

Preparing Saudi women educators for teacher leader roles in accord with societal expectations of Islamic leadership

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This paper concerns preparing Saudi Arabian female educators, who may assume teacher leader roles, in alignment with the Islamic leadership concept. Women have been recognised as a ‘great asset’ for national development, and interest in their educational attainment is growing. After explaining this development in conjunction with the teacher leader concept, and after explaining Islamic leadership, the discussion turns to how Saudi female preservice teacher education programs can be retooled to offer a teacher leader curriculum that contains leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions pursuant to female educators contributing to the achievement of *Vision 2030*. “Teachers as leaders” in a knowledge society is a key part of Saudi Arabia’s future.

Introduction

This paper concerns historical, cultural, and religious aspects of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s notion of Islamic leadership and its potential influence on Saudi female teacher leadership, which is part of educational leadership. The latter concerns leading in an educational context whether in public or private schools, higher education institutions, the public policy arena, educational corporate agencies, or education-focused non-government agencies (Lumpkin & Achen, 2019). Of particular interest herein is the notion of a *teacher leader*, meaning teachers who “maintain... classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom” (Wenner & Campbell, 2017) and who provide “... other important elements of teacher leadership, such as its independence of a formal position and development of students as a goal.” (Schott, van Roekel & Tummers, 2020, p.6).

Teacher leaders can choose to engage in some combination of fiscal affairs, student affairs, institutional affairs, and academic affairs. What distinguishes them in this role is their choice to engage in activities that advance teachers, students or the school’s interest while *still* teaching rather than holding a formal leadership assignment or position (e.g., principal, vice-principal, department head, school board administrator). As a teacher leader, they always collaborate actively with colleagues (one-on-one, teams, committees, working groups) to improve students’ learning, teachers’ effectiveness, and the school’s culture and academic standing (Hunzicker, 2017; Lumpkin & Achen, 2019; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011; Bond, 2011).

Developing the leadership capabilities of teachers should be a top priority (Carswell, 2021; Lumpkin et al., 2014). Through their initiatives, teacher leaders can (a) help the school

fulfil its mission and retain good academic standing; (b) energise and inspire colleagues; (c) transform classrooms and schools; (b) initiate and then sustain school improvements; (e) facilitate student engagement and learning; and (f) strengthen connections with home, family, and community. In the process, teacher leaders challenge the status quo and help others with change while respecting different perspectives and valuing collaboration to improve educational practice and policies (Lowery-Moore et al., 2016; Lumpkin, Claxton & Wilson, 2014; Roby, 2011; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

This paper is a contribution to the teacher leader literature, because it expands the construct of leadership to include *Islamic leadership*, which is significant given that more than one quarter of the world's population (1.9 billion) is Muslim (i.e., practise the tenets of Islam, the religion) (World Population Review, 2021). Better understandings of educational leadership within an Islamic context are important because many Islamic nations are developing countries, and female teacher leaders have influential roles to play in growth and development. Teacher leaders influence others toward improved educational practice school-wide (Cooper et al., 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Improving instructional practice is key to a successful national development (McGregor, 2019). To be discussed, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) (2016) has embarked on an ambitious national development plan (*Vision 2030*) that is heavily dependent on the education sector. This paper is predicated on the authors' conviction that Saudi female educators must become teacher leaders.

Saudi Arabian context

The authors propose that several factors influence teacher leaders and educational leadership in the Saudi educational context, especially the conceptualisation of leadership as a construct and in practice. Foremost, the KSA is an Islamic nation and a gender-segregated society, both of which inform understandings of leadership. In Islamic law, gender segregation manifests as practices of and requirements for the separation of men and women in social and other settings, including segregated educational settings. For many years, the KSA education system has been populated and led by men, even in female higher education institutions (Aldawsari, 2016).

However, female education in Saudi Arabia has been strengthened since the reign of the late King Abdullah (also known as 'the golden age for Saudi women') and the 2005 launch of the King Abdullah Sponsorship Program that provides scholarships for Saudi students to study abroad and then return home in professional roles (Alsuwaida, 2016). While men still hold most leadership roles in Saudi higher education, statistics show "a remarkable increase of the number of females in all Saudi universities" (Kattan et al., 2016, p. 95). Currently, more than two thirds (66%) of Saudi university students are women representing a 32% increase from 2006 (Kattan et al., 2016). Mores and customs around segregation are cautiously being examined, which will impact women's role in educational leadership.

