place convenient for school faculty. These visits will likely be held before the end of March 2003.

Participation is completely voluntary. I ensure you that any data that will be gathered will be kept in a very secure and safe place till the end of the dissertation, and then it will be destroyed. Survey responses will be kept strictly confidential. There will be a code for each school that participates and for each grade level. The roster that connects codes with school names and grade levels will be destroyed once data analysis is completed.

I am very excited about this dissertation for at least two reasons. First, gifted education from an Islamic point-of-view seems relatively ignored at this time, though, at the same time, we have a unique treasure that should be used to teach our Muslim students. The second point is that exploring a gifted program in Islamic schools will help us to view the strengths and barriers indicating what is appropriate for us as Muslims.

I am very optimistic about the support and participation of Islamic schools in the United States such as yours. If you are willing to participate, please provide the information requested below and send it to me via e-mail at faa@cc.usu.edu

Sincerely,

Fatma A. Al-Lawati

Contact person:

School name:

School address:

Phone number (___) _ _ _ _ _

Fax number (___) _ _ _ _ _

School population (K-6):

Number of teachers (K-6) available to participate from each grade level:

K ----

1 -----

2 -----

3 -----

4 -----

5 -----

6 -----

Total: -----

Provision of the above information constitutes your school's interest and willingness to participate in this study of Islamic schools in the United States and permission for me to send letters of informed consent questionnaires and appropriate follow-up materials to the contact person listed above.

If you have further questions, please contact:

Fatma Al-Lawati

Utah State University

Dep. Of Elementary Education

2805 Old Main Hill

Logan, UT 84322-290

Phone: (435) 797- 0389 (leave a message if necessary)

Fax: (435) 797- 0372

e-mail: faa@cc.usu.edu

Appendix B
An Explanation Letter and Information about a
New Schedule for Data Collection

Assalumu Alaykum

I appreciate your interest in participating in my research project. In my research, I am exploring the concept of giftedness in the Islamic theory of education and its implications in the Islamic world. This research has not been explored in the Islamic educational system; therefore, I have developed a questionnaire to collect relevant data. My primary plan was to start collecting the data by November 2002. Unfortunately, several factors contributed to the delay of my plan, one of which is my pilot study, which was conducted outside of the United States to examine the questionnaire's items reliability.

I will start collecting the data from January 2003, which will help me to complete my dissertation by the end of the school year. I really appreciate your continued help and support. I was very encouraged to get some very supportive e-mails from some Islamic schools showing their concern and support.

I always need your support and Du'aa. Without your great support and willingness this study will not have a chance to succeed. Therefore, please accept my apology from not being on time and I hope that you understand my problems.

Sincerely,

Fatma A. Al-Lawati

Appendix C
Principal's Cover Letter

January 13, 2003

Dear principal

Assalamu Alaykum

In your response to my invitation letter, you specified the number of teachers that are willing to participate in my research. Therefore, I included in this envelope the exact number of smaller envelopes to be distributed among the participating teachers. Each envelope is titled "Teacher Envelope". Teacher envelopes include: a teacher survey, an informed consent, a post-card from Oman, a thank-you letter, and a prepaid envelope. Teachers may send the questionnaire and the informed consent directly to me or through the school. Only teachers of kindergarten through sixth grade are expected to participate in the study.

In addition, an attached "Principal Envelope" consists of a principal survey, an informed consent, a post card from Oman, and a prepaid envelope.

I would appreciate if you would meet with teachers and explain the importance of answering all survey items. In addition, it is very important to sign the informed consent and send it along with the survey. I also would like to ask you to highlight the importance of returning the survey by the mid of February 2003.

Thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.

Sincerely,

Fatma Al-Lawati

Appendix D
Criteria Used to Identify Gifted Education in the
Islamic Schools in the United States
(Principal Survey)

School Name: -----

**Criteria Used to Identify Gifted Education in the
Islamic Schools in the United States
(Principal Survey)**

This survey explores the essential components that could be used as criteria to define a Gifted and Talented Program in the full time Islamic Schools in the United States. Your individual responses will help us to learn about the services and resources that are offered to gifted students in the Islamic schools. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and data from your survey will be reported only in a group form. Please check the box for the most appropriate response.

