

The chapters that are presented in this book explore and illuminate the intersection of Islam and higher education in changing societies. The question that emerges is what kind of role does Islam play in the context of higher education in transitional societies. First, this book presents scholarly work from research conducted in geographic regions that are generally under-researched (e.g. Iran, Turkey, Pakistan) and where the place of Islam is not well explored in educational context. Existing literature on Islam is heavily dominated in political contexts in various parts of the world. However, higher education, which prepares future leaders following religious and cultural values of a nation, is embedded in the social, economic and political contexts of that nation. So it is important to examine the role of Islam in higher education systems in different countries to better grasp how next generation of a nation is shaped. Therefore, this volume fills a critical gap in the literature and offers an understanding of how Islam in higher education is constructed and understood in social and cultural contexts.

Understanding how Islam reflects itself (and does or does not intersect with secularism) in curriculum, campus life, and administration in changing societies may offer insights into higher education system in non-Western world. This is important because during organizational change in such countries, help and advice is usually requested from developed countries such as the United States. A better grasp of a higher education system may help the western world offer better consultancy opportunities, where efforts are more productive and results more fruitful.

Finally, the role of Islam in higher education in changing societies is important because it is only through an understanding of their educational conditions that institutions (universities) can implement policies and practices to respond effectively, and create campus environments that are supportive to university stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators, employers). Effective policies can only be attained when there is a clear understanding of

how cultural, social, and religious values are embedded in university lives. female students and scholars. Given that Islam has historically occupied and to some extent continues to occupy a marginal position in the daily operations of institutions of higher education, it is critical to highlight their potential effects not only on its stakeholders but on the institutions as well in changing societies.

### **MARKET CONSIDERATIONS**

There are several markets that can be considered for this book. Our first market would include graduate level students/ scholars in courses such as Religion in International Development, Sociology of Education, Anthropology of Education, Higher Education Systems in Developing World to name a few. In order to reach a broad base of readers, the book could target schools of education in the US and other countries specifically targeting those institutions with an interest in Comparative and International Education, Higher Education Studies, and Muslim Studies among others. The book could also appeal to members of professional organizations including the Comparative and International Education Society, the Association for Study of Higher Education, and the American Educational Research Association. A paperback edition of this volume would be especially attractive (and affordable) to course instructors.

This book has the potential to attract readers beyond the US, particularly those scholars who conduct research in other countries, or serve as consultants. This group of scholars and educational consultants constitute the second potential market for this book. In our increasingly global world, it is imperative to have a broader understanding of how Islam is understood and manifests in various social, political and cultural contexts. Therefore, third potential market could include policy-makers and advisors to governmental and other agencies involved in the construction and implementation of policies that seek to be more inclusive. This book will serve as an important benchmark for understanding Islam and

potentially inform policies to transform institutional processes and structures to be responsive to the Muslim world.

## **Overview of the Chapters**

XYANTHE NEIDER

### *FROM A U.S. STANDPOINT: RESEARCHING MUSLIM HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS*

This paper takes a United States standpoint positing that many Western countries are now becoming transitional societies as an effect of globalization. At this present historical moment these societies need to be aware of the intricate transnational distinctions and how environments in higher education are created to support, challenge, and oppose these nuances. Further, due to globalization multicultural diversity is shifting in Western societies - where immigration patterns in the Western world once were predominantly Christian and European there are now more people coming from Eastern and Middle Eastern countries, not centered on Christianity, and speaking languages with different root bases and alphabets dissimilar to English. In the U.S. there is a sense of disequilibrium and lack of knowledge about Islam and persons from these parts of the world. Western student affairs practitioners may be unfamiliar with how to work with these populations, in large part due to the construction of Muslim through the media and popular discourse. Exploring how Muslims have been constructed by and through the media and how this contributes to creating environments in higher education this paper takes a United States standpoint through which to view Muslim postsecondary students turning the gaze back upon U.S. higher education. The purpose of this paper is to introduce postcolonial theory as a lens through which to investigate and come to know the needs of Muslim students in United States higher education settings.

Ayesha Razzaque

### Academic Freedom in Pakistani Higher Education

The chapter focuses on the influence of conservative religious forces in Pakistani higher education and its implications for the role of faculty. In order to help the reader understand the context, the chapter begins with a brief description of the social, political and religious situation in the country, as well as the influence of religion on the education policy of the country.

