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### Double Schooling in Northern Cameroon and Central Ohio

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## **Abstract**

Around the world, millions of children participate in two schooling traditions: Qur'anic schooling and public schooling. Despite the prevalence of such double schooling, we know little about Qur'anic schooling, double schooling, and how these educational experiences shape Muslim children as learners. I have studied the double schooling experiences of young children in two African Muslim communities: Fulbe children in a small city in northern Cameroon and Somali-American children in Central Ohio. In this paper I describe Qur'anic schooling in these two contexts, one postcolonial, one diasporic. I then discuss the skills, concepts, and dispositions that children may develop through routine engagement in this schooling tradition and which have the potential to support their literacy learning in the public school classroom. I conclude by considering the differences in how literacy and learning are conceptualized in Qur'anic school and public school and what these differences may mean for efforts in public school literacy instruction to build upon Qur'anic-school based literacy skills, practices, and dispositions.

### **A Different Kind of School**

During my service as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Far North Province of Cameroon, I lived just around the corner from a Qur'anic school. Each afternoon on my way back to work after lunch I passed the crowd of children sitting outside a family compound. They sat cross-legged on the gravel-covered ground, holding across their laps wooden tablets covered with writing, while their teacher walked among them or sat on a sheepskin, studying his own text. Sometimes the children murmured, sometimes they yelled. For about two hours every afternoon (except Fridays) and again in the evening after dinner (except Thursdays), the children would gather outside their teacher's house to study the Qur'an under his supervision, committing to memory passages from the sacred text in Classical Arabic, a language they did not comprehend.

Millions of Muslim children around the world participate in Qur'anic schooling. For some this is their only formal schooling experience, while others attend both Qur'anic school and public school. As the vignette above illustrates, Qur'anic schooling emphasizes memorization and reproduction (recitation, reading, and transcription) of Qur'anic texts without comprehension of their literal meaning. Such practice is not unique to Muslims, nor is it restricted to religious educational contexts. In the religions that have promoted literacy (including Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism), traditional pedagogies emphasize verbatim mastery of sacred written texts as a means to develop a child's intellect, moral character, and religious community membership (Wagner, 1993). Built on the foundations of religious education, public schooling in the West long emphasized memorization and reproduction of texts, what is commonly called rote learning (Wagner, 1983).

Despite being a significant part of so many children's lives, Qur'anic schooling is understudied and widely misunderstood by non-participants (Wagner, 1999). The need for better understanding of this schooling tradition grows as more and more non-Muslim educators in Europe and North America find themselves working with Muslim children. The Muslim population in the US is projected to more than double over the next 20 years, and the Muslim population in Europe is projected to grow by nearly a third (The Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life, 2011). In Western Europe, educational achievement among children of Muslim immigrants has long been and continues to be much lower than among the general population (Nielsen, 2005). While most Muslims in the US are middle class and mainstream (Pew Research Center 2007), most Somalis are struggling economically and educationally (Kapteijns & Arman,

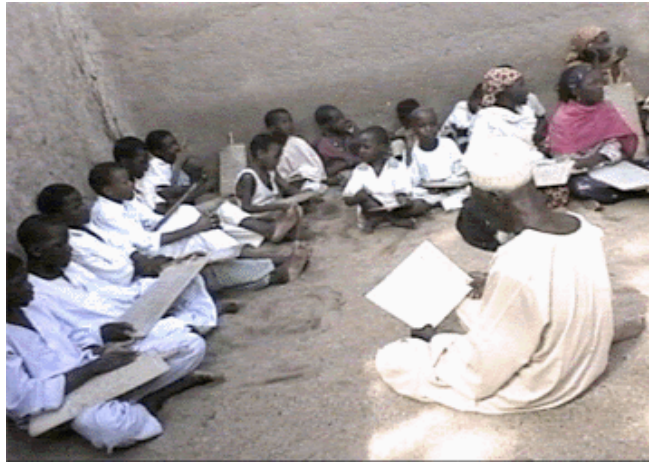
2004). In Ohio, 82% of Somali students are classified as economically disadvantaged; 85% of them are classified as Limited English Proficient (LEP), and push-out and age-out rates are high (Ohio Department of Education, 2010).