I. Enrichment in the Regular

Classroom

1. Do you have an Enrichment Program in the Regular Classroom?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

2. Which students participate in the enrichment activities?

- Those identified as gifted/talented Those identified as gifted/talented plus others, but not including the entire class The entire classroom

3. How much time is allotted to enrichment activities per week?

- 3 - 5 hours More than 5 hours

4. Which content areas are enriched? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Math Science English/Language Arts
- Social Studies Arts and Music Multidisciplinary
- Arabic Islamic Studies Other (specify) -----

5. Curricular materials used in the enrichment activities are:

- Different from those used in the basic program.
- Both the same as those used in the basic program and different from those used in the basic program.

II. Part-Time Special

Class

6. Does your school arrange any Part- Time Special Classes for gifted individuals?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

7. How many days per week does the special class meet?

- 1 day per week 2-4 days per week 5 days per week
week

8. What is the length of each class session?

- Less than 1 hour 1-2 hours More than 2 hours

9. Which content areas are studied in the special class? (Mark all that apply)

- Math Science English/Language Arts
 Social Studies Arts and Music Multidisciplinary
 Arabic Islamic Studies Other (specify) -----

10. What strategies are used in the special class? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Group instruction Individualized instruction Special projects
 Puzzles and games Other (specify)-----
-

11. Do the regular classroom teacher and the special class teacher coordinate their curricular plans:

- Regularly Occasionally Never

III. Full-Time Special

Class

12. Does your school arrange any Full-Time Special Classes for gifted individuals?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

13. Which content areas are studied in the special class? (Mark all that apply)

- Math Science English/Language Arts
 Social Studies Arts and Music Multidisciplinary
 Arabic Islamic Studies Other (specify) -----

14. Are the curricular materials the same as those studied in regular classes?

- No Sometimes

15. Is the amount of curricular material covered greater than in the regular classes?

- Yes No

IV. Independent Study

16. Does your school arrange any Independent Study Classes for gifted individuals?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

17. How much school time is allotted to independent study?

- Less than 3 hours 3-5 hours per week More than 5 hours per week

18. In which content areas do students engage in independent study? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Math Science English/Language Arts
 Social Studies Arts and Music Multidisciplinary
 Arabic Islamic Studies Other (specify) -----

19. What resources do the students use in independent study? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Staff Library Community
 Laboratory Computer Masjid
 Other

20. How is a student's independent study progress evaluated? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Staff Teacher Projects Other

V. Mentorship

21. Does your school arrange Mentorship Program for gifted individuals?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

22. How much school time is allotted to a student to work with a mentor?

- Less than 3 hours per week 3 - 5 hours per week More than 5 hours per week

23. Who are the mentors? (*Mark all that apply*)

- School staff University faculty Imam or other religious leader
 Business and professional people Other

24. Do mentors receive special training? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Yes Sometimes No

25. Are mentors paid? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Yes Sometimes No

VI. Resource Rooms

26. Does your school have a Resource Room for gifted individuals?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

27. How much time per week does a student spend in a resource room?

- Less than 3 hours 3 - 5 hours More than 5 hours

28. The time scheduled in the resource room is:

- The same each week Varied from week to week Both

29. Who is in charge of the resource room?

- Special teacher of the gifted Librarian Aide
- Parent Community volunteer

30. What materials are available in the resource room? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Books Films Packets Other

31. What equipment is available in the resource room? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Laboratory equipment Shop tools Computer
- Audiovisual equipment

VII. Early Entrance

32. Do you permit Early Entrance?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

33. At what level(s) is the provision for early entrance made? (*Mark all that apply*)

- Kindergarten First Grade Middle/junior High school
- Senior High School

34. How many students entered these levels last year due to early entrance policy? List the numbers, please.

- Kindergarten ----- First Grade -----
- Middle/junior High school----- Senior High School-----
-

35. On what basis were early entrance decisions made? Check all which apply.

- Ability test Achievement test Teacher recommendation
- Parental request Other

VIII. Continuous

Progress

36. Does your school use a continuous progress program?

- Yes No

If yes, please respond to the following questions:

37. At what level(s) is continuous progress in operation? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Preschool Elementary (Inc. K)
 Senior High School Middle/junior High School

38. In what content area does continuous progress allow students to advance at their own pace? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Math Science Social Studies Language Arts (inc. Reading)
 English Arts and Music Foreign Language Islamic Studies Other

39. On what basis does a student move from one level to another? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Standardized tests Demonstrated competency
 Teacher-made tests Other

40. How would you describe the continuous progress program at your school? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Group instruction Individual instruction Other

41. How long has the continuous progress program been in operation? *(Mark all that apply)*

- Less than 5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years

Thank you very much for your help.

