

## **The Study of Transformational Leadership Emergence in a Faith-based School**

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**Abstract:** Transformational Leadership (TL) – often termed as ‘Moral Leadership’ or ‘Authentic Leadership’ – has emerged as an innovative, novel and captivating concept surrounding the various theories dominating Leadership Styles today. It alludes to a leadership style where the interaction between the leaders and followers raises both sides, not only to higher levels of motivation and morality, but also the concern for the achievement, self-actualization and well-being of the other, of the organization and of society in general. Studies suggest that the field of training and educating adult leaders for TL as being not very successful and, in practice, a tedious task. With the current state of de-motivated, unfocused youth on the one hand and a materialistic, individualistic, competitive society, on the other, the responsibility of schools and educators to map transformational leadership programmes in school curriculum is now more critical and decisive than was ever before. Extant literature on transformational leadership reveals a close connection between TL, spirituality, faith and care reasoning. Quite unfortunately, however, Muslim institutions today are the centre of controversy and debate, misconceptions and stereotyping for many reasons, one being, religion is, today, quite unfairly, accepted as the reason for social instability, chaos and disunity, and the other, more importantly, being the inability of the product of these institutions to contribute to mainstream society. The moot question, especially in the context of the Muslim world, is whether the current faith-school systems, potentially equipped by way of their higher order thinking curriculum and pedagogy, are able to create an environment that will achieve the authentic vision of Islamic

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education: nurturing transformational leadership. This study is a small step in a colossal task. It focuses mainly on identifying the emergence traits of TL in adolescents in the given faith-based environment, an IGCSE school in the Indian city of Bangalore. The pedagogy proposed is antithetical to the current Muslim educational pedagogy and, yet, paradoxically, in line with Islamic prophetic pedagogy, alluding to Stakes' explanation of a case-study model having a complex broader implication than what is apparent. The hypothetical assumptions of the study, if validated by qualitative research, are poised to provide significant performance indicators for analyzing efficacy of Muslim institutions and laying the ground for further quantitative research to derive, evaluate and triangulate educational, pedagogical, policies and standards for the deeper underlying critical issues facing the Muslim educational world.

**Key words:** Transformative Leadership Emergence, Extroversion, Faith Schools, Critical Thinking Pedagogy, Adolescence, International Schooling, Prophetic Pedagogy.

## **Introduction**

Transformational Leadership – often termed as ‘Moral Leadership’ or ‘Authentic Leadership’ – has emerged as an innovative, novel and captivating concept surrounding the various theories dominating leadership styles today. Although, at a theoretical level, the term ‘Transformational Leadership’ (TL) was coined only in the 1970s, this leadership style has a history that can be traced far back to the origin of humankind.

In the late 1970s, political scientist, James MacGregor Burns, one of the pioneering political scholar of the transformational leadership theory [the other being Bernard M. Bass], defined transformational leadership as ‘the influence that occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality’ [Stewart, 2006]. Bass (1999, p.3) refers to Transformational Leadership as the kind that elevates not just the level of maturity and ideals of the followers, but also the concern for the achievement, self-actualization and well-being of others, of the organization and of society, in general.

According to Goldring and Greenfield (2002, p.16), as quoted in the work on Transformational Leadership by Stewart (2006):

‘School leaders are located more prominently in the centre of discourse, educating the broader public about

the importance of, and the need to support, the critical connections between schooling and the 'good society.' In the present scenario, wherein the majority of the political class of India is ailing from some form of corruption, the country's growth and development is in grave danger of stagnation. This meteoric rise in corruption can be attributed to the steep decline and falling standards of the societal morals and values that constitute and formed the foundation on which the country was established. The current state of affairs reiterates the responsibility of schools and educators to shoulder the tremendous and arduous task to design a curriculum that inculcates and imparts education that encompasses the right values and morals for the future citizens of the country. It constitutes understanding the development of young minds while confronting internal challenges at the administrative and organizational levels.'

Despite ever-increasing attention being paid to transformational leadership in the literature and its wide theoretical (Bass, 1997, 1998) and practical acceptance (Avolio, 1998), the development of Transformational Leadership behaviours has rarely been examined and remains little understood (Zacharatos *et al*, 2000). In his extensive studies, Bass (1999) shows the field of training and educating adult leaders for TL as being not very successful and as actually being a tedious task.

