Chapter 5
Transformational Islamic Leadership:
A Case Study From Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on transformational Islamic leadership based on a case study of a madrasah in Singapore. The research findings underscore the significance of an Islamic leader in articulating and promoting a shared vision, demonstrating exemplary behavior, working towards group goals, rendering individual support, providing intellectual stimulation, and setting high expectations. A major implication is that Islamic leadership contributes to the existing literature on transformational leadership by highlighting the religious motivation, principles, and values for madrasah leaders.

INTRODUCTION

The changing and challenging settings within schools, in society and across the globe require educational leadership to be adaptable, dynamic and innovative. Educational leaders must re-fashion themselves as the bridge between the school community and the society, serving as creators of visions for their schools. It is incumbent that

they understand where their school "fits into the bigger picture" for the present and into the future (Myint & Salleh, 2009, p. 125). Among the leadership theories, transformation leadership has been the focus since the 1990s (Bass, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burn, 1978; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Tichy, & Devanna, 1986). Essentially, transformational leadership disfavours direct control, supervision, and instruction, preferring instead the enhancement of an organisation's capacity to determine its purposes and support changes in teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003). Despite an impressive body of literature on transformational leadership, there is limited research on the application and relevance of transformational leadership in Islamic educational contexts. This chapter aims to fill the gap by examining the leadership philosophy and practices in a madrasah in Singapore. The first part of the chapter introduces the theory of transformational leadership and leadership in Islam. The next section reports the research study in terms of the methodology, key findings and implications.

Transformational Leadership and Leadership in Islam

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978), in his book titled *Leadership*, contrasts transforming leadership with transactional leadership. Transforming leaders appeal to the moral vision and values of their followers so as to motivate them to reform organisations and institutions. Transactional leadership, in contrast, motivates followers by appealing to their self-interest and exchanging benefits. Yukl (2006) points out that the underlying influence processes for transactional and transformational leadership "can be inferred from the description of the behaviour and effects on follower motivation" (p. 266). Transactional leadership concentrates on motivating followers by exchanging rewards for performance of job expectations. Such a leadership style is a fundamental leadership practice in which a leader identifies roles, expectations, and performance parameters, and guides followers to desired results. In contrast, a transformational leader interacts with followers in ways that stimulate their thinking, inspire their performance, and result in performance beyond expectations.

Bass and Avolio (1994) developed a Full-Range Leadership Model that suggests that transformational and transactional leadership behaviours, when displayed at appropriate conditions and environment, would increase the effectiveness of an organisation tremendously, resulting in transformation through higher-order change. Leithwood and Janzi (1996) carried on the work of Burns and Bass on transformational leadership by adapting it to the school setting. They believe that the transformation leader portrays six behaviours that characterise transformation leadership. The behaviours are as follows:

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