Please return to:
 Fatma Al-Lawati
 Department of Elementary Education
 Utah State University, 2805 Old Main Hill
 Logan, UT 84321

Appendix E
Informed Consent

Date created 5/15/02

Informed Consent
Islamic Schools in the United States and Gifted Education

Dear participants

I am an international student from Oman working on a doctoral degree at Utah State University. My focus is on the gifted and talented education. Since I am a Muslim, I would like to explore an Islamic theory of gifted education. Therefore, I have selected to study the perception of teachers and principals in Islamic schools regarding gifted programs. My plan is to send a survey to first through sixth grade teachers and to the school principals to investigate their views about gifted students' needs. around 150 teachers will be asked to participate in the study. Teachers will be asked to complete two surveys. Each survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete them. Further, around 40 principals are expected to participate in the study. the principals will be asked to fill one questionnaire that will take around 15-20 minutes to complete.

In addition, I will arrange focus group discussions with some of the teachers. The focus group will be selected after the questionnaires will be received. Teachers will be invited to participate in the focus group discussions to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions about gifted programs in their schools. The focus group will last about 60-90 minutes with a group of 8-10 teachers. The meetings will be arranged in the schools or any place that is convenient to the participants. The discussions will be tape-recorded. The focus group meetings are expected to be held in November 2002.

Your participation in this research is very important for my study. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw without consequence. Your participation in this research is considered minimal risk.

Regarding research records, I am please to inform you that all the records will be kept confidential consistent with federal and state regulations. The data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. Only the investigator and members of my doctoral committee will have access to the data. It will be kept for three months then destroyed. Any tape recordings will be destroyed also by deleting everything on them or cutting them into pieces. In addition, if you believe that you have been harmed as a result of your participation in this research program, please contact (435) 797- 1821. the institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of Human Subjects at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this research project. If you have any questions or concerns about the approval of this research, please contact the Institutional Review Board as (435) 797-1821.

Informed Consent
Islamic Schools in the United States and Gifted Education

The information gained from this research will help Muslim educators to understand gifted program in the Islamic school in the United States. It also may help them to be aware of the possibility of implementing a gifted program in Islamic schools in the United States. I will be very happy to share the study's findings with you.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign the form on the following page. Please feel free to call my committee chair Dr. Scott Hunsaker or me at Utah State University. If you have any concerns or questions about the purpose and nature of this study .

Dr. Scott Hunsaker

Fatma A. Al-Lawati

Signature _____

Signature _____

Data _____

Data _____

Dr. Scott Hunsaker
2805 Old Mail Hill
Department Elementary
Logan, UT 84322-2805
Phone: (435) 797 0286
Email: scotth@coe.usu.edu

Fatma A. Al Lawati
777E 1200N Apt # B-1
Logan, UT 84341
Phone: (435) 797 6697
Email: slmfn@cc.usu.edu

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Principal signature_____
Date_____
Teacher signature_____
Date

Appendix F
Practices in Applying Islamic Values
(Teacher Survey)

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Islamic Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify-----) |

3. What is the enrollment of your class by gender? (Give number) Boys ----- Girls-----
4. Indicate the number of limited English proficient students in your classroom -----
5. What is the enrollment of your class by religion? (Give number) Muslim----- Non Muslim -----
6. What is the number of formally identified gifted students in your classroom? -----
7. Which of the following measures and/or checklists do you use (or if you don't have a gifted program, would you use) to identify gifted students in your classroom? (Check all that apply)
- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> IQ Tests (Group or Individual) | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Nomination | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity Tests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Achievement Tests | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Nomination | <input type="checkbox"/> Grades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Self-Nomination | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Rating Scales | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Interview |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Products/Portfolios | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Nomination | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Specify:----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- | <input type="checkbox"/> ----- |
-
8. Are there students in your class you believe are gifted **but have not been formally identified as such** by your school?
- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
9. If your answer to question 8 is (YES), please indicate the number of gifted students who have not been formally identified in your classroom? -----
10. Indicate the number of limited English proficient students in your classroom who are formally identified as gifted **and also those who** may be gifted but are not formally identified as such.
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Formally Identified As Gifted ----- | May be Gifted But Not Formally Identified----- |
|-------------------------------------|--|
11. Do you modify or differentiate your classroom practices for formally identified gifted students or students who you believe to be gifted?
- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|