'Given that the roots of leadership begin in childhood and adolescence, we believe that it is advantageous to focus on youth leadership development rather than expecting adult leadership training programs to have much of an impact.'  
(Reichard R.G., 2011)

The significance of developing TL in early life makes it critical and decisive for schools to map their curriculum for developing the same in high school. As a member of the leadership team of a faith-school, whose aim and focus emphasizes service to society, the co-author of the current study finds research into this form of leadership to be intriguing and relevant to her work.

Quite unfortunately, faith-schools today are the centre of controversy and debate, misconceptions and stereotyping for many reasons. Faith-schools are, by definition, concerned with passing on religious beliefs, and it is just this activity which invites the charge of indoctrination. Add to this the fact that religion, today, has been accepted, quite unfairly, as the reason for social instability, chaos

and disunity. School-systems that value revealed religion as the basis for moral and religious reformation find themselves unable to participate as cultural actors in the public forum and are often replaced by advocates of consumerism, relativism, and self-promotion [Trafford, 1998]. Paradoxically, extant literature on Transformational Leadership reveals a close connection between spirituality, faith and care reasoning.

‘Spirituality, which is the essence of faith-school philosophy, is the awareness that there is something more to life than just our narrow, ego-oriented view of it.’

(Ritscher, 1998, p.68)

This understanding is quite empowering, for it takes life beyond superficiality and inspires and motivates social initiative and change (Hartfield). The authentic humility which comes from this understanding mitigates not only selfishness and arrogance, but also the illusion of personal sovereignty and autonomy. Clearly, this is a worldview that provides a set of absolute values of trusteeship (public benefit), accountability, transparency and trustworthiness (Asri, 2003). Along with this special status of man comes a very important responsibility and purpose. A purpose that is not merely material, but rather one that aims to establish justice, harmony and peaceful co-existence: primary goals of good leadership, in general, and Transformational Leadership, in particular. Burns’ (1978) position is that leaders are neither born nor made; instead, leaders evolve from a structure of motivation, values, and goals; and he emphasizes this at another place, where he says:

‘Leadership must be aligned with a collective purpose and effective leaders must be judged by their ability to make social changes.’ (Stewart J, 2006)

This is not too far, then, from the thinking of authentic spiritualistic and religious leadership.

### **Scope of study**

Through this research, the current paper attempts to study the emergence of Transformational Leadership as a phenomenon in a faith-based school environment. This international school is in the south Indian city of Bangalore, conceived and led by a group of women, whose mission is to nurture and develop a strong sense of self-identity among its students through a pedagogy rooted equally in religious faith and critical enquiry; hoping to instill in them noble values, ethics, selflessness and a strong sense of ultimate accountability to the Divine.

The identity versus identity-crisis dilemmas that adolescents, in particular, have to confront has been pointed out by Erikson in his theory of psycho-social developmental stages. Questions about self – ‘Who am I?’, ‘How do I fit in?’, ‘Where is my life going?’ – haunt adolescents everywhere. Desperately looking for answers, the adolescent engages in various activities, some of which maybe developmentally appropriate and some dangerous. Erikson also believes that allowing the child to explore, helps him/ her to reach a conclusion as regards his/ her own identity. He argues that if the parents, guardians, or teachers try and force the child, he/ she is more likely to be confused about identity.

The late Prof. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, an intellectual of great standing in the Muslim world and the founder of the ‘Islamization of Knowledge’ project, saw no dichotomy between faith and reason. Inviting Muslims to think critically, he reasoned thus in one of his many seminal *Tawhid* expositions:

‘The liberated Muslim mind, therefore, is neither secularist nor does it have to abandon the spirit to achieve advantage in the world of matter. The spirit itself moves it to gain that advantage; Religion itself commands it to be critical, reasonable and empirical, in the highest sense of these terms.’

The need, then, is to have international schools that provide exposure and relevance to local and traditional cultural ethos in order to not only nurture stronger identities, but also to nurture a critical intellect amongst students who need to be contributing citizens of the world.