Saudi women's leadership in the educational context (i.e., educational leadership) is also being influenced by the KSA's (2016) recent national development plan (*Vision 2030*)

wherein the nation is transitioning from an oil-based to a knowledge-based economy. Knowledge-intensive activities will now inform production more so than physical inputs or natural resources (especially oil and gas) (Khorsheed, 2015; Powell & Snellman, 2004). If something is knowledge intensive, it requires “a lot of experience, understanding, information, and skills to be successful” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Knowledge of this calibre arises from secondary high school, trade schools, colleges, technical universities, and universities (including teacher education programs).

A knowledge economy depends on the “production of novel ideas that subsequently lead to new or improved goods and services and organizational practices” (Powell & Snellman, 2004, p. 201). The production of this knowledge requires astute and especially trained minds. Related economic production activities that are contingent on *knowledge* include leadership and management; research and development (R&D); information technology (IT); marketing, legal, accounting, and financial services; and human resource (HR) management (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2006).

In a knowledge-based economy, the possibility of leadership is open to all (Drucker, 1994). In Saudi Arabia’s transition to a knowledge-based economy, that sentiment especially applies to women who are characterised in the vision statement as a “great asset” for national development (KSA, 2016, p. 37; Najm, 2019). Ensuring their education is paramount to *Vision 2030*. Ensuring female *teacher leadership* is paramount as well, with this effort likely informed by how Saudi Arabia conceptualises leadership (i.e., Islamic leadership). The governing power in the KSA is shared by male clerics and male members of the ruling family, which recently started looking to transform Saudi society to one that makes women’s presence more apparent and valued (Alsuwaida, 2016; Kattan et al., 2016; Najm, 2019).

As a caveat, “Islamic instructions (Sharia laws) do not prevent women leadership but... [Muslim] culture... has a negative impression about female leaders despite the presence of many highly respected... women leaders in Islamic history” (Kattan et al., 2016, p. 101). Monjur (2015) claimed that “no woman was named as a leader of state in the early era of Islam” (pp. 10-11). Yet, in her book, *The forgotten queens of Islam*, Mernissi (1993) recounted that Saudi female heads of states and political rulers have reigned. Examples are Shajarat al-Durr, Turken Khatun, and Princess Fatima Al-Zamil who ruled the town of Ha’il in the Arabian Peninsula from 1911 to 1914. This act of leadership is 1,280 years after the death of the Prophet of Islam, who is the spiritual leader of all time in the Muslim world.

This pre-Islamic period is known as *Jabiliyyah*, which is an Arabic word implying “ignorance [of] either the true faith or of the way of civilization or of both combined” (Sulaimani, 1986, pp. 5-6). Sulaimani speculated “it is not known whether a woman was ever the leader of her tribe [in the pre-Islamic period]” (1986, p. 9). But a woman might have become influential in politics if she was a wife, sister, or daughter to her tribe’s male chief or a messenger of peace between disputing tribes. Saudi Arabia has since gained its sovereignty with the discovery of oil 90 years ago. For the first time, the world is

witnessing the emerging importance of Saudi women to successfully implement the national development plan (Najm, 2019).

Najm (2019) commented that “over the coming years, it will be fascinating to see how women continue to shape growth in Saudi Arabia to unleash the Kingdom's true potential on the world stage” (para. 12). Recent advances in educational opportunities for women and the knowledge and skills they will bring to a knowledge-based economy prime them to assume teacher leader roles, which should constitute part of “the right talent to fuel the future [of KSA’s] large scale transformation” (Najm, 2019, para. 11).

Islamic leadership

The Western leadership literature has identified common characteristics of effective leaders with differences depending on specific leadership theory assumptions (e.g., transactional, transformative, servant, authentic, behavioural, contingency, trait) (Khan et al., 2016; Northouse, 2013). Aside from transactional leadership, most leaders “can craft a vision and inspire people to act collectively to make it happen responding to whatever changes and challenges arise along the way” (Visser, 2011, p. 1). They take responsibility for their actions, are self-confident, and are problem solvers and decision makers. They can build and maintain successful interpersonal relationships, motivate people, and lead followers to achieve identified ends. Leaders use a combination of delegation and teamwork, draw on their leadership knowledge and experience, employ group interaction skills, and are skilled at communicating with and directing others (Awan et al., 2015; Addison, 1985; Conner & Strobel, 2007; National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, 2005; Prentice, 1961/2004).