IV. Classroom Curriculum Practices

As you **individually respond** to the items, please provide answers that reflect your actual practices. Please be assured that your individual responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

Above (in question 2) you told us whether you teach an intact class or specific subject(s) (i.e., departmentalized arrangement). If you teach an intact class, please respond to the following items for that class. If you teach in a departmentalized

arrangement, please respond to the following items using the same class you selected earlier as your point of reference. **PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE CLASSES.**

1. If you marked “**No**” or “**Not relevant**” to question 11, please respond to items 1- 45 on the left side of the instrument for **Average Students**.
2. If you marked “**Yes**” to question 11, please respond to items 1-45 for **Average Students AND Gifted Students** (*those you believe are gifted or above average or students who are formally identified as a gifted*). It may work best if you have at least one specific student in mind as you mark the left for average students and one specific student in mind as you mark the right for gifted students.

Please circle the most appropriate response, using the following response scale:

0. Never
1. Once a month, or less frequently
2. A few times a month
3. A few times a week
4. Daily
5. More than once a day

Average Students**Gifted Students****The Ultimate Source of Knowledge**

0	1	2	3	4	5	1. Memorizing parts of Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	2. Analyzing parts of Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	3. Encouraging students to explore in depth the connection between Qur'anic concepts and a subject area (e.g. math, science)	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	4. Explaining the connection between Qur'anic concepts and a subject area (e.g. math, science)	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	5. Connecting Qur'anic concepts to the daily life of students	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	6. Reading historical events in the holy Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	7. Analyzing historical events in the holy Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	8. Applying the principles of the historical concepts in the students' lives	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	9. Writing about social concepts drawn from the principles taught in Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	10. Encouraging students to reflect on their reading in the Qur'an about God's power	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	11. Guiding students to reflect on prophets' lives mentioned in the holy Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	12. Encouraging students to study how the universe functions	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	13. Encouraging students to connect how the universe functions with Qur'anic concepts	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	14. Giving students a chance to write about their thoughts on the Qur'an	0	1	2	3	4	5

The Ethical Framework

0	1	2	3	4	5	15. Discussing human rights in Islam	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	16. Exploring the prophet Mohammad's teachings (<i>Hadith</i>) regarding human rights	0	1	2	3	4	5

0 1 2 3 4 5 17. Explaining the prophet Mohammad's actions regarding human rights 0 1 2 3 4 5

- 0. Never
- 1. Once a month, or less frequently
- 2. A few times a month
- 3. A few times a week
- 4. Daily
- 5. More than once a day

Average Students

Gifted Students

0 1 2 3 4 5	18. Reflecting on the prophet Mohammad's action regarding human rights	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	19. Exploring the concepts of good and bad	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	20. Reflecting on the stability of ethical framework in Islam	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	21. Training students to evaluate their reading materials or any other educational sources in the light of Islamic values	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	22. Explaining the differences between an Islamic concept and a Western concept of ethics	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	23. Encouraging students to evaluate personal practices in the light of an Islamic concept of ethics	0 1 2 3 4 5

The Believer to Act Upon Knowledge

0 1 2 3 4 5	24. Analyzing Islamic history	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	25. Helping students develop a sense of awareness about their daily life practices	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	26. Exploring the Arabic term of <i>ilm</i>	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	27. Teaching Islamic history	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	28. Encouraging students to evaluate their daily activities in the light of Islamic values	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	29. Evaluating cultural practices in the light of Islamic values	0 1 2 3 4 5

0	1	2	3	4	5	30. Developing a sense of responsibility	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	31. Developing a habit of self-evaluation	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	32. Analyzing self behavior in light of Islamic values	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	33. Analyzing Qur'anic verses regarding a Muslim's personal characteristics	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	34. Exploring barriers that could prevent personal development	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	35. <i>Explaining</i> barriers that could prevent personal development	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	36. Studying Hadith that illustrates a Muslim's personal characteristics	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	37. Studying prophet Mohammed's characteristics	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	38. Analyzing prophet Mohammed's behavior with others	0	1	2	3	4	5

