

Youth Work and Islam

A Leap of Faith for Young People

Brian Belton and Sadek Hamid (Eds.)



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INTRODUCTION

This book has an eclectic focus, emanating from the dual inspirations presented by its title. Through the perspective and voice of practitioners, it considers how youth work can be informed by Islam, but at the same time looks to demonstrate how practice can be pertinent to young Muslims, their community and relationship with wider society. But more broadly it also does something to demonstrate how an understanding of Islam can enhance and develop youth work practice across the horizon of the discipline, providing a much needed impetus to theory and ideas, many of which have ceased to be relevant or are coming close to being passed their sell by date.

This ground breaking collection has, for the first time, brought together a range of voices and views to elaborate and celebrate the relationship between young British Muslims, Islam and youth work. By creating a discursive space to inform, debate and share experiences, it is hoped, that this volume will be of interest to professional and voluntary youth workers, policy makers and anyone with a stake in the welfare of Muslim youth. As a whole, the book questions the bifurcation usually proposed (or proclaimed) by the media, and that is sometimes implied in policy, which purports that the imagined homogenous Muslim population and the rest of society (apparently taken to be anything but the heterogeneous conglomeration that it is) are separate and often divergent entities. Moreover it challenges the myth that young Muslims (and perhaps the young generally) are a kind of sub-species within this dichotomic fantasy.

The chapters that follow are timely as, particularly in the European context, Muslims are being effectively ostracised for being who they are, in a way that would be deemed as unacceptable from any civilised or liberal standpoint. Under the diaphanous camouflage of the weakening of 'collective identity', in Munich, on February 2011, as the English Defence League, which has been accused of Islamophobia, being understood by many to disgorge a clearly anti-Muslim vocabulary as the spine of their organisational logic, held a mass rally in Luton, British Tory Prime Minister, David Cameron told the world in a speech, which ostensibly focused on terrorism (mentioning the words 'Muslim' or 'Islam' 36 times and 'extremism/ist' 23 times);

In our communities, groups and organisations led by young, dynamic leaders promote separatism by encouraging Muslims to define themselves solely in terms of their religion.

He went on to declare;

...organisations that seek to present themselves as a gateway to the Muslim community are showered with public money despite doing little to combat extremism

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This qualifies as a gross and flagrant misrepresentation of the vast majority of young Muslims and of Muslim organisations; many of the latter receive no public funding whatsoever.

But even worse than this, the tenor and ethos of the this speech marks out Muslims, and particularly young Muslims, as a dangerous threat to European populations;

...this threat comes in Europe overwhelmingly from young men who follow a completely perverse, warped interpretation of Islam... young men find it hard to identify with the traditional Islam practiced at home by their parents, whose customs can seem staid when transplanted to modern Western countries

This kind of rhetoric, at a time of economic recession, smacks of the language of pogrom, and echoes Cameron's Tory predecessor Enoch Powell's 1968 warning (also a period of recession) of 'Rivers of Blood' that served as a shot in the arm for the National Front, an earlier incarnation of British National Party.

In the face of this type of insensitive, undistinguished, hurtful and apparently purposely divisive onslaught (not even the most foolish Politian, which Cameron is not, could believe this type drum beating would not have the power to fuel the fires of hatred) of all professionals, youth workers, as long-time self proclaimed 'advocates of young people' need to make a response.

Perhaps the most authoritative rejoinder to such decided hyperbolic anamorphosis is to demonstrate how Islam and Muslims have augmented, and continue to contribute, inform, increase the integrity of and refresh valuable work, which potentially and actually impacts on all young people. In this cause, *Youth Work and Islam* brings together Muslim and non-Muslim youth practitioners and academics in a project that demonstrates how Islamic understanding and the presence of Muslim youth workers has enhanced and continues to enrich British culture and the life of young people of this country, promoting a fairer, more just and humane society. However, perhaps contrary to the distorted pastiche of Islam that has become popularised in the European context, what the reader will be left with on engagement with this book is the vigour Islam offers to encourage dialogue and so questioning. It is this which can give rise to action and ideas that are able generate an ethos that might be the closest we can come to experiencing democracy, not just as a word but as a field effect. This provides a means to connect and meld a nation, which is being systematically and violently broken up into distinct human categories, into a functioning society, that can be energised by its rich diversity.