Having said that, it is imperative to also keep in mind that the most prevalent mode of teaching in the Muslim world today is the supply of information as, available in classical sources. For, as one observer notes:

‘The teacher hardly talks critically of the material he shares with his students. Students are generally discouraged to ask questions and make their own observations. In case an extraordinarily brilliant student dares to understand something rationally, he is rebuked and his voice stifled.’ [Khan, I, 2009]

Paradoxically, the pedagogical principle embedded within the sources of prophetic teaching is this: the learning atmosphere is sacred, disciplined, caring and functional (Ramzy and Memon,

2011). 'Functional' in this context means to promote, in the students, humility, in order to ask, confidence, in order to discover, and a willingness to take risks with their learning. Classrooms must not be the boundaries of a student's thinking and a teacher's learning processes.

Khan (2009) has noted that graduates of religious educational institutions throughout the Muslim world are generally absorbed by mainly three service sectors: mosque-related services, Islamic mission (*da'wah*) and teaching in religious schools and universities. They are not considered capable of joining other areas of services. They hardly play any significant role in building the Muslim society. And yet, Toor (2008) says that most of the modern theories of leadership recognize the importance of ethics, morality and spirituality, and also emphasize leadership traits that are fundamental to the Islamic ethical system. Dr. Ali Zohary, whose PhD dissertation was on Prophet Muhammad's 'communication' as a branch studied by all Islamic faith-based education systems at different levels, had projected values which Burns (1978) and Bass (1982), claimed to be the extraordinary values of a transformational leader. Besides the primary traits of liberty, justice, equality and collective well-being, these extraordinary traits have been listed as follows: forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, politeness, truthfulness, mercy and leading by example.

The purpose of internationalization according to Hayden (2012) is in incorporating a critical examination of oneself and one's traditions, the ability to see oneself as bound to all human beings by ties of recognition and concern, and the ability to consider what it might be like to be in the shoes of a different person, to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for securing a just and suitable world in which all may fulfill their potential and to challenge injustice and inequalities. The critical pedagogy that has emerged in the post-modern era as a result of the failure of the ideological and modernistic materialistic and capitalistic thought coincides with the revival of the Muslim faith-education and its reform to its original uncorrupted integrated emancipatory form.

'Critical Theory' emphasizes an education that liberates, enlightens, empowers and emancipates the human individual. Emancipatory knowledge is knowledge that emancipates from habit, custom, tradition, dogma and superstition, which are usually accepted as 'given' and unquestionable. Emancipatory knowledge shows how the world could be different when it is freed from suppression and social injustices. Muslim faith-education [with

vicegerency as its true goal] and critical theory, have common conceptual underpinnings based on a common aim. This is, perhaps, the primary rationale for faith-schools to look beyond traditional educational approaches and toward contemporary philosophies.

The moot question, especially in the context of the Muslim world, is whether the international faith-school system – potentially equipped by way of its higher order thinking curriculum and critical pedagogy – is able to enhance the value-based and faith-based programs to create an environment that will achieve the authentic vision of Islamic education: nurturing transformational leadership.

This study is a small step towards a colossal task. It focuses mainly on identifying the traits of Transformative leadership emergence in adolescents in the given faith based environment, and primarily looks at five broad areas to understand what may constitute the formative processes and characteristic traits in leadership emergence in young adults:

(1) Literature that provides key indicators/ traits that identify potential transformational leaders. The work of Sahgal *et al* (2007) gives evidence to show that challenging life-experiences, adolescent self-worth and socialization are the formative factors that predict Transformational Leadership.

(2) Quite apart from these aforementioned factors, longitudinal studies support the hypothesis that the emergence of extroversion is the key to Transformational Leadership (Reichard R. J., 2011). Three of the ‘Big Five’ personality traits – Extroversion, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness – positively correlated with Transformational Leadership. Fundamentally, this study ruled out the relationship between intelligence and leadership emergence in the long term and deduced that only extroversion predicted whether an individual would engage in more ‘leader-like’ behaviours at the workplace.

(3) The theory of attachment, currently the major developmental theory in the emotional and social domain (Rutter, 1996), is proposed as a conceptual framework to highlight the developmental processes underlying the emergence of the capacity to be a transformational leader. It proposes that this capacity is related to:

- (a) The person’s self-assurance and positive self-regard, and
- (b) The person’s keen interest in others and a general inclination to invest in interpersonal relationships.

