We are exceptionally proud to share that, after just four years, JEMS has been accepted for Scopus, Elsevier’s abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature, which puts powerful discovery and analytics tools in the hands of researchers, librarians, research managers and funders to promote ideas, people and institutions. Scopus is curated by independent subject matter experts who are recognized leaders in their fields and covers nearly 36,377 titles (22,794 active titles and 13,583 inactive titles) from approximately 11,678 publishers, of which 34,346 are peer-reviewed journals in top-level subject fields. (https://www.elsevier.com/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/114533/Scopus-factsheet-2022_WEB.pdf) In its letter to the JEMS co-editors, the Scopus Content Selection and Advisory Board indicated that:

- JEMS consistently includes articles that are academically sound and relevant to an international academic or professional audience in the field.
- Although the scope of this journal is narrow, it addresses the need of an important niche audience.

This milestone affirms the commitment of JEMS to publishing academically rigorous research, book reviews, and essays. It also confirms our dedication to seek out and foreground research that examines the complex aspects of the broadest interpretation of education in Muslim societies. There has never been a time when research and scholarship were so important to the advancement and sustainability of Muslim societies, especially in the current age when artificial intelligence is taking over educational spaces and content. Education is a foundational imperative of Islam—not only for the purposes of knowing, but also how to be and to act—that can manifest Islam’s message that seeks socially just societies, communities, and relationships. The acknowledgement by Scopus also opens to the rest of the world the emerging scholarship generated in majority Muslim societies and engages a larger number of researchers in the academic pursuit of relevant new knowledge.

We know all too well the immense challenges facing Muslim societies and education given the myriad submissions to JEMS on topics ranging from early childhood development to higher education, and including pedagogies, policies, leadership, and management. These challenges sometimes
emanate from within Muslim societies that are struggling to frame and construct educational discourses that respond to a world increasingly out of equilibrium. At other times, the challenges, as well as provocations, are external and intent not only on propagating misinformation but also reflecting a growing atmosphere of denigration and Islamophobia. To cite one example, burning of the Quran, under the so-called auspices of democratic freedom, is an act devoid of any rationality that seeks merely to provoke and disparage Muslims and Islam. The only worthwhile response resides in Islam’s foundational paradigms of debate and deliberation even in the face of obvious incitements. In matters like these, the critical importance of reading, writing, thinking, and reflecting is especially pertinent, and the responsibility of research and researchers cannot be overstated.

Research should respond not only to contemporary crises and controversies, but should also study the possibilities of renewed forms of consideration, engagement, and peaceful co-existence. Research is motivated by a curiosity about the world and the inexhaustible scope of human existence. We are all connected in a “web of human relationships” (Arendt, 1958, pp. 183–184), despite geopolitical constructs in the form of borders and the resulting otherness they create. What happens elsewhere affects all of us. The more we scratch the surface of our existence and overarching inter-relatedness, the greater the need for more extensive and deeper questioning. There is no end to what we do not know and what we need to know. And hence, the unequivocal obligation to research and the resulting publications that cross the divides.

Our latest issue brings together an eclectic collection of contexts, insights, and arguments. In their article, “Negotiating Language Arts and the Islamic Identity,” Adrian Rodgers and Firman Parlindungan argue that faith-based settings provide an opportunity for children’s literacy development that intertwines religious literacy practices with the process of knowledge and identity building. In this regard, the role of teachers with diverse language and cultural backgrounds in the selection of texts and classroom activities is important. Kefah Barham, in “The Use of Reflective Journals in the Development of Teaching Skills and Teacher Education” maintains that reflective journaling practices, when applied in the Palestinian setting where people, including teachers and students, face challenges and hardships, can be a powerful tool for them to record their experiences and lessons learned. The author also argues that reflective journaling can assist Palestinian teachers and educators in processing their emotions, gaining insight into their thoughts and feelings, and developing a better grasp of themselves and their surroundings as well as developing constructive coping mechanisms. It can also be used to document the everyday struggles of living in an occupied
territory, such as movement restrictions, a lack of essential services, and human rights violations. Furthermore, reflective journaling can provide a forum for educators and students to share their experiences with others to increase awareness of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Next is Khurram Shahzad and Muhammad Qaiser Shafi’s “Impact of Sense of Belonging on Forgiveness and Gratitude among Muslim Students: Mediating Role of Collectivism and Moderating Role of Religiosity.” They assert that inculcating values in the education process is necessary for belongingness, collectivism, forgiveness, gratitude, and religiosity and is essential for healthier relationships in daily life. Specifically, they show that a sense of belonging plays a positive role in enhancing forgiveness and gratitude in close interpersonal relationships and that understanding that need can help individuals be aware of and care about other people’s feelings. In our fourth article, Mahshid Tavallai analyses “The Representation of Iran (Persia) in the Young Children’s Picture books in North America” and reports that the common themes found in these books were relatively limited in scope with an emphasis on Nowruz stories and folktales. In turn, the predominant setting of the fiction stories, either partially or wholly, is outside of Iran, resulting in most of the books not shedding light on the contemporary life of Iranians. Our final article, “U.S. Islamic Schools’ Promotion of Physical Education and Physical Activity” by David Kahan, Thomas L. McKenzie, Maya Satnick, and Olivia Hansen utilized content analysis to examine the promotion of PE/PA on U.S. Islamic school websites. They found a hidden agenda in which the mention of PE was subordinate to nearly all other subject matter. Religious subject matter was prioritized which aligns with what parents most value about Islamic school education. This created impressions that PE and Islamic religious studies are not complementary.

In addition to these articles, we trust that our readers will benefit tremendously from an array of book reviews, a review essay, as well as an interview by our book reviews editor, Isra Brifkani, with Dr. Fathi Hasan Malkawi.

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References