Over the past decade, a few scholars have sought to increase teachers' understanding of Islam so that they may better support their Muslim students (e.g., Eeqbal & Cole-Adams 2010; Hoot, Szesci, & Moosa 2003). Their work provides valuable insights into Muslims' perspectives on public education, as well as information on Islamic practices and beliefs that are relevant in school settings, such as the five daily prayers, dietary restrictions, fasting during Ramadan, and norms of modesty and inter-gender interaction.

In this paper I discuss Qur'anic schooling, an Islamic practice that has been overlooked in the teacher education literature and frequently misrepresented in popular media since the events of September 11, 2001 (cf., McClure, 2009). My first goal is to sketch the social organization and meaning of this schooling tradition. My second goal is to make clear that children who participate in this schooling tradition engage in routine activities through which they may develop concepts, skills, and dispositions that have the potential to support their literacy learning in the public classroom. My third goal is to consider the differences in how literacy and learning are conceptualized in Qur'anic school and public school in these postcolonial and diasporic contexts and what these differences may mean for efforts in public school literacy instruction to build upon Qur'anic-school based literacy skills, practices, and dispositions.

### **The Social Organization of Teaching and Learning in Qur'anic School**

Qur'anic schooling is not a monolithic tradition. As a researcher working with Fulbe (an ethnic group also known as Fulani or Fula) in northern Cameroon and now with Somali-Americans in the American Midwest, I have had the opportunity to observe variation over time and within and across groups with respect to how the teaching and learning of the Qur'an is done (Moore, 2011). There is remarkable continuity of practice and ideology across time, space, and communities (Eikelman, 2002). Here I describe the organization of Qur'anic schooling in the Fulbe community in Maroua, Cameroon, at the turn of the last millennium. In the next section I will discuss Qur'anic schooling in the Somali community in Central Ohio.

**Figure 1: Qur'anic school in Maroua, Cameroon, 2000****Figure 2: Qur'anic school in Dadaab, Kenya, 2005**

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Fulbe families sent their children to Qur'anic school to learn to recite, read, and write the Qur'an, the sacred text of Islam believed to have been revealed by God to the Prophet Mohammed. Minimally, children learned to recite from memory at least a few Qur'anic texts so that they could perform the five daily prayers. Instruction was individualized, and a child progressed through the curriculum at his or her own pace. There were four stages in the curriculum. In the first, a young child might attend off and on, sometimes studying her own text but often just observing (see Table 1). In the second stage, the child began attending daily and memorized chapters one and 114–104 (known as the “first twelve chapters”), studying the Qur'an in reverse order after mastering the opening chapter. In the third stage the child learned to

name the letters as they appeared in chapters one and 114–104. Sometime during the third stage, most children learned to decode Arabic script, a development that was regarded as a higher level of understanding of the Qur'an. In the fourth stage, the child wrote and recited the remaining chapters (103–2), and completion of this stage was celebrated with a feast and gifts for student and teacher.

**Table 1: Stages of Qur'anic school curriculum**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Attend irregularly, text assignment optional</li> <li>2) Memorize chapters 1 and 114-104 of Qur'an</li> <li>3) Name letters of chapters 1 and 114-104</li> <li>4) Recite/read and write remaining chapters (103-2)</li> </ol> |
|---|

At every stage, the text to be studied was transcribed from a printed Qur'an onto the child's wooden tablet. Initially, a more expert writer transcribed the text for the child. When writing instruction began (usually during the third stage), teachers scratched the text into the clay coating on the tablet, and the child then wrote over the teacher's marks with pen and ink (see Figure 3). As the child's writing improved and he or she was judged mature enough to handle the sacred text properly, the teacher scratched only straight lines on the tablet for the child to follow as he or she copied from the Qur'an, and eventually the child was allowed to transcribe without any scaffolding. Learning to transcribe Qur'anic texts accurately was an important transition, for this skill was regarded as a sign and a means of higher engagement with the text (see Table 2).