(4) Introjections of parent behaviour: Bass (1999, p.20) states that Transformational Leadership qualities are affected by individuals' childhood experiences. Further, he reports research showing that transformational leaders typically report their parents as being caring and setting challenging goals. From Popper and Mayseles' (2003) work on the development processes in the three domains of motivation, empowerment and morality, it can be deduced that there is wide acceptance that parental control, when coupled with warmth, promotes the development of qualities such as social responsibility, independence, and high esteem. Avolio (1994) in Bass (1999, p.6) states that:

“A child's moral standard, set by parents and the leadership experiences in school along with extracurricular activities, forecast subsequent tendencies to be more transformational as an adult.”

(5) Quite contrary to the above, from a retrospective study, Cox and Cooper (1989) found that many successful British Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) experienced the early loss of a parent or had been separated from their parents and, consequently, had to take responsibility for themselves at an early age. This has been the case with Gandhi and the Prophet Muhammad who have been extremely successful in transforming societies in the harshest of conditions. The same study demonstrates that leadership development can be explained in a social learning framework (Bandura, 1977). Specifically, adolescents perceive the extent to which their fathers use behaviours consistent with transformational leadership when interacting with them and, in turn, manifest these behaviours themselves when interacting with their peers. Second, the current results demonstrate that transformational leadership behaviours are manifested not only by adults, but also by adolescents. Adolescents exhibiting transformational leadership behaviours appear to be capable of evoking effort from their peers and of being perceived as satisfying, and effective, leaders (Barling *et al*, 1996). Quite in accordance with the cliché, 'it runs in the family.'

From the above literature review on leadership emergence, it is quite evident that Transformational Leadership emergence:

- i. is a function of the confident, positive, extroverted personality type, to be found in a strong sense of identity and in having positive self-regard.



**ii.** depends on childhood experiences, family support, and schooling all of which act as attachment factors and play very significant roles in the process of leadership emergence in adolescents. Ironically, even those without parental support – who end up with a challenged lifestyle – were found to exhibit more responsibility in one study.

Interestingly, Reichard’s longitudinal study informs extroversion as the trait to watch out for in adolescents while Bandura’s study points out that adolescents, too, show transformational leadership behaviour and can be identified through values like kindness, forgiveness, justice etc. in their interactions with peers in sports and other school/ college activities.

The purpose of this study is to measure, with the criteria deduced, adolescent leadership among the students and alumni of the faith-school and the impact of unique schooling experience on students’ leadership thinking

The two **Research Questions** for the empirical study, then, are:

- i.** Do adolescents at the faith-school show potential for transformational leadership?
- ii.** What is the role, if any, played by the critical thinking pedagogy and faith values of the school, as perceived by the alumni, on their life outside school?

### **Methodology**

The **case-study** approach, most widely used for qualitative research, is appropriate for this study when compared to other methods used by qualitative researchers like ethnography, narrative inquiry, action research and grounded theory. The qualitative case-study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter *et al*). According to Yin (2003) a case-study design should be considered when:

- (a) The focus of the study is to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions;
- (b) You cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study;
- (c) You want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or
- (d) The boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

The phenomenon of leadership emergence has many variables and had to be restricted to those that are relevant to the context: the faith-based international school. The research question of this study does not specify a specific unit for study. Nor is Transformational Leadership emergence a written vision of the faith-based school but, rather, a hidden, derived, goal. All these point towards the appropriateness of a case-study design. From among the various types of case-studies including exploratory, descriptive, multiple case-study, intrinsic, instrumental and collective, the instrumental case-study design is most suitable for this research which, as explained earlier, is evaluative in nature. Besides this, the study is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case itself is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in-depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed – all because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may, or may not, be seen as typical of other cases (Stake, 1995).

Stake states:

“Issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases.”