Due to the influence of conservative forces in the country, who exploit Islam to pursue their own political agenda, faculty cannot express views that are in conflict with the essence of Islam. Academic freedom is tenuous at best, faculty self censors due to the fear of conservative retaliation and knowledge based on religious text overrules all other forms of knowledge, without investigation. Under such conditions faculty do not instruct but indoctrinate when teaching particular propositions as *dogmatically* true. The chapter looks at several contemporary instances where faculty tried to exercise academic freedom and presented students with a balanced view, and as a result faced severe retaliation from the students, colleagues, university administration and the conservative forces of the society. Since the chapter focuses on contemporary issues of curtailment of academic freedom the author was not able to reference scholarly literary sources and had to rely primarily on data collected from interviews with involved parties, newspaper articles, and electronic media.

Sharon Karkehabadi

### Academic Freedom and the Islamic Republic of Iran

This chapter analyzes how academic freedom is defined and observed in the Islamic Republic of Iran from a comparative and historical perspective, with particular attention to the role of the Islamic government. To begin, Karkehabadi gives a brief description of the organization and governance of higher education in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This includes the important role of the Iranian government and Islam in higher education. Second, the author examines how academic freedom is defined in Iran as compared to the United States. Finally, she sights contemporary examples of “violations” of academic freedom in Iran and compares them to examples in the United States, Post 9-11.

Doria Daniels

### Muslim academics at South African universities: The Western Cape experience

Universities as institutional environments are microcosms of the socio-economic environment of a country and could positively impact the process of diversification of the South African workplace. Higher Education is seen by government as a key role player in “the consolidation of democracy” in South Africa because of its potential to both serve a re-distributive social function as well as play an economic role in training future professionals. Currently transformation of South Africa’s universities is evidenced by a diversification of their student and staff populations. However, the transition from exclusion to inclusion of minority populations and their cultures on to university campuses has not been without challenge for those accessing these institutions. Muslim academics are members of a minority group working in universities where the hegemony of Christian National education could still exclude them as fully fledged workers of the institution. In this chapter Daniels reports on Muslim academics experiences with inclusion at the three Western Cape Universities.

Fauzia Ahmad

### ‘We always knew from the year dot that University was the place to go’ – Muslim Women and Higher Education Experiences in the UK

This chapter draws on detailed semi-structured interviews with under-graduate and post-graduate British South Asian Muslim women studying in universities in London, UK and reflects on their educational motivations and experiences of higher education. Ahmad argues that contrary to stereotypes of over-bearing Muslim families restrictive of the educational development of daughters, parental support, and fathers in particular, were key motivating factors in women’s accounts of their educational success.

While attention is paid to Muslim women’s positive accounts of their time in university, differentiated across three over-lapping forms of beneficial experience: ‘academic’, ‘social’ and ‘personal’, there were some racialised aspects to some women’s experiences that

contributed to a sense of 'Othering'. These centred on the ways certain university structures and lack of provisions affected Muslim women, their interactions with staff and fellow students and expectations of what being a 'mainstream' student in British universities represented. Some of these issues, such as the banning of face veils on some university campuses and heightened tensions around Muslim 'extremism', have become more significant following the London bombings in July 2005.

However, far from encouraging women to turn away from their religious and cultural identities, the research shows how experiences of higher education helped women rationalise and re-evaluate these aspects of their identities. The author concludes by highlighting how Muslim women's accounts of their experiences at university offer a further challenge to stereotypes that misrepresent educated Muslim women as 'religious and cultural rebels' thus disrupting certain discursive and polarised frameworks such as 'modern' and 'traditional' often used to situate Muslim women's lives.

Fatma Nevra Seggie & Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela

Unpacking the Turkish undergraduate core curriculum: A comparative textbook analysis

This study is based on an exploratory study that qualitatively examines the impact of Turkish secularism of 1980s on the core undergraduate curriculum by comparing and contrasting the focus and content of two sets of textbooks used before and after 1980 military coup in one core course in Turkish higher education institutions. Findings of the comparative textbook analysis show that after the military coup in 1980, the course became compulsory for all the undergraduate students. In addition, there was a change in the length of delivery of the course as well as its objectives and content, especially with regard to the treatment of Turkish secularism and Islam with these texts.