**Figure 3: Wooden tablet used in Maroua Qur'anic school, Arabic writing runs right to left**



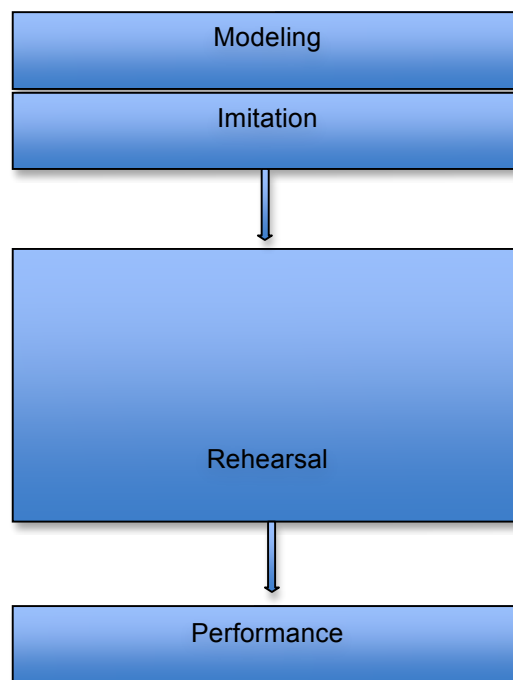
**Table 2: Stages of writing**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Recite/read text transcribed by expert</li> <li>2) Trace text transcribed by expert</li> <li>3) Transcribe text following lines made by expert</li> <li>4) Transcribe text independently</li> </ol> |
|---|

The teaching and learning of the text written on one side of the child's tablet constituted a lesson, which might be completed in a single session or over the course of several sessions. The primary lesson objective was the faithful recitation of the Qur'anic text by the child without assistance from the teacher. Each text was taught and learned through a practice I call "guided repetition," which has four phases—Modeling, Imitation, Rehearsal, and Performance (see Table 3 and Figures 4 and 5), each of which entails particular rights and obligations for both teacher and student (Moore, 2006; Rogoff et al., 2007).

**Table 3: Phases of a Qur'anic lesson (guided repetition)**

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Modeling—teacher models recitation of text</li> <li>2) Imitation—child (attempts to) reproduce teacher's model</li> <li>3) Rehearsal—child practices recitation of text, supervised by teacher</li> <li>4) Performance—child displays oral mastery of text to teacher</li> </ol> |
|--|

**Figure 4: Phases of guided repetition**

Modeling and Imitation were phases of formal and focused one-to-one interaction in which the teacher modeled the recitation of the text and the child attempted to reproduce the teacher's recitation. Children who were not yet competent decoders usually needed to hear and reproduce small chunks of the text many times, such that Modeling and Imitation were so intertwined as to constitute a single phase. The child was expected to listen attentively to the model provided by the teacher in order to be able to reproduce it as accurately as he or she could. Teachers and parents stressed the importance of the child being able to be very calm and observe with great focus in order to achieve an adequate understanding of the text.

Rehearsal began once the teacher felt the child was able to practice the text effectively on his or her own. The child was sent to sit among the other students and recite the text over and over, tuning out the recitations of the other children, until his or her recitation was fluent and accurate. Many children would be in this phase simultaneously, each practicing his or her own assigned text (as described in the opening vignette of this article), while the teacher supervised the students and corrected recitation errors.

**Figure 5: Phases of Qur'anic schooling in Maroua, Cameroon**



In the final phase, Performance, the child displayed mastery of the text by reciting it for the teacher in a focused, one-on-one interaction. Usually it was up to the child to decide when to begin the Performance phase, though young children often had to be called upon by the teacher. If the child recited the text fluently and accurately, then he or she was regarded as having mastered it. The writing would be washed from the tablet, the next text transcribed, and a new lesson begun.