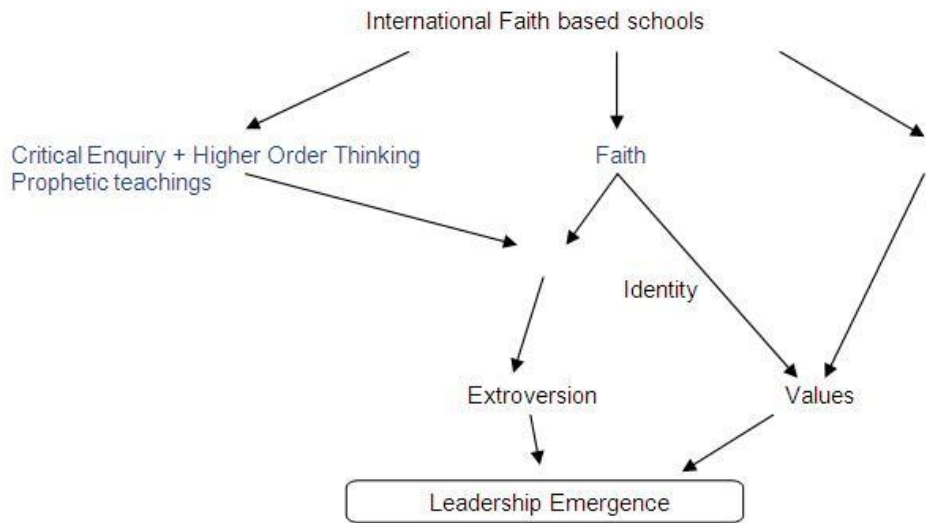
The external context in this case-study is the traditional pedagogy of Muslim institutions. The pedagogy proposed is antithetical to the traditional Muslim schooling pedagogy and yet, paradoxically, in line with Islamic prophetic pedagogy, alluding to Stakes’ explanation of a case-study model having a complex, broader, implication than what is apparent.

Based on the literature reviewed, we have put forward two propositions:

- 1.** Strong self-identity, TL values and extroversion traits are evident in the student leaders and alumni of the school.
- 2.** Alumni acknowledge the impact of faith and critical thinking pedagogy of the faith-school on their lives outside of school.

Both Yin and Stake suggest that the propositions and issues are necessary elements in case-study research in that both lead to the development of a conceptual framework that guides the research.

## Conceptual Framework



## Methods of Data Collection

A hallmark of case-study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). The sample of the current study would be students of Grade 9 and 10, boys and girls, who may, or may not, be holding leadership positions and are alumni of the previous three years.

The method – or the instrument of research – used was, primarily, a series of semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions for alumni, student records on standard tests for self-esteem, spiritual intelligence and leadership personality tests to collaborate with the interview data. One cannot take on an interpretative approach without due consideration to the sensitivities of the subject's psychological and developmental mindset.

Young adults, it was seen at times, will reject a choice which even younger children and adults will choose as reasonable (Ladd and Forman, 1995). What seems important to teenagers will seem trivial to even themselves later (Ladd and Forman, 1995); and yet, keeping the age-related development values aside, there are many values in adolescent that permanently stay with them well into adult life. The semi-structured interviews were appropriate to the issues that needed details, were clearly chalked out, and yet, made allowances for adolescent flexibility to give information based on

his, or her, own interests. On the rationale for interviews – as against questionnaires – Denscombe's views hold good in the case of the sensitive adolescent years:

‘If the researcher wants to collect information on simple and uncontroversial facts, then questionnaires might prove to be a more cost-effective method. But when researchers need to gain insights into things such as people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences, then interviews will almost certainly provide a more suitable method.’

**Semi-structured interview:** From student and alumni selected, the interview would question and analyze to identify peer/parent/teacher leadership expectation from the student as formative experience for leadership emergence, positive/negative influences of parents, level of faith-consciousness in decision-making, leadership personality traits like extroversion, confidence, open-mindedness, conscientiousness and emotional well-being and care, reasoning among the subjects and to bring forth any other achievements, examples of volunteerism and service, experience or challenging situations/ unfortunate events that can build resilience and perseverance that maybe existing in the school culture, in general, or in their personal lives, in particular.

A very short, standard, questionnaire was used during the interview for triangulating the findings of the current study and the students were asked a couple of ‘Yes/ No’ questions to identify the extroversion traits in them. For instance, according to one student respondent:

“I like getting my energy from active involvement in events and having a lot of different activities. I'm excited when I'm around people and I like to energize other people. I like moving into action and making things happen. I generally feel at home in the world. I often understand a problem better when I can talk out loud about it and hear what others have to say.”