Youth work arises out of the society that fosters it, while playing a part in maintaining and creating that society. As such, youth work, influenced by Islam or effecting young Muslims, shapes and is shaped by the same. However, the product and process of this symbiosis is hardly understood because it has more or less remained unexamined. Indeed, most of the time and energy given to considering the actual or potential relationship between Islam and youth work tends to see one

element (Islam) as a target of the other (youth work). Anyone who has any understanding of either Islam or youth work will, with consideration, recognise this to be at least unrealistic and perhaps a ridiculous point of view. Even if it seems to make sense on paper, in practice the delivery of youth work hardly ever achieves the kind of cultural hygiene that policy makers might wish for. At its best youth work tends to melt into its context and become at one with it. As a secondary effect, particular incarnations of practice have a propensity to bleed into the whole, reforming the general nature of the field (youth work is a field and not a discipline – its plasticity and tendency to metamorphose dictates this).

This understanding guides the purpose of what follows; youth work and Islam are not approached as separate considerations affecting or infecting each other; we do not want to put youth work into Islam, nor veneer youth work with Islam; we see youth work and Islam as complimentary in terms of a values, hopes and ambitions. This is something more than fabricating a notion of complementary systems of thinking and acting, it is effectively the pointing out, for what the most part has historically been, a hidden seam of precious synchronicity; a synthesis of ethics, attitudes and ways of being.

This approach produces much more than a straightforward view of theologically informed practice, it presents a broad and humane understanding of the character and possibilities of youth work practice. Centrally, while, taken as a whole, the book demonstrates how Islam and Muslims have been and are part of the development of youth work, it also puts forward ideas and standpoints that demonstrate how Islam can continue to enlighten, augment and direct practice, while adding to and enlivening (perhaps helping to resuscitate) the traditionally humanitarian spirit of youth work. This can only make our endeavours amongst, with and alongside the young people we serve more effective.

The book starts out with chapters by Brian Belton and Tahir Alam, who provide introductory explorations of the relevance of Islamic values to youth work, demonstrating how professional practice can be enriched by these principles, benefiting both Muslim and non-Muslim young people. This may surprise some people in this age of anxiety about the alleged failures of multiculturalism; however the fact of our societal diversity is not going to be wished away. Those who resist societal pluralism would do well to remember that human interdependence is necessary to create civilised co-existence. Besides, there has not been a point for the best part of 3,000 when the islands that make up Britain have been anything else other than pluralist, ethnically, culturally or religiously¹. So it's not so much about getting used to it, it's about getting with it!

The context and pathologised representations of young British Muslims are analysed in detail in the first section by Sughra Ahmed and Tahir Abbas. Muslim young people, they argue, cannot be reduced to a homogeneous 'problem' that needs to be 'fixed'. However, this is not to deny that young people are encountering unique tensions within the communities they live in and wider

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society. Particularly troubling is the ongoing securitised framing of Muslim youth, which looks set to continue under the current coalition government. In reality there is much more to Muslim young people's lives than just 'preventing violent extremism'. Like their non-Muslim friends, their social well being can be disadvantaged by poverty, educational underachievement, unemployment, the further reduction of youth and recreational services and in some cases threatened by gang warfare, knife and gun crime.

The second section explains how delivering effective, high quality youth work, informed by Islamic perspectives, can help to provide skills and experiences to deal with these challenges. A distinctive approach to working with Muslim youth is necessary and demonstrated in the good practice discussed by Julie Griffith. However, as Sadek Hamid argues, faith based youth work can create counter productive trends that need alternative models of practice, a theme enthusiastically taken up by Maurice Coles in his framework for youth participation.

