



# The Role of The Mosque And The Maktab In The Education Of The Younger Generation In The Face Of Contemporary Challenges

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines the role of the mosque and the maktab in the education of the younger generation in the face of contemporary challenges, drawing upon the Islamic tradition and present-day social realities.

In an era characterized by globalization, the influence of digital media, moral relativism, and identity crises, the need for sustainable spiritual and ethical formation among youth emerges as a pressing necessity.

By analyzing the historical role of the mosque as a center of learning and the maktab as the foundational institution of religious education, the study highlights their potential in fostering a generation that is conscious in faith, morally grounded, and socially responsible.

Particular attention is devoted to the Prophetic pedagogical model as the foundation of Islamic educational methodology and as a source of guidance for addressing the challenges of the modern era.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes that strengthening the educational role of the mosque and the maktab through context-sensitive and responsible approaches can contribute to the formation of a generation that preserves its religious identity and confronts contemporary challenges with maturity.

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**KEYWORDS:** mosque, maktab, younger generation, contemporary challenges, religious education, Islamic education, Prophetic pedagogical model.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, the younger generation faces numerous challenges that affect identity, morality, and life orientation. Globalization, the influence of digital media, moral relativism, and the weakening of traditional educational structures have created a new

social reality in which sustainable spiritual and ethical formation emerges as an urgent necessity.

In this context, renewed attention to traditional institutions of religious education becomes essential for preserving identity and strengthening the moral consciousness of young people.

Within the Islamic tradition, the mosque and the maktab have constituted central pillars of religious education and instruction.

The mosque was within this space that the first generation was nurtured—distinguished by firm faith, elevated moral character, and a strong sense of social responsibility.

Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the places where children learned literacy and the Qur'an were known as kuttab (schools). During the Ottoman Empire, this term evolved into mektebs, meaning schools for children, although other names were also used. After the nineteenth century, the meaning of the institution mekteb gradually expanded, and the term began to be used more broadly to refer to various educational institutions.[1]

From this Islamic tradition emerged the maktab as the foundational institution of elementary religious education, where younger generations were taught the recitation of the Qur'an, the principles of faith, and the moral norms that regulate both individual and collective life.

Nevertheless, in light of contemporary challenges, the role of the mosque and the maktab requires renewed reflection and strengthening.

Religious education can no longer remain confined to the traditional transmission of knowledge; rather, it must provide sustainable guidance that enables young people to confront cultural pressures, identity crises, and the negative influences of the modern environment. This reality necessitates a critical examination of the current role of these institutions and their potential to



serve as sources of moral and spiritual stability within society.

This study aims to examine the role of the mosque and the maktab in the education of the younger generation, drawing on the Islamic tradition and the contemporary social context, with the aim of highlighting their potential in shaping a conscious, responsible, and steadfast generation in the Islamic faith.

## **II. THE FORMATIVE ROLE OF THE MOSQUE IN BUILDING THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY: BETWEEN THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION AND THE CHALLENGE OF MISINTERPRETATION**

Islam is the only religion that unequivocally calls people to learning and knowledge, while it classifies and elevates the bearer of knowledge to the rank of the heirs of the prophets. Therefore, it is not surprising that the education and upbringing of the human being in Islam are incorporated into the very foundations of Islamic thought.

Based on the foundational teachings of Islam, it is impossible to speak about religion without speaking about education, or to speak about education without speaking about upbringing, or to speak about upbringing without speaking about education. In other words, there is no place for knowledge that does not educate, nor for education that is not grounded in knowledge.

In this regard, the mosque has played and continues to play an extremely important role for many individuals, and even for entire societies.

However, it must always be remembered that religious instruction in the mosque is a double-edged sword; alongside its very positive contribution, misinterpretation and misperception of teachings can cause significant individual and social harm.

If we have sound teaching and a proper understanding of religion, it becomes an unshakable foundation—a compass for the individual in their future life roles, whether as a student, parent, or leader of a social institution.

### **II.1. The Mosque as an Educational Institution**

The Noble Qur'an represents the foundation and source of all Islamic sciences, while the study of the Qur'an constitutes the basis of Islamic education and upbringing.

The first stage and the beginning of formal learning is the reading and study of the divine book, the Noble Qur'an. Considering this, from the earliest times, in mosques where believers gathered to perform prayers, they simultaneously engaged in learning the Qur'an. They also acquired knowledge about this divine book, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as well as about the Sharia, the law that determines how believers should live and act.