Saudi Islamic leaders draw their authority from *Allah* (Mustapha, 2019). “Leadership in Islam is rooted in belief and willing submission to the Creator, *Allah*. And We made them leaders, guiding Our command; and We inspired them to do good work, and to observe the prayer, and to give out charity. They were devoted savant to Us (*Allah*)” (*The Holy Qur’an*, 21:73). Saudi leaders must thus have an exemplary character inspiring people to follow them. Leaders must be willing to place their body and mind in pursuit of spirituality and make contributions to humanity while leading in various contexts (government, industry, education, civil society, and so on). In Arabic, *Imam* means “leader” or “model.” *Imam* is also used to refer to the head (leader) of *Ummah*, the Muslim community (Mustapha, 2019).

Islamic leadership is further informed by Sharia law. This is Islamic canonical law (i.e., body of codified law) based on the teachings of the *Qur’an* (Muslims’ holy book), the traditions (*Hadith*) of the Prophet, and the rulings of Islamic scholars (*fatwas*). Five categories of all human actions are regulated by Sharia law: (a) obligatory actions that must be performed with the opposite being (b) forbidden actions, (c) recommended actions that should be undertaken with the opposite being (d) disliked actions and (e) permitted actions that are neither encouraged nor discouraged, with most human actions falling within this category (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2009).

“In the perspective of Islam, leadership is the proper realization of the goals of the religion [Islam] and the implementation of its precepts as established by the messenger of Allah... Leaders are forerunners whom the followers are looking up to. Leaders occupy a position of dignity worthy of emulation” (Mustapha, 2019, pp. 3-4). Also, from the Islamic perspective, leadership is supposed to arise from popular demand, but people can ask for a leadership position as long as they do not “attain this position of authority [and power] at all costs” (Mustapha, 2019, p. 5).

The Islamic perspective further presumes that leaders will hold a combination of the following dispositions and traits (i.e., core beliefs, values, and attitudes): dependent on (*Tawakkul*) and accountable to (*Ihtisab*) Allah and belief in the core Islamic beliefs leading to enlightenment (*Hikmah*); steadfast; fair and just (equitable) (*Adl*); truthful; trustworthy (*Amanah*); modest and humble (*Taqwa*); tolerant and inclusive (*Sabr*); healthy in body, mind, and spirit; lead by example (spirit of sacrifice); attend to followers’ comfort and listen to their concerns; defend people’s interest as long as those do not contravene Allah’s injunctions; courageous and brave; disciplined and confident; consult (*Shura*) and share views and opinions; and plan, mobilise, push, and make things happen (Monjur, 2015; Mustapha, 2019).

Islamic leaders are in a relationship with *Allah* and a symbiotic (close and long-term) relationship with people. The latter relationship affords Islamic leaders several rights. They have the right to (a) loyalty and support as long as their duties are ‘righteously discharged’ (i.e., virtuously, worthy, and honourably) (Mustapha, 2019, p. 9). They also have the right to (b) obedience and respect; (c) bodily protection and defence from mutual foes; and (d) appreciation when doing well, which includes support to address personal responsibilities (Mustapha, 2019).

Islamic leaders draw their authority from *Allah* who bestowed “man [sic] with authority to rule on the earth in accordance to His rules and directives” (Mustapha, 2019, p. 6). Whether a leader through nomination, consensus, consultation (*shura*), or occupation, Islamic leaders ideally become “a servant to the community [– in effect] a servant-leader” (Mustapha, 2019, p. 7). With that caveat in mind, Monjur (2015) contrasted the Islamic leadership concept with the Western approach (see Table 1). He divided the quality of a leader (from the Islamic perspective) into the (a) basic quality of a leader, (b) personal attributes (character) required for leadership, and (c) operational qualities and traits that enable the person to function as a leader (e.g., make decisions and utilise time).

