

# LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN INTEGRATED MUSLIM SCHOOLS: A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

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## Abstract

The presence of integrated Muslim schools or faith schools in South African communities is neither neonatal nor a modernistic development of the post-apartheid education system of modern-day South Africa, but rather something long established. Integrated Muslim schools were established as a response to the ideologies and challenges of the apartheid state. The primary objective of Muslim schools is to preserve the Muslim identity, practices and ethos. The curriculum followed in integrated Muslim schools is the national curriculum of the Department of Basic Education, as well as the religious curriculum – Islamic Studies. The present ownership and governance of Muslim schools can be summarised as privately owned by merchant families, religious trusts or expatriates. In Muslim faith schools, the existence and prevalence of traditional and transactional approaches to leadership dominate, leaving little to no room for principals to lead and manage these schools, as the decision-making authority is often retained by school owners. In addition, religious or faith-based schools are likely to experience challenges erupting as a result of the contradicting values of contemporary, liberal, non-faith-based leadership and management approaches in contrast to those of approaches that are based on religion. Against this background, two curricula must be presented and managed. This study was supported by the systems theory. The systems theory is seen as a theoretical approach that serves as a transcendental solution to examine and understand interactions such as ethics, relationships, limitations and boundaries, morals and the creation of social and organisational hierarchies. The aim of the study was to determine how the principals of integrated Muslim schools could increase the effectiveness of their leadership and management practices. The objectives were to understand and explain the nature of integrated Muslim schools, to explore the existing leadership and management practices of the principals of integrated Muslim schools and to determine strategies that can be implemented in integrated Muslim schools to enhance the leadership and management practices of school principals. An interpretivist qualitative research design was followed. The non-probability sampling method was employed to identify six principals of integrated Muslim schools in three provinces of South Africa. In-depth, semi-structured one-hour interviews were used as the primary method to gather data from the participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed. This research identified invaluable insights into the nature of integrated Muslim schools from a historical perspective and the existing leadership and management portfolio of integrated Muslim schools. Furthermore, the findings revealed the need for good character, values and attitudes among those who preside in leadership roles at integrated Muslim schools. The future trajectory for best practices was identified as well. Moreover, the research established that principals who preside over the leadership and management of integrated Muslim schools have a dichotomous portfolio of leadership and management, i.e. the secular curriculum and the Islamic curriculum. The principals of integrated Muslim schools have dichotomous leadership and management tasks, primarily towards their employers and as a religious duty. This research study also established that the leadership and management duties of school principals are not detailed, which results in role ambiguity and overlapping between the leadership and management role and the governance role.

**Keywords:** *Integrated, leadership, management, Muslim, principal.*

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