**Focus group interview:** The group of alumni chosen for this purpose was a mix of those who held leadership positions back in school and some who did not hold positions. In case of the alumni group discussion, the current study identified, in addition to the above, presence/ absence of belongingness and, where present, the strength of the same. The current study also sought to understand their experiences in mainstream society while exploring their challenges, their feelings towards the school, what they think they

really miss out on and what they value – all of which would be the ‘Focus’ of discussion.

The rationale of doing the focus interview is to use the group dynamics and to help recollect their shared school experiences, reflecting on, and reminding each other in the group of, the period from their school days to their present student life and relating the same. In the course of the discussion, the study questioned and analyzed their roles, responsibilities, interactions and experiences in mainstream society and also sought to understand the extent to which their unique schooling experience has been an asset (or hindrance). The study sought simply to facilitate this discussion unlike the group interviews which are led by the researcher. The technique of interview for measuring attitudes and personality traits require in-depth probing for linking the above to the underlying value and belief system. The current study agrees with the opinion that:

‘Typically, attitudes do not exist in isolation within the individual. They generally have links with components of other attitudes and with deeper levels of value systems within the person.’ [Oppenheim. A, p.177]

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Data Analysis depends to a great extent on the type of case study. Yin briefly describes five techniques for analysis: pattern matching, linking data to propositions, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. In contrast, Stake describes categorical aggregation and direct interpretation as types of analysis. (Baxter, 2008)

The conceptual framework serves as an anchor for the study and is referred to at the stage of data interpretation. The current study records the interviews conducted in its due course and prepares transcripts of the 101 semi-structured interviews as also the focused interviews. The linking of data to the propositions through in-depth explanations followed by logical discussions and the conclusions derived from the hypothesis will help in assessing the all-important elements of the research, namely, validity and reliability.

### **Data Analysis**

Following are the themes that have emerged from the data gathered: 1. **Accountability** as a value stands out throughout the participants’ rhetoric. This subsists in the subconscious of the institution. Faith being a very compelling factor here, most participants seen as keen

on abiding by their Faith. The consciousness of the Hereafter is spoken of in a matter-of-fact way.

**2. Good Object Experience:** Taking the conceptual framework from Klein, the second most prominent theme that emerges among all the participants was the experience of good object. Alumni students cherish and remember the institute that gave them the courage and guided them in the process of identity development during their adolescent years by helping them experience moralistic values and practice critical thinking. Various behaviour exhibited by the alumni – like, for instance, helping a classmate understand what is right and wrong, leading by example in following customs and traditions – to address the need of fellow members was found high amongst the alumni. A sense of pride in being associated with a pioneering institute is quite apparent in their conversations.

**3. Life Instinct:** The theme runs across the alumni. The need is to contribute towards keeping the Faith alive and authentic for future generations. The alumni, for their part, do this by practicing what they were taught, irrespective of what ‘society’ thinks.

**4. Confidence to Engage in Dialogue and to Contribute:** When in other institutes, the alumni students applied their knowledge to various situations in various ways such as: participating in elections, dramas, taking on leadership roles, and standing up for what they believe is right, respecting others, contributing and contesting. They were open to engage in dialogue with students from other schools and to discuss their faith and share their thoughts. There is, however, a feeling that segregation of the sexes and the resulting lack of interaction with the opposite gender made them uncomfortable in co-educational institutions and less confident in mixed events. Moreover, students who had joined in middle or high school were less assertive of their identity when faced with conflict in other institutes than those who had spent more years at such institutions.

**5. Prophet as Role Model:** To the question as to who their role model – particularly in leadership positions – was, the students of the school responded with the Prophet as their exemplar *par excellence*. The students, especially the boys, were very confident and full of examples of their emulation of the Prophet, providing vivid examples of some exemplary work they are doing in their neighbourhood. Some of the alumni too, especially the girls, were prompt with this answer.

### **6. Drive to Participate, Compete and Excel in Interschool Events (Sports and Academics)**

- To compete and prove to be as good as, or better, than any other school despite the challenges of a growing institution in terms of infrastructure and differences in spirit and core ideology.
- To alter the *status quo* and negative stereotyping of the community they represent through dialogue and success in public events.
- The students and alumni have been acknowledged for their discipline and fair-play in interschool sports events and for their daring to follow the norms of their faith in spite of all the odds against them.