Aligning Saudi women educators in teacher leader roles with Islamic leadership concepts

Although the discipline of educational leadership is thoroughly developed in the West and can inform teacher leadership in the KSA, Saudi Arabian teacher leader preparation should also reflect its traditional views of leadership with its Islamic influence. This perspective assumes that “every Muslim is a potential leader. The Prophet declared that everyone is a leader in his or her own capacity and would be accountable for his or her leadership” (Mustapha, 2019, p.8). This assertion implies that female Saudi teachers

Table 1: Comparison of conventional (Western) and Islamic concepts of leadership

	Conventional, Western	Islamic
1	Problem solving by the leader is in the interest of followers.	Leading is in the interest of humanity (as well as followers) and to satisfy <i>Allah</i> (the Creator).
2	Leadership is a formal, rule-bound duty to perform.	To lead is a divine responsibility involving trust building with followers.
3	Followers rarely become leaders during the leadership process.	Leaders and followers handle the leadership process together.
4	Leaders who have authority make decisions.	In consultation (<i>shūrā</i>) with followers, the leader makes decisions in compliance with <i>Sharia</i> law.
5	Selection of a leader is based on personal traits with no specific reference to ethical and moral values.	Before appointing or accepting the person as their leader, followers consider their personal qualities, knowledge of Islamic principles and <i>Sharia</i> law, and moral and ethical values and character.

(preservice and inservice) can strive to assume the teacher leader role. And, relative to achieving *Vision 2030*'s mandate, because educators are central to knowledge creation, and by association a knowledge-based economy, teachers have the potential to become a leading class in a knowledge society (Andrews & Crowther, 2006; Drucker, 1994), especially women educators (e.g., female teacher leaders).

Monjur (2015) cited the *Qur'an* in his claim that “the leader has to be a Man, not a woman [while acknowledging that] this issue is not free from controversies” (p. 10). *Vision 2030* is predicated on improved education. In response to this national development plan, which recognised Saudi women as great assets (KSA, 2016), female teacher leaders are needed to ensure balanced gendered representation in educational leadership. Aldawsari (2016) affirmed that women leaders in Saudi higher education, for example, are under-represented. Current arrangements reflect both Islamic notions of leadership (Monjur, 2015) and the “popular perception of the maleness of leadership” (Kattan et al., 2016, p. 96).

Interestingly, leadership research has continually “reported stark and meaningful differences between women and men leaders” (Northouse, 2013, p. 349). But while women used to be viewed “as inferior to men, [the literature now] extols the superiority of women in leadership positions” (Northouse, 2013, p. 349). Nonetheless, the Saudi culture effects Islamic and gender expectations for men and women, and “men are still preferred” as leaders (Kattan et al., 2016, p. 96).

The authors assert that Saudi Arabia needs a balance of male and female teacher leaders because males have generally tended toward aggression, assertiveness, the exercise of authority (power over), and competitiveness. The traditional sense of leadership in Saudi Arabia is centralised with control by one person (usually male). Managers are viewed as leaders. And their management skills are expected to suffice to fulfil the leadership role

(Algarni & Male, 2014). This expectation is unfortunate because leadership and management are two different functions. Leaders respect the need for change so the system can thrive, while managers maintain the *status quo* so the system can function. Leaders hold and express a vision for the future, and managers ensure that things happen to achieve that vision (Connolly et al., 2019). Warren Bennis' (2009, p. 42) famous quote captures the difference, "The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing."

Given the mandate of *Vision 2030* to move the nation toward a knowledge-based economy (KSA, 2016), more than management is needed, and leadership from both men and women is needed. As with other nations (Northouse, 2013), Saudi empirical studies have reported that female leaders are materially different from their male counterparts (Alghamdi & Ahmed, 2018; Alghamdi, Alexander & Al-Hattami, 2016). Saudi women tend to place a higher value on consensus building, participation, and empathy. They are more prepared to share information and authority, empower colleagues and subordinates, embrace diversity and inclusiveness, and consider others' experiences and needs (see also Al Suwaidan and Bashraheel as cited in Alotaibi et al., 2017; Gazzaz, 2017; Caliper, 2014).

These leadership traits align closely with Islamic leadership (Monjur, 2015; Mustapha, 2019). There are many reasons to believe that this human-oriented leadership approach can generate substantial returns for the Saudi economy and society in combination with competition-oriented leadership. Achieving *Vision 2030* will depend on both. One way to ensure a future cadre of Saudi female teacher leaders who are prepared to advocate for the role of education in development is to entrench this mindset and skill set into preservice teacher (PST) education. "Education that aims at preparing the next generation of teacher leaders must do more to connect the learning and experiences of PSTs in teacher preparation programs to the work that teacher leaders perform" (Leeper et al., 2010, p. 29).

