

Editorial

“**R**ead” has a significant meaning and implications in Islam not only because it is the first word mentioned in the holy Qur’an but because of its message of spreading knowledge and urging people to deepen their understanding of God. This call amplifies the importance of education and more specifically learning the script as well as the world. “Read” also has meaning in educational and psychological theories of learning, which emphasize not only the importance to learn, and grow and, in many cases, to transform people’s lives, but also to reflect upon our lives and the world around us. Freire and Macedo’s (1987) famous saying that “reading the word and the world” as a goal of education for the oppressed and marginalized is a testimony to its importance for social and economic mobility. It speaks to a consciousness of our place in the world and how we conceive of ourselves in relation to all others. In today’s environment, this is a reminder to all educators to advocate for a deeper and more transformative education, that is, to invite young people to think and awaken themselves to the worlds of others. Freire’s dictum seems especially pertinent at a time when fewer people are reading. And when asked, many prefer online quick readings where information is summed up in headlines, Twitter feeds, and brief summaries—signaling a skimming over ideas and a focus on soundbites, rather than substantive understanding or engagement. In Muslim societies, this scenario is exacerbated in some countries where literacy rates are the lowest and the number of books read is minimal.

To encourage readership and to improve access to reading materials, *JEMS* has moved to an online platform. While printed copies of *JEMS* are available by paid subscriptions, all issues are available online on the journal’s official website. As the editorial team, we are working hard to reach as many readers as possible, especially those interested in scholarship and research in Muslim societies. We aim not only to bring to the forefront research questions and answers in the education field, but also to provide a platform for insights and ideas that question the status quo in a constructive and evidence-based

manner. We encourage contributions that invite readers to perplex with the authors on topics pertinent to children and adults, the individual, and the collective, more specifically in the global South. We have done that for three years now and we hope to continue and provoke our readers thinking a bit more.

This volume addresses topics that put the learners at the center of research and explores issues of language, culture, and religion as they relate to educators and students. Fathi Ihmedieh shares a study with children in Jordan and the impact of digital gaming on them especially during the pandemic, while Raudah Mohd Yunus shares a study on education as a method to (dis) integrate the Rohingya refugee children in the Malaysian education system. The two authors introduce reviews and analysis of these two important topics and populations. The third article, authored by Cherine Sabry, provides an analysis of the regional education organizations in the Arab World and more specifically zooming into the performance of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). The author provides insights on the functions and challenges facing these types of regional educational bodies. Donia Smaali Bouhlila and Imen Hinteti contribute to the debate on using Arabic versus English as the language of instruction, especially in the Gulf States. They provide field-based information to support the importance of using Arabic as a native language in teaching and learning. Maura A. E. Pilotti, Huda Al Mulhem, Halah Al Kuhayli, and Khadija El Alaoui share the case of university students and their performance before and after the pandemic, especially when courses were delivered virtually as the result of lockdowns. All five articles offer new research questions, sound methodology, and generate new knowledge to contribute to larger discussions around the globe on improving teaching and learning in cultural and religious contexts. The articles are followed by a practitioner's note on the internationally recognized accrediting agency The Council of Islamic Schools in North America (CISNA).

Finally, we have included four book reviews, two of which attempt to zoom into Islamic schools, identity, and pedagogy, while the other two focus on teachers as state builders and higher education experiences and citizenship of Muslim faculty. This issue also includes an interview by Isra Brifkani, our book review editor, with the scholar Muhammed Haron on

his research and scholarship in Islamic education. We hope that you spread the word about this journal and follow our media outlets to learn more, and most importantly, “Read.”

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References

Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Bergin & Garvey.