**7. Gratitude, and Attachment, to Teaching Staff:** Students and alumni have very often attributed their success to the hard work, care, individual attention and perseverance of the staff. They acknowledge the relaxed nature of their relationship with the teachers, as evidenced in the oft-employed option of questioning without fear of emotional rebuke or sanction.

**8. Erikson's Stage – Identity Vs. Role Confusion:** The students have passed this stage with grace clarity and dignity.

### **Discussion**

#### **The Role of Self-Identity and Critical thinking in the Development of Extroversion Traits in Adolescents**

Seeking one's identity implies the effort to locate one's place in the social setup encompassing one's skills and attitude as a person. Even with a sense of the self, the adolescent experiences rapid shifts between self-confidence and insecurity.

To provide students a strong identity through faith-based knowledge and environment is the unsaid rationale of faith-schools. However, the low percentage of Muslims in mainstream civic society and the marginalisation and the inability of the current-day Muslim dualistic educational system's inability to nurture transformational leadership have created the need for an integrated and contemporary system with stress on critical enquiry.

The participants (alumni) of the study seem to have sculpted for themselves an identity – very holistic in nature – exhibiting behaviour of balanced decision-making, problem-solving and leadership traits. Moreover, the need for faith in God, moral development, and a sense of accountability are all ingrained into the adolescent's subconscious at an early stage. Self-identity and self-worth, as built upon correct understanding and a rational and

critical approach – envisaged by the CIE and IQRA curricula selected by the school – enhance the student’s social skills and overall personality. Merging in, and yet standing out, within mainstream society has been rendered smooth and easy. The accepted method, then, is in learning to remain within the boundaries charted out by faith while yet experiencing the sense of fun and joy. With the Prophetic example as the guide, virtues like empathy, kindness, patience, self-control, forgiveness and the promotion of goodness – all seem to come quite naturally to them.

From the analysis done here, it is seen that both alumni and the students have internalized a critical thinking style. Faith-based education, explored through higher order thinking skills, helps the adolescents to critically review the various concepts taught to them, thus leading to a better understanding of the subject and to better decision-making from the adolescent’s perspective. Here, the adolescent has the liberty to question in order to understand the deeper metaphysical implications of one’s own faith, existence, and purpose. Emancipation from cultural and man-made boundaries of materialism and individualism are the common goals of a faith-based education and a critical pedagogy. Serving humanity thus becomes integral to the student’s mind, body and soul. Students seem to be making that extra effort to reach out and participate, contribute and connect – all of which, of course, clearly points towards extroversion.

#### **A Strong Sense of Attachment and Pride in the Approach to Education Adopted by the Institution**

Out of the students interviewed, just a couple of them have mentioned a parent as their role model. However, most of them expressed their sense of gratitude for their parents for having chosen this school for them and for persisting with this choice, despite the opposition that would, at times, come up to the fore.

The students exude a very explicit attachment to the teachers, acknowledging their individual success to their patience, hard work and care. They show utmost respect for the unique nature of the educational system and take great pride in introducing the school to their friends. They strongly miss the relaxed atmosphere and their relationship with their teachers as also the freedom to question. They proudly talk of the institution even while they enjoy the freedom and the differences they discover for themselves when placed with ‘the other’ in their new institutions.

#### **Summary**

The Muslim community is often projected as being regressive and uneducated. The Sachar Committee report showed Indian Muslims



to be more backward than almost all other minorities in India. According to the Sachar Committee Report (Basant, R., 2012) on the plight of Indian Muslims, concerns that have come up during the study include those of security, identity and equity (because of minority status), Muslim stereotyping after the 9/ 11, 26/ 11 events, marginalization, poverty, perceived unfairness, discrimination in employment and education spaces, and low participation in education spaces especially in higher education. As a religion, perception of Islam remains distorted and misunderstood. An exaggerated inferiority complex, thus, lies within the community's subconscious. One plausible reason for the increased motivation might be this heightened inferiority complex in the minds of a Muslim generation which shows up as a drive to change the *status quo*. However, a more probable reason is definitely an intense awareness of the life and times of the Prophet as a real and approachable model for human life. The stress on higher order thinking, accountability towards the Creator and a caring atmosphere were the highlights of school culture. The students exhibited level of belongingness; the alumni cherished every aspect of the School's culture, especially the individual attention, and freedom to talk and discuss, question and debate. The students and alumni had a deep sense of gratitude and respect for their teachers. Extroversion and confidence were seen as part and parcel of identity, particularly in the case of student leaders. Students acknowledged values that called for respecting parents, while yet believing themselves to be independent decision-makers. The commitment shown by the School's teachers and the all-pervading religiosity in the School's culture were both cherished and held in high esteem. Most students have the Prophet as their primary role model. The teaching system is caring, functional, and uninhibited with a student community that is friendly, curious, fun-loving, cheerful and articulate.