Saudi preservice teacher leadership in light of *Vision 2030*

Many Western countries have responded to the call for teacher leadership education in the context of educational reform (Harris & Jones, 2019; Kissock & Richardson, 2010; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). Saudi Arabia is currently going through massive educational reforms in the light of *Vision 2030*, which urges the provision of 21st-century skills to new generations. One of the vision's key themes is to invest in human minds and education instead of just the oil industry (KSA, 2016). This investment requires a strategic plan to improve and empower education, which has always been generously funded (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Another significant theme of *Vision 2030* is a focus on *leadership* via education as exemplified by this quote from the document:

We intend to embed positive moral beliefs in our children's characters from an early age by reshaping our academic and educational system. Schools, working with families, will reinforce the fabric of society by providing students with the compassion, knowledge, and behaviors necessary for resilient and independent characters to emerge. The focus will be on the fundamental values of initiative, persistence and leadership. (KSA, 2016, p. 28)

This statement reflects aspects of the Islamic understanding of leadership: character, morality, independence, and compassion (Monjur, 2015; Mustapha, 2019). With *Vision 2030* in mind, in 2018, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) issued a mandate to review and reform all undergraduate teacher preparation programs so they can “match the competencies required for teachers of the current century” (Al-Abdullatif, 2019, p. 3395). These reforms include new policies to improve the qualification, recruitment, and development of teachers to meet labour market needs (Al-Abdullatif, 2019). The authors herein strongly assert that Saudi MOE policymakers and curriculum designers should also remain aware of preservice *teacher leaders*’ preparedness relative to *Vision 2030*’s agenda and purposefully orient them to the *teacher leader* role to meet the nation’s needs through the education sector.

Recommended preservice teacher leader curriculum

Transitioning to a knowledge-based economy can happen through investing in and strengthening the education system (KSA, 2016), which includes training teachers as *teacher leaders*. Because these programs are one of the most important tools for achieving *Vision 2030*’s goals, they should be examined through the lens of *teacher leadership*. As a reminder, teacher leaders do not aspire to be principals or administrators, but they do want to take advantage of leadership opportunities to benefit teachers, students, the school, and the community, which could encompass a national interest as well (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). University teacher-preparation program organisers should thus intensify their efforts to adopt the best framework to guide teacher leader practices in teacher training.

Leadership opportunities that should be reflected in this curriculum include the teacher leader (a) advocating for the teaching profession, the power of education, and the importance of student learning; (b) teachers can take the lead and access and use research to improve their practice and student learning; (c) they can judiciously promote the use of data and assessments (local and international) for student, school, and district improvements; (d) advocating for policies that support continuous educator development, improvement, and professional learning; (e) finding ways to improve instruction and classroom learning environments to augment student learning; and (f) teacher leaders can also help develop policies that improve family and community outreach (Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011).

With these leadership activities in mind, curricula designed to orient female Saudi PSTs to the teacher leader role must contain specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Bond, 2011; Hanuscin et al., 2012; Hunzicker, 2017; Sawalhi & Chaaban, 2019). Hanuscin et al. (2012) claimed that transitioning from a teacher to a teacher leader is a well-planned and implemented combination of (a) nurture (e.g., teaching experience, knowledge, and skills gained via professional development and training) and (b) nature (dispositions).

Respectively, teacher leaders need (a) self-knowledge (especially viewing oneself as a *leader*); (b) knowledge of others (e.g., colleagues, parents, students, administrators, policy makers, and community leaders); (c) knowledge of schools and their organisational

contexts (e.g., governance, decision-making processes, and improvement strategies); and (d) knowledge of teaching (e.g., instructional strategies, educational philosophies, and up-to-date pedagogy) (Bond, 2011). Hunzicker (2017) added that teacher leaders require knowledge of collaborative planning, instructional coaching, and peer teaching.

From a skill perspective, teacher leaders must be competent in several areas: (a) metacognitive skills of inquiry and self-reflection (i.e., think about their own thinking); (b) interpersonal skills for collaboration and mentoring; and (c) leadership skills (Bond, 2011). In the KSA, the latter requires additional insights into Islamic leadership in the educational context. This might include righteously discharging teacher leader activities; the spirit of sacrifice (lead by example); respectfully and humbly (*Taqwa*) attending to others' ideas and concerns; respecting and being accountable (*Ihtisab*) to *Allah's* injunctions while advocating for teachers, students, or the school; and leading from a position of enlightenment (*Hikmah*) (adherence to core Islamic beliefs). As noted, Saudi female teacher leaders would draw their authority from *Allah* (Monjur, 2015; Mustapha, 2019).