Therefore, the mosque is considered the first educational institution, older than all other schools in Islam. It was the place where knowledge and science were cultivated and through which they spread to all segments of society.[2]

The first educational and instructional activities in Islam began precisely in the mosque. In Mecca, due to unsuitable conditions and circumstances around the Kaaba, this process took place in Dar al-Arqam, whereas in Medina it was conducted inside the Prophet's Mosque. There, it became a tradition for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), after completing the prayer, to provide guidance to the believers, bringing them closer to the divine revelation. It also became customary for people to gather in circles, with the Prophet sitting at the center.[3]

This method and form of education later spread throughout the Islamic world after the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). In all cities, "mosque schools" began to emerge, where lectures were held after prayers. It soon became clear that, for functional reasons, spaces needed to be separated—between the place of prayer and the place where the educational process would take place.

Mosques were schools that offered knowledge and action, theory and practice. They were places where both the soul and body were purified, where goals were defined and appropriate means to achieve them were chosen. Through the mosque, rights and obligations were clarified; primary attention was given to upbringing, followed by a special emphasis on education, all of which was ultimately completed by putting acquired knowledge into practice. In other words, this process began with spiritual education and then progressed toward formal education.

Mosques were not only places where religious education took place, but also centers for various other fields of knowledge. In order to properly understand the Qur'an and Hadith, it was necessary to learn literacy and classical Arabic poetry; thus, from the early centuries, these subjects were taught as well. It can be noted that over time,



depending on circumstances, alongside many other disciplines, in the eleventh century during the time of al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, Ibn al-Haytham delivered lessons in medicine at al-Azhar Mosque.[4]

There were instances when mosques could not meet all needs or were not always available for preaching, or when preachers chose other locations such as different classes or the residences of social or political leaders. Nevertheless, mosques never lost their position as centers of education and learning,[5] a role they continue to maintain to this day.

The expansion of Islamic educational institutions in the Balkans, particularly in North Macedonia, took place after the Ottoman liberation, around the end of the fourteenth century. It is worth noting that mosques preceded other educational institutions, as the nature of the situation necessitated their existence before others. Although mosques were built alongside maktab and madrasas, their role in many cases remained traditional, represented by occasional lectures and some regular lessons. However, this does not mean that the mosque did not fully play its role.[6]

This form of religious education in the mosque, in other words, the beginning of this type of education in the Islamic world, dates back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Although at the beginning it may not be considered a highly sophisticated or systematically organized educational process compared to today, it was nevertheless a very important process for learning the basic rules of the religion at that time. Thus, for believers, the mosque was the central place where they turned to learn, while the teacher (preacher) was the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).[7] In this way, the first school within or near the mosque emerged, indirectly known as the maktab.

### III. THE MAKTAB AS A FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

The maktab, a word derived from the Arabic *kataba* meaning “to write,”[8] was for a long time known in the Islamic world as an elementary school. In a more organized and systematic form, it emerged during the time of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), while in a widespread and structured manner it is mentioned in the 7th and 8th

centuries. With the spread of Islam, it was also transmitted to other regions.[9]

In this context, alongside maktab, the madrasa also emerged, representing a higher level of education.

However, maktab traditionally remained closely connected to mosques.[10] Initially, the term *maktab* referred to the place where teaching took place, within which students learned reading, writing, grammar, and Islamic disciplines. Even today, the terms *maktab* or *kuttab* refer to the traditional method of education in most Muslim countries, which involves a teacher instructing a group of students seated in front of him.[11]

In the Balkans, maktab as educational institutions date back to the early period of Ottoman expansion, appearing shortly after the establishment of mosques.

It is worth noting that the arrival of the Ottomans in the Balkans also brought families from Anatolia, which created the need for establishing maktab for the education of their children.[12]

### IV. THE FIRST EDUCATOR IN ISLAM AND METHODS OF TEACHING

As the first educator in Islam, various hadith collections present Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who—depending on different circumstances—used diverse teaching methods to convey the divine message. At times he would ask questions, at times provide answers, sometimes explain through examples, sometimes emphasize his words by oath, at times instruct writing, and at other times explain by drawing, among many other methods. These methods were later analyzed and incorporated into numerous works on Islamic pedagogy.[13]

Thus, in transmitting knowledge, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) took into account the educational level of the society in which he lived. For this reason, he employed various pedagogical forms and methods, which can be considered among the earliest methods of the educational system in the Muslim world. He did not apply a uniform method for everyone; rather, he adopted different approaches depending on the level and needs of the individual he addressed, as well as the circumstances, in order to convey guidance and advice effectively.