### Qur'anic Schooling in the Somali Diaspora

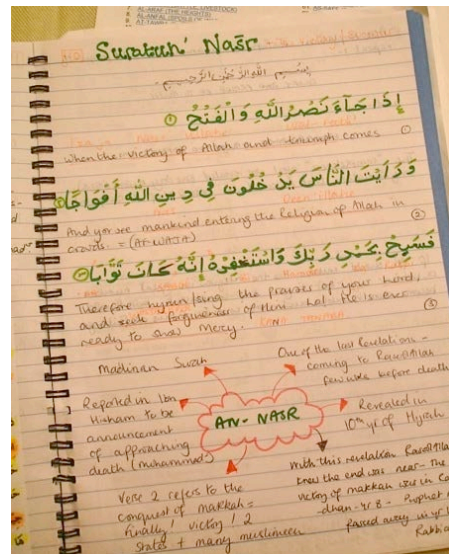
Somali refugees began resettling in central Ohio after civil war broke out in Somalia in 1991, and the community has grown rapidly since, becoming the second largest in the United States (after Minneapolis), estimated to be more than 45,000 (Roble & Rutledge, 2008). The upheaval of civil war and the resulting diaspora meant that the Qur'anic schooling of many Somalis was disrupted (likewise for public schooling). Nonetheless, Somalis have sustained their Qur'anic schooling tradition and have brought it with them to the United States. Among Somali children in Columbus, double schooling is the norm. Families first send their children to Qur'anic school, or *dugsi*, around the age of five. Some children have been attending *dugsi* for several months before entering kindergarten, while others begin both kinds of schooling at about the same time. Most children are taught by a Somali *ma'alim* and attend *dugsi* on Saturday and Sunday for about four hours each, while a few also attend for a couple of hours on weekday afternoons after public school gets out. As was the case for the Fulbe, public-school holidays are occasions for more intensive participation in Qur'anic schooling.

I have found many similarities between the traditional model I observed in Maroua and how Qur'anic schooling in prewar Somalia has been described in interviews with Somalis in Columbus and in published works (e.g., Abdi, 1998; Lewis, 1961; Sheikh Hassan & Robleh, 2004). Somalis with whom I have spoken often describe *dugsi* as somewhat less formal than the Fulbe system, but the organization of curriculum and instruction is quite similar, as are the socialization goals. Somali Qur'anic schooling in the diaspora differs in some respects from schooling in prewar Somalia. Some changes are fairly superficial, such as the use of paper notebooks instead of the *loox*, a wooden tablet like the *alluha* of the Fulbe. Other changes are more significant.

**Figure 6: Qur'anic school in Columbus, Ohio, 2007**



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**Figure 7: Sura transcribed in spiral notebook**

The curriculum is in flux: instead of focusing exclusively on oral recitation and memorization in the early stages, many teachers begin reading and writing instruction very soon after a child begins schooling. Some Somalis in Columbus argued that early instruction in reading and writing facilitated children's learning of the Qur'an. Others expressed concern that it interfered with the timely development of Qur'anic recitation skills, which are integral to the five daily prayers that children begin performing by the age of seven. The reason for this shift in the curriculum is unclear, but it may be related to change in the sequencing of Somali children's introduction to the two types of schooling. In prewar Somalia, children attended Qur'anic school for two to three years whereas Somali children of the diaspora begin Qur'anic and public school about the same time. This simultaneity of schooling may be causing a shift in community beliefs about when it is appropriate and effective to begin literacy instruction. The curricular shift in Columbus may also be linked to the emergence in postwar Somalia of "hybrid" Qur'anic schools that provide instruction in numeracy and Somali and Arabic literacy in addition to traditional Qur'anic instruction (Warsame, 2007). The Qur'anic schooling tradition is being transformed by Somalis not only in the diaspora, but also in Somalia, and it seems likely that the flow of innovation is bidirectional.

An important consequence of the diaspora is that many Somalis have contact with Muslims who are not Somali. Before coming to Columbus, some Somalis sojourned in the Middle East and/or in European countries with large Muslim minority communities. While most

Somali children living in Columbus attend a Somali-run *dugsi*, some children and/or their family members have had non-Somali teachers. In addition to attending *dugsi*, some children listen to and recite along with audio recordings of Qur'anic recitations by renowned reciters, many of them non-Somali. Exposure to other Qur'anic schooling traditions has led some Somalis to reflect critically on the practices of their own community. Several people have told me that one development in the diaspora is greater emphasis on the study of *tajwid*, the discipline of proper recitation of the Qur'an. It is increasingly common for teenagers and young adults to pursue advanced instruction in *tafsir*, the discipline of Qur'anic exegesis.