In terms of disposition, Saudi teacher leaders must believe in themselves, be self-confident, respect others, be willing to serve others, and have a sense of community. They must genuinely love and want to care for people (humanity) and do so from a position of sustained enthusiasm. Teacher leaders must be truthful, open-minded, perceptive, resilient in the face of adversity, and assertive (i.e., able to forcefully advance their ideas while respecting the other party). They must embrace both professional risk-taking and lifelong learning and truly want to make a difference (Bond, 2011; Hunzicker, 2017). Many aspects of this roster of teacher leader dispositions resonate with both (a) Islamic notions of leadership (Monjur, 2015; Mustapha, 2019) and (b) Saudi women's leadership traits relative to men (Al Suwaidan & Bashraheel as cited in Alotaibi et al., 2017).

Rationale for preservice teacher leader preparation

Teacher leaders are willing to work within and outside the classroom and school setting to improve education (Bond, 2011; Lumpkin & Achen, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). For this very reason, Saudi PST education programs should inculcate the concept of teacher leaders and educational leadership so female educators can fully contribute to the achievement of *Vision 2030* vis-à-vis the role of education. Scholars concur that PSTs should be prepared early on to be leaders so they can assume teacher leader or educational leadership roles when they enter the work force (Bond, 2011; Hunzicker, 2017; Seemiller, 2016).

Ensuring this preparedness has its challenges. Scales and Rogers (2017) claimed that PSTs have the potential to be teacher leaders, but they are not always exposed to the right opportunities to demonstrate their leadership potential. This exposure is important because developing leadership characteristics and leader dispositions is reliant upon formal training and experience (Adair, 2011). Without a full understanding of the meaning and practice of teacher leadership and the power and influence of teacher leaders, educators often fail to translate it into practice (Fullan, 2007). With that in mind, it

behoves Saudi teacher education colleges to assume responsibility for preparing teacher leaders for the 21st century (per Lieberman & Miller, 2004) and the achievement of *Vision 2030's* goals.

This is a reasonable call to action, because “leadership development is a prominent objective in higher education” (Kiersch & Peters, 2017, p. 148). Multiple studies have indicated that leadership characteristics can be improved through higher education (Alghamdi & Ahmed, 2018). In a meta-analysis, Avolio et al. (2009) concluded that leadership-development programs have a positive effect over two thirds (66%) of the time. Formalising female teacher leader orientation in Saudi undergraduate teacher education programs can work.

To illustrate, in a Saudi Arabian setting, Alghamdi and Ahmed (2018) concluded that a leadership-development program changed Saudi PSTs’ perceptions about leadership skills. Regardless of their academic fields and previous leadership experience, participating PTSs recognised the value of leadership skills better when these skills were formally implemented within a leadership-development program. “Hand in hand” is the recommendation that PSTs be socialised to the idea that being a teacher leader and educational leader is part of their professional identity (Alghamdi & McGregor, forthcoming). It should become part of their character, of who they are. And if they are not teacher leaders themselves, they should value and support those who do take on this key educational, political, and social responsibility.

Conclusion

Saudi female PSTs are teachers in the making and their leadership skills are at a developmental stage requiring opportunities for leadership knowledge, skills, and traits to develop over time. With political will, Saudi teacher education programs can provide a well-constructed curriculum that supports teacher leader and educational leadership practice. Differentiating between conventional and Islamic leadership concepts will be necessary to accommodate any students who obtained aspects of their education abroad where the conventional leadership concept is predominant. A fuller understanding of the two leadership concepts (commonalities and differences) may also help teacher leaders navigate the new *Vision 2030* terrain. They would be better equipped to contribute to the achievement of the national development plan that is unfolding in the global arena where different notions of leadership exist.

Ideally, transformational female *teacher leaders* will emerge from retooled Saudi preservice teacher education programs ready to hit the ground running. They will be women leaders prepared to work full or part time as teachers in the school system (public/private or higher education) *while* concurrently assuming responsibilities to inform policies related to student learning, teacher development, school improvement, and enhanced connections between the school and home and community as they inform *Vision 2030's* goals (Lumpkin et al., 2014; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). They will do so while embracing some combination of conventional and Islamic notions of leadership.

Well-prepared and socialised Saudi female teacher leaders can readily assume educational leadership roles involving a high level of cooperation, negotiation, and communication among people committed to increasing the intellectual productivity of the Saudi nation and transitioning the KSA to a knowledge-based economy. Teachers as leaders in a knowledge society are a fundamental part of the KSA's future.

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