This educational philosophy, which continued even into the early Ottoman period, deserves special attention, as it offers valuable experiences that can be drawn upon and may serve as a source of inspiration for achieving high



scholarly and scientific levels that transcend continents. In this context, it can be said that Muslims need a continuous educational paradigm.[14]

In a world that is changing at a breathtaking pace, there is a growing need not only for the classical acquisition of knowledge, but also for a transformation in its structure. The organization of education must evolve, particularly in terms of content and methods.

The mosque, and more specifically the maktab as a relatively closed and tranquil oasis of knowledge, must necessarily develop into an open research station in which the new generation will acquire and renew its knowledge. It should function as a laboratory where continuous experimentation, discovery, and renewal take place. Innovation is essential if the maktab is not to lag behind the social and technological changes of an ever-evolving reality.

Younger generations accept traditional teaching methods, and for certain parts of the curriculum these methods remain indispensable. However, they are also consistently curious and open to the inclusion of contemporary approaches. These approaches require a different organization of teaching, leading the educational process in new ways, largely due to the influence of technology, which is reshaping how young people perceive reality, as well as how teachers deliver educational content.

Today, information and knowledge are acquired at an astonishing speed, which necessitates the application of new resources, forms, methods, and tools of learning. The era of teaching dominated by frontal methods with one-way communication, or relying solely on the traditional blackboard and chalk, has already passed.

To make teaching more effective, the use of modern multimedia tools is recommended, as they meet contemporary didactic and methodological standards. Due to the widespread presence of advanced technological devices in everyday life, education in maktab should not remain unaffected; on the contrary, it should align with current curricula, age groups, technological possibilities, and the characteristics of students in accordance with modern trends. Technology is one of the most important resources for expanding and improving the educational system.

The provision of multimedia, electronic, interactive, and well-designed educational formats offers an opportunity for every teacher (mu'allim) and student (tālib) to transform the educational

process in the maktab into a new and higher-quality dimension.

Islamic education and upbringing of the Muslim population are primarily carried out by Islamic Communities through maktab, followed by madrasas, and ultimately completed at Faculties of Islamic Studies. The goal of this entire process is to develop well-rounded religious personalities, in whom the strength of faith, the performance of religious obligations, and the lived experience of Islam as a comprehensive system and way of life are united, even in contemporary times.

It can be rightly said that in the process of shaping the Islamic personality, the mosque holds a special place, an irreplaceable role, and great importance. Although Islam emphasizes the responsibility of parents in the upbringing of their children, this in no way diminishes the responsibility of Islamic institutions or their interest in this activity, because the quality of religious education and upbringing of each individual directly affects the quality of religious life in society as a whole.

Finally, it is undeniable that modern tools and technology are already in the hands of most parents, imams/teachers (mu'allims), and children, as they possess them in their homes. What remains for institutions is to learn when and how to apply these tools effectively in order to facilitate the educational process and enhance the quality of religious instruction.

## V. CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted in this study demonstrates that the mosque and the maktab constitute fundamental institutions in structuring Islamic religious education and in the moral and spiritual formation of Muslim generations. Historically, the mosque has functioned as a center of worship, learning, and social organization, while the maktab has been consolidated as the primary institution of elementary religious education, ensuring the systematic transmission of the principles of faith and moral norms. This integrated model of education and instruction has established a sustainable tradition that has profoundly influenced the formation of Islamic identity.

In the contemporary context, where the younger generation faces challenges such as cultural globalization, the influence of digital media, moral relativism, and identity fragmentation, the role of the mosque and the maktab acquires a renewed strategic dimension. The study argues that these institutions can serve as sources of moral stability and spiritual orientation,



provided that their educational role is strengthened through context-appropriate pedagogical approaches and open engagement with the realities of young people.

The contribution of this study lies in articulating a theoretical framework that connects the Islamic educational tradition with the current needs of the younger generation, proposing an integration of foundational Islamic principles with contemporary teaching methodologies. In this regard, the study recommends:

- enhancing the pedagogical capacities of imams and religious instructors;
- developing educational programs that address the concrete challenges faced by students;
- strengthening cooperation between the mosque, the family, and educational institutions;
- integrating modern communication tools into the process of religious education.

In conclusion, preserving the authenticity of the Islamic tradition, accompanied by methodological adaptation and institutional awareness, can contribute to the formation of a new generation that is steadfast in faith, socially responsible, and capable of confronting the challenges of the modern era.

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