Qur'anic schooling has changed in the Somali diaspora—not just in its form, but also in its meaning for participants. In Somalia, there was no question that children would grow up to be Somali and Muslim. But this outcome seems far less certain to Somalis in Columbus and other North American cities and towns, where their children's moral, spiritual, social, linguistic, and intellectual development may be influenced by many unfamiliar forces. In the diasporic context, Qur'anic schooling has become a key context for the development and maintenance of “Somali-ness,” or *Soomaalinimo*, of which Islamic practice and belief are key components. As one young Somali woman wrote in a reflective research report to me, “The intent behind sending children to Qur'anic schools has changed in the diaspora. The *dugsi* is now seen as a means of shaping children to be good Muslims, who do not lose their identity in their adopted nation.”

### **Qur'anic School Concepts, Skills, and Dispositions**

The effect of Qur'anic school experience on public-school learning remains an open question, but a few studies provide us with some valuable insights. Research by cultural psychologists Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) in Liberia and Daniel Wagner (1993) in Morocco showed that participation in Qur'anic schooling was associated with the development of serial memory skills. Wagner also found that for Berber-speaking children, Qur'anic school experience prior to starting public school correlated with higher reading achievement in Arabic and French in the first five years of elementary school. More recently, scholars working with language-minority immigrant students in Great Britain have found that Muslim children appear to benefit from learning different kinds of literacies in their Qur'anic schools and public schools (e.g., Creese & Martin, 2004; Gregory & Williams, 2000). These scholars argue that experience with “parallel schooled literacies” fosters meta-awareness about language and literacies—how they

work as systems, how they are taught and learned, and how they are done (Robertson, 2006). Moreover, these studies show that, far from being confused by their different languages and scripts, Muslim children develop skill in switching between literacy systems and strategies for making meaning with text.

There are several concepts, skills, and dispositions that Qur'anic-schooled children may bring to public school that have the potential to support their learning in that context if recognized by the teacher and the student as relevant. Qur'anic schooling organizes children's learning such that they learn to pay close and sustained attention to teacher and text. Many of the practices children master in the course of Qur'anic study are essential elements of early reading instruction and predictors of later reading success: alphabet knowledge, concepts of print, decoding skills, and reading fluency. Arabic alphabet knowledge, concepts of print, and sound-symbol correspondences are different from those in English (and other languages), but research has shown that such knowledge may transfer from one language to another (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Children develop alphabet knowledge in Qur'anic school, learning to name the letters of the alphabet and recognize the letter symbols as they appear in the Qur'an. Arabic letters have different forms depending on where they appear (alone, at the beginning, middle, or end of the word), making them more challenging to learn to recognize than upper and lower case Roman alphabet letters. Fulbe and Somali children developed high levels of letter naming fluency in the third stage of the curriculum, when they learned to name Arabic letters as they appeared in memorized chapters of the Qur'an.

Qur'anic-schooled children also develop concepts about print. They learn that there is a proper way to hold a tablet or page or book on which the Qur'an is printed or transcribed. They learn to turn the pages of the printed Qur'an from right to left and to distinguish the front of the Qur'an from the back. Children learn to read the text on their upright tablets from right to left, continuing at the right end of the next line down. They learn more complex concepts about text conventions, including the marking of word boundaries, pauses, verses, and larger Qur'anic textual units.

In Qur'anic school children learn about sound-symbol correspondence and develop decoding skills as they shift from relying strictly on memorization of recited text to using the written text as a mnemonic support for recitation. Fulbe children displayed this kind of

knowledge sometime in the third stage of the curriculum, when writing instruction typically began and children were expected to look and point more accurately at the text on their tablets. (This is likely the case for Somali children as well, but I do not yet have enough data to claim it is so.) Decoding skills became more necessary and more developed in the fourth stage, when children began studying texts that were longer and less rhythmic and thus more difficult to memorize. Like other Muslim children for whom Arabic is not a native language, Fulbe and Somali children must learn not only the symbols that corresponded to speech sounds in their native language. They also learned to perceive and produce non-native speech sounds and recognize and reproduce the symbols that represented them in writing.

Qur'anic schooling emphasizes accuracy and fluency in recitation, reading, and writing, and children develop these skills through extensive practice of Qur'anic texts. In addition to these skills, children develop a strong sense that accuracy and fluency matter in literacy activities (cf., Robertson, 2006). They learn that it is important to pay close attention to the linguistic forms they hear, see, speak, and write. Initially, Fulbe children relied heavily on teachers' monitoring and corrective feedback, but over time they learned to monitor and correct their own production in speech and writing. (As with decoding skills, I do not yet have sufficient data to make claims about Somali children.)