- 0. Never
- 1. Once a month, or less frequently
- 2. A few times a month
- 3. A few times a week
- 4. Daily
- 5. More than once a day

Average Students

Gifted Students

Environmental Aspects

0	1	2	3	4	5	39. Analyzing Qur'anic and Hadith concepts about the effects of the environment on a person's life	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	40. Explaining the effects of the social environment on a person	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	41. Developing wisdom by observing others examples	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	42. Encouraging questioning and thinking about requirements of Islamic religion	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	43. Helping students to think individually	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	44. Exploring ways that would protect an Islamic social environment in the United States	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	45. Questioning information gather from different resources based on the Islamic principles	0	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Classroom Instructional Practices

This section is designed to provide information about the instructional strategies and approaches you use in your classroom. It is very important that the answers you provide reflect actual practices. Please be assured that your individual responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

Above (in question 2) you told us whether you teach an intact class or specific subject(s) (i.e., departmentalized arrangement). If you teach an intact class, please respond to the following items for that class. If you teach in a departmentalized arrangement, please respond to the following items using the same class you selected earlier as your point of reference. **PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE CLASSES.**

1. If you marked “**No**” or “**Not relevant**” to question 11, please respond to items 1- 39 on the left side of the instrument for **Average Students**.
2. If you marked “**Yes**” to question 11, please respond to items 1-39 for **Average Students AND Gifted Students** (*those you believe are gifted or above average or students who are formally identified as a gifted*). It may work best if you have at least one specific student in mind as you mark the left for average students and one specific student in mind as you mark the right for gifted students.

Please circle the most appropriate response, using the following response scale:

0. Never
1. Once a month, or less frequently
2. A few times a month
3. A few times a week
4. Daily
5. More than once a day

Average Students

Gifted Students

0 1 2 3 4 5	1. Use basic skills worksheets	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	2. Use enrichment worksheets	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	3. Assign reading of more advanced level work	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	4. Use self-directed instructional kits such as S.R.A.	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	5. Assign reports	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	6. Assign projects or other work requiring extended time for students to complete	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	7. Assign book reports	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	8. Use activities such as puzzles or word searches	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	9. Give creative or expository writing assignments on topics selected by the teacher	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	10. Give creative or expository writing assignments on topics selected by the students	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	11. Make time available for students to pursue self-selected interests	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	12. Use pretests to determine if students have mastered the material covered in a particular unit or content area	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	13. Eliminate curricular material that students have mastered	0 1 2 3 4 5
0 1 2 3 4 5	14. Repeat instruction on the coverage of more difficult concepts for some students	0 1 2 3 4 5

0	1	2	3	4	5	15. Substitute different assignments for students who have mastered regular classroom work	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	16. Modify the instructional format for students who learn better using an alternative approach	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	17. Encourage students to move around the classroom to work in various locations	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	18. Allow students to leave the classroom to work in another location, such as the school library or media center	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	19. Assign different homework based on student ability	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	20. Use learning centers to reinforce basic skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	21. Use enrichment centers	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	22. Teach thinking skills in the regular curriculum	0	1	2	3	4	5

0. Never
1. Once a month, or less frequently
2. A few times a month
3. A few times a week
4. Daily
5. More than once a day

Average Students

Gifted Students

0	1	2	3	4	5	23. Teach a unit on a thinking skills, such as critical thinking or creative problem solving	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	24. Participate in a competitive program focusing on thinking skills/problem solving, such as Future Problem Solving, Odyssey of Mind, etc.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	25. Use contracts or management plans to help students organize their independent study projects	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	26. Provide time within the school day for students to work on their independent study projects	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	27. Allow students within your classroom to work from a higher grade level textbook	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	28. Provide a different curricular experience by using a more advanced curriculum unit on a teacher-selected topic	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	29. Group students by ability across classrooms at the same grade level	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	30. Send students to a higher grade level for specific subject area instruction	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	31. Establish interest groups which enable students to pursue individual or small group interests	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	32. Consider students' opinion in allocating time for various subjects within your classroom	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	33. Provide opportunities for students to use programmed or self-instructional materials at their own pace	0	1	2	3	4	5

0	1	2	3	4	5	34. Give assignments that encourage students to organize their own work schedule to complete a long range project	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	35. Provide questions that encourage reasoning and logical thinking	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	36. Ask open-ended questions	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	37. Encourage students to ask higher-level questions	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	38. Encourage students participation in discussions	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	39. Use computers	0	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS

Please provide any comments you believe will help us in understanding classroom practices within your school.

