Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

ABDRAHAMANE TRAORE

MS (New York Institute of Technology, 2005)
BA (Al-Azhar University, 2001)

“The Madrasa in Mali: Examining Its Impacts, Role, and Curriculum Through the Experiences of Five Former Students”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Wednesday, November 18, 2020
12:00 noon (PST)
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Graham McDonough, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)
Dr. Farouk Mitha, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, University of Toronto

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Fayez Gebali, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

This multi-case study examined the experiences of five former students who attended madrasas in Mali between 1980 and 2009. These students were university graduates and worked in Bamako, Mali, at the time of data collection. With these five participants, I explored the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional outcomes of madrasa education on students, and I explored their perspectives about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali, a Muslim majority country in West Africa. I collected research data through three semi-structured interviews and document review. The findings revealed that the participants perceived madrasas as needed in Mali for educating future Muslim religious leaders and scholars who understood the contemporary world and mastered Arabic, an essential language for Islamic scholarship and religious rituals. The participants argued that madrasa education connects Mali to its intellectual heritage, all of which were written in Arabic prior to French colonization. They equally stated that madrasa education enabled them to observe Islamic teachings in all aspects of their life and to know these teachings better than the average Malian Muslim. They were thus able to guide their family members, their coworkers, and their neighbours in religious matters. The findings also showed that the participants had strong foundations in Islamic subjects and Arabic. Some participants, however, faced difficulties in terms of higher education and career for lack of fluency in French or competencies in modern subjects. Hence, the participants appreciated that the Malian government designed a new curriculum in 2003 to improve madrasa students’ fluency in French and competencies in modern subjects. This new curriculum gave students the opportunity to study at Malian public universities and enter the job market easier than before. However, the participants lamented that the new curriculum neglected Islamic subjects and Arabic. Neglecting these subjects, in participants’ views, threatens the religious mission of madrasas. To sustain madrasas in Mali for future generations, the participants thought that state officials and madrasas’ union must cooperate to design a curriculum that balances Islamic subjects and Arabic with modern subjects and French; madrasa owners must pay teachers a good salary; teachers must teach with devotion; parents must supervise children’s education; and students must be advised about the importance of madrasas, university education, and careers. Based on these findings, I recommended that Malian state officials support madrasas because the role madrasas play in the Malian education sector cannot be substituted with other types of schools. I also proposed that curriculum designers structure the madrasa curriculum to prepare students in both Islamic subjects and Arabic, and modern subjects and French. Structuring the curriculum as such makes madrasas respond well to the educational needs of students including religious needs and career aspirations. Hence, the madrasa continues to play its roles in Malian society.