Concepts of literacy—beliefs about the nature of reading and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)—fostered in Qur'anic schooling differ from those valued in public classrooms. Like many other Muslim communities, the Fulbe believed that one came to understand the Qur'an in successive layers, and the accurate oral and written reproduction of Qur'anic texts constituted the initial and most essential layers of textual understanding. Only after writing, reading, and reciting the entire Qur'an might a student begin to study its literal meaning. Such beliefs are widely held in the Somali community in Central Ohio, too. While children are not taught the meaning of the texts, they do learn that written text has meaning (cf., Bigelow, 2010). Fulbe children and Somali children are taught that accuracy in reproduction of Qur'anic texts was essential because even the smallest mistake might change the meaning, potentially changing the sacred into something profane.

Qur'anic school is about more than the teaching and learning of specific texts and literacy concepts, skills, and study habits. It is about socializing children to become devout and disciplined members of a religious community in which literacy and learning are highly valued.

Children are taught to respect teachers and to take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning (cf., Robertson, 2006). They learn that literacy and learning in general are important, and that it takes diligence and self-discipline to learn to read and write well. While grounded in faith, these dispositions, along with the concepts and skills discussed above, have the potential to support learning in the public classroom.

### **Making Qur'anic School Connections**

Above I have used the words “concept,” “skill,” and “disposition” to discuss the possible or desired outcomes of participation in Qur'anic schooling. Moreover, I have proposed that literacy skills, knowledge, and dispositions developed in one schooling tradition may potentially be leveraged to support the development of literacy skills, knowledge, and dispositions in a very different schooling tradition. But how transferable or—to use a word that invokes Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*—how transposable are specific ways of engaging in literacy activities when there are differences and (perceived) conflicts with respect to how participants conceptualize literacy and learning in two distinct traditions?

Thus far in my work with Somali families, I have found parents/guardians to be pleased by my interest in Qur'anic school and the potential contribution of Qur'anic school experiences to public school achievement. However, they often express the view that Qur'anic schooling is in contrast with public schooling, with the former providing a kind of counterbalance to or protection from the negative influences of the latter. Many parents have also expressed doubt that what they describe as Islamic ways of learning could ever be truly accepted in the public schools in the US.

Muslim children growing up in Europe and North America are not often encouraged in public school to transfer the knowledge and skills they develop in Qur'anic school (Robertson, 2006). The marginalization of Qur'anic school-based knowledge and skills is due in part to non-Muslim teachers' lack of knowledge of this schooling tradition. Teachers cannot recognize relevance if they are unaware of a whole world of schooling and literacy in which Muslim children participate. Without support from teachers, children may not recognize the relevance of what they have learned in their other school, or they may be reluctant to transfer Qur'anic school-based concepts, skills, and dispositions to a very different cultural context.

Lack of knowledge is not the only reason that public school teachers do not draw upon Muslim children's Qur'anic school experiences. Some of the non-Muslim teachers I have worked with in Ohio explained that they were uneasy with the idea of drawing on or even referring to children's Qur'anic school experiences and language and literacy (learning) skills because Qur'anic schools are, after all, religious institutions and thus have no place in public schools. The role of religion in state-funded education has long been a contentious issue in the United States (Haynes, 1999), and this is increasingly the case in Europe (Jackson et al., 2007). One charter school superintendent noted that any modification of instruction connected to a child's participation in Qur'anic school was "a lawsuit waiting to happen" because parents could claim the child was being treated differently—that is, discriminated against—on the basis of his or her religion. Fears of litigation aside, many teachers rejected the premise of adapting instruction to build on experiences linked to religion. One teacher put it this way, and his five colleagues nodded in agreement: "We have to teach them like Americans. Not like Muslims. Like Americans, just regular Americans."