Thank you very much for your help.

Please return to:
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VITA

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Major: Curriculum and Instruction-Gifted and Talented Education

Proposed Dissertation Title: *Exploring Gifted Education Programs, Services, and Practices in Islamic Schools in the United States*

M.S., Utah State University, Logan, UT, 1999

Major: Family and Human Development-Early Childhood Education

Thesis Title: *Parents' and Teachers' Expectations for Early Childhood Education in Oman*

B.A., Beirut Arab University, 1987

Major: Philosophy and Psychology

Professional Work Experience:

2000-2003: Graduate Research/Teaching Assistant, Utah State University, Logan, UT

Responsibilities and Activities: Assisted with early childhood research, assisted in teaching undergraduate course, "Working with Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom"; provided data-entry and data analysis for department and professional organization evaluation; assisted professors in course preparation; assisted with conference organizing, assisted with student assessment for undergraduate course, "Orientation to Elementary Education.

1992-1996: Supervising Kindergarten Teachers, Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

Responsibilities and Activities: Assisted in conducting Kindergarten teachers' workshops; assisted and supervised

kindergarten teachers; evaluated private schools' libraries, reviewed teachers application.

1984-1992: Elementary School Teacher, Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

Responsibilities and Activities: Tough first to sixth grade elementary school student in five subject areas (Arabic, Math, Science, Islamic religion, and Social study).

Refereed Publications:

Al-Lawati, F. A (2003). A Pilot Study: The Impact of Staff Development on Omani Teachers' Views about the Concept of Giftedness (in press).

Al-Lawati, F. A, & Hunsaker, S. L., (2002). Muhr and Mawhibah: A Multicultural Perspective on Women's Gifts. *Roeper Review*, 25 (1) 22-26.

Al-Lawati, F. (1995). طفل الروضة بين التكلم والتفكير. *Al-Arabi Journal* (442) September 95: Kuwait (online).

Other Publications:

During 1996: A series of columns dealing with educational issues that face elementary children, *Al Omania Magazine*.

1992 and 1996: 2 children's plays, broadcasted by Oman television in Arabic.

During 1992-1996: 4 children stories, published in Oman.

During 1985-1995: Several adult stories, published in several Arabic magazines and newspapers in Oman.

Consulting:

Summer 2002: Workshop organizing and conducting, Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

Responsibilities and Activities: Organized and conducted a workshop for Omani Teachers and principals, "Methods in Developing Students' Giftedness."

Presentations:

- Al-Lawati, F. A. (2003, June). *The Islamic Concept of Giftedness and its Implication on the Gifted Students*. Presented at the 26th Annual Intermountain Conference on Education of the Gifted and Talented, Logan, UT.
- Al-Lawati, F. A. (2002, November). *The Value of Education and the Concept of Giftedness in Islam*. Presented at the meeting of the National Association for Gifted Children, Denver, Colorado.
- Al-Lawati, F. A. (2002, June). *Using The Teiring Strategy in Teaching Social Study*. Presented at the 25th Annual Intermountain Conference on Education of the Gifted and Talented, Logan, UT.
- Al-Lawati, F. A. (2002, April). *Exploring the Concept of Giftedness in Islam*. Presented at the 3rd Annual Islamic Society of North America Forum, Chicago, IL.
- Al-Lawati, F. A. (2002, January). *Aspects of the Islamic Culture and Muslim Gifted Women*. Presented at the meeting of the Utah Association for Gifted Children, Provo, Utah.
- Hunsaker, S. L., & Al-Lawati, F. A. (2001, June). *Muhr and Mawhibah: A Multicultural Perspective on Women's Gifts*. Presented at the 24th Annual Intermountain Conference on Education of the Gifted and Talented, Logan, UT

Research Interest:

Exploring the concept of giftedness from the Islamic perspective, strong interest in early childhood education, and professional training and development.