The study also delineates the role of the system as a whole unit, and shows us that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Interviews at each level of the School's structure reveal their respective contributions in the development of morals and values in the School's community and in equipping the adolescents with courage and confidence to face the world with commonalities and differences.

#### **Significance of the Study**

Some significant questions that arise from the data analysis and discussions pertaining to the case study may be listed as follows:

- Firstly, can faith in the Creator – and the spirit of accountability that goes with it – become catalysts in a system in enhancing

the traits of conscientiousness, selflessness, agreeableness, humility, care and emotional intelligence and in also providing the attachment factor required for transformational leadership?

- Can the contemporary international educational system provide the desired pedagogy and spirit, as also revive and inspire a long-lost tradition of leadership thinking within a community which, even when in possession of the Prophet's communication in its authentic form, has, today, forgotten its true worth and purpose, and is at its lowest point from a psycho-social perspective?
- Given that culture-transmission and identity-building are the formative factors that are, by default, inherent in a faith-system, can the characteristic traits of transformational leadership emergence be a significant rubric in providing for the vital need to evaluate the efficacy of the pedagogy of faith-schooling and, in turn, predicting the potential or failure of faith-schools in fulfilling their authentic purpose and mission i.e., to nurture agents of positive moral change in society.

### **Conclusion**

The pedagogy of faith-based education has significant implications in terms of outcome and achievement in its effect on personality-building, in general, and emotional intelligence, in particular. While it is one thing to allege that this system of education is actually a subtle programme of indoctrination, it is quite another to impartially evaluate the basis of such allegations and, in so doing, to explore the roots of this system, tracing it back, thereby, to the practices of Prophet Muhammad that were founded on critical inquiry, freedom of expression and other morally superior human traits.

True, faith-based schools tend to be looked at as a tool for fulfilling community goals and cultural preservation. But, as explained in this paper, they have in them, the inherent potential to contribute constructively to the transformation of a fragmented and disjointed world, if only because of their possession of a stronger sense of purpose and identity, of accountability, responsibility and service: all imbibed, of course, from the time-tested faith-based traditions. Youth today, especially those marked out for social prejudices and biased stereotyping are going through a turnaround phase where, up against the wall in front, they seem to have decided to face their predicament and work to change it for the better.

An approach, then, that puts forth authentic transformative values in a contemporaneously appealing way to set out their universal implications, offers the ideal nurturing ground for bold, assertive and responsible citizens of sound social standing. To be sure, youth development, thus focused, aware and strategically geared towards inspiring transformational leadership emergence, is the way forward for a sustainable social order inasmuch as it is more just, more equal and more caring than other alternatives extant today.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Leithwood, Bass, and other scholars of this leadership concept acknowledge the difficulties experienced in providing evidence for measuring transformational leadership even with well-designed, multifaceted, questionnaires. This being a qualitative study, it brings in further subjectivity. Besides, schools being the complex psycho-social organizations that they are, to provide evidence for reliability and validity for transformational leadership traits becomes all the more complicated. Though similar studies on other faith-based organizations do triangulate the findings to some extent, not many studies have been done on Muslim schools to collaborate present research, which, by itself, is relatively unique inasmuch as the variables studied in the context of the Prophet's leadership methods provide a significant theoretical base. Presently, the institute, being in its budding stage, has had only three batches of successful graduates.

A comparison between the contemporary faith-based systems and the traditional faith-schools – the latter of which were outside the scope of this exploratory case study – can be a surer way forward in validating the interpretations of this research.

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