Whether or not teachers in Central Ohio are reluctant to building on Islamic practices in particular is unclear. However, it is clear that the non-Muslim educators with whom I work in Ohio have a less than positive view of Qur'anic school. Many teachers described *dugsi* practices as "just rote learning" and "not real learning" (cf., Robertson, 2006). Some expressed concern that Qur'anic schooling might cause some Somali children to be students who "imitate well but don't really understand in a meaningful way, don't really make it their own." Among non-Muslims, beliefs that Qur'anic schooling has deleterious effects on children's cognitive and linguistic development and public school achievement are common, despite a lack of supporting evidence (Wagner, 1993, 1999). Most of the non-Muslim teachers in my studies in Ohio and Cameroon had limited knowledge of Qur'anic schooling but nonetheless expressed the belief that participation therein was likely to have a negative effect on children's academic achievement and development of competence in the language of public school (French in Cameroon, English in the US). The account most teachers gave for this was that Qur'anic school consumed many hours that children could better devote to their secular studies, while several teachers said that it also fostered in children a passive learning style and a habit of reproducing texts without trying to comprehend them (Moore, 2006, 2010).

A few Ohio teachers voiced concern that Somali children's participation in Qur'anic schooling also interferes with their integration into the mainstream (English-speaking) community and thereby their development of an American identity and English language proficiency (which seemed to be closely intertwined in the minds of most teachers). When I explain to teachers that *dugsi* is regarded by Somali adults as a key activity setting for children to develop and maintain Muslim and Somali identities, it is not unusual for some in my audience to express ambivalence or even disapproval. Many teachers in Columbus are confused and troubled by the transnationalism of the local Somali community, and Qur'anic schooling is a salient example of how Somalis in the diaspora are maintaining ethnic, national, linguistic, and religious identities across national borders.

Most of the non-Muslim teachers I have worked with in Ohio do not see Somali children's experiences learning to recite, read, and write Qur'anic Arabic as literacy (or second language learning). Qur'anic literacy does not count as "real" literacy because Somali children are not taught in Qur'anic school to understand the texts they read and write. As one teacher said, "It's not like they're really reading, are they? I mean, they have no idea what they are saying." Moreover, Qur'anic school literacy is strictly reproductive for first several years: children are taught to render oral and written texts as faithfully as possible. For the public school teachers, real literacy entails the ability to generate text that is original and expressive of one's own thoughts.

Qur'anic schooling does not entail many of the forms of participation and engagement with text valued in the public classroom. There are no read-alouds with a Qur'an that have been illustrated to support comprehension of the text, and children are not asked for and do not offer their thoughts on what will happen next or why somebody in the text did what they did. Children are not asked to express their own thoughts in writing with the support of a model and a wall covered in Arabic sight words. However, many of the routine literacy activities in the early years of public schooling (letter study, guided reading, and the use of handwriting worksheets) emphasize decoding and encoding of texts with little or no attention to their literal meaning or the potential for creative departure from what is printed on the page. The Ohio teachers with whom I have worked acknowledge (and sometime lament) this, but they universally have insisted that what they do in their classrooms is entirely different from what goes on in Qur'anic



schools because reading with comprehension, not just fluency and accuracy, is the ultimate goal of these activities.

For years, scholars and activists have called for (1) recognition that children enter school with a repertoire of practices related to learning and literacy and (2) incorporation of children's repertoires into school instruction rather than replacement. In my work in Central Ohio, I have found many teachers who take these calls seriously but who are nonetheless wary of trying to build on Somali children's Qur'anic school experiences. Providing teachers with opportunities to learn about this schooling tradition may help, but ideologies concerning religion in schools and what counts as learning and literacy may still get in the way. When public school teachers do not recognize a child's experiences in Qur'anic school as legitimate forms of literacy and language learning, it is unlikely that they will endeavor to build upon those experiences. One of the challenges facing those of us in K-12 teacher preparation is finding ways to foster cross-cultural perspectives on teaching, learning, and literacy that will enable teachers to make connections to the diverse experiences of all the children in their classroom. Teachers need to know about "best practices," but they also need to understand that *all* practices of literacy, teaching, and learning (including "best practices") are related to specific cultural contexts and associated with specific values, beliefs, and identities. In classrooms and in policy, we need to find ways to include religious schooling traditions and literacies in our efforts to make public school instruction more effective for cultural language minority students.

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The conference, organized by Kellogg Faculty Fellow and Professor of Anthropology Susan Blum, witnessed inspiring discussion and collaboration between leading scholars of education from several disciplines and nations.

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