The final third of this anthology is devoted to the reflections of youth workers engaged in work with Muslim youth from across the UK. Each contributor, having different stand points and experiences, provide rich insights into the diverse ways of engaging young people and the challenges they encounter. The anonymous autobiographical reflection on growing up as a Muslim and becoming a youth worker is a refreshingly honest example of the dilemmas of trying to successfully negotiate multiple identities. In a concise but intricate analysis Firzana Khan, narrates some of the impacts of marginalisation, categorisation and the 'weak power' encompassed in the same, while Irfan Shah assesses the problematic nature of the recent Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda and its repercussions on work with young people. Mark Roberts and Zoey Williams respectively explore the relevance of the key concepts of education, community and Ummah in relation to youth work theory. These contributions, which share underlying themes, should be read in sequence. In the next chapter Brian Belton looks at the place of mercy in youth work and how this sentiment links and confirms some of our common needs with our unity via and across faith boundaries. Andrew Smith demonstrates how positive relations can be fostered between Christian and Muslim youth, and how this can cultivate open discussion, maintain integrity and avoid both polemics and apologetics.

Brian Belton's final chapter relates fragments of his own intellectual and spiritual journey and the centrality of action, echoing a core Islamic teaching of the indispensable link between faith and practice; this provides a fitting conclusion to the book.

All the above accounts powerfully vindicate, communicate and commemorate the necessity of faith and cultural competence as an eminent path to integrity of practice; all emphasise the centrality of the well being and growth of those we

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work with and amongst. As such, as a collection the book champions the best traditions of youth work, within a theme of developmental and critical practice.

We, the writers who have come together with our words and ideas, do not seek to sentimentalise religious belief, which can in certain ideological forms encourage prejudice and violence. However, in our experience the ideals and ethics of the Muslim faith can offer wisdom and new directions which enhance the quality of youth work with Muslim young people and those with different religious backgrounds. This message of solidarity is critical at a time when young people, your and our children, seek meaning, belonging and direction in a confusing, fast changing world. These viewpoints cannot remain feel good rhetoric in situations where young people are demanding urgent positive change. So the task remains to convert theory into practice; we hope we have offered a few useful signposts for this journey.

NOTES

- ¹ Until the sea levels rose following the most recent ice age (the Devensian glaciation) about 8,000 years ago, Britain was part of the European land mass. As such, before that point in time there was no barrier to the exchange and intermingling of populations, beliefs, cultures and even between 'subspecies' (Neanderthals were still knocking around in Europe around 30,000 years ago) from across and beyond the European land mass. Incidentally, as Britain became cut off from Europe we have no idea of the skin colour of the people of the newly formed island; there is no reason to suggest it was white for instance.

CONTEXT

BRIAN BELTON

1. YOUTH WORK AND ISLAM – A GROWING TRADITION

Dr Brian Belton was born and brought up in Newham and is a Senior Lecturer at YMCA George Williams College in East London. He has nearly 40 years experience in youth work; as a field worker and an academic he has experience in Africa, Canada, the USA, Iceland, Sweden, Greece, China, the Falkland Islands and Eastern Europe. He has recently been involved in the professionalization of youth work in Malaysia and across south-east Asia. However, his practice and personal roots are in London's East End communities, which of course has included Muslim contexts. Recently Brian took a lead in developing a pre-graduate course at the George Williams College for youth workers involved in Islamic contexts, looking to lay a path for this group to enter undergraduate studies. He has written close to 50 books looking at identity, social history, race, ethnicity and sport.

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The Prophet said, 'He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children

Al-Tirmidhi Hadith

The following seeks to generate a sense of the development of youth work with young Muslims in North and East London over the last 40 years via autobiographical and narrative research, but also to demonstrate something of how an awareness of Islam can enrich and enliven practice. It includes analysis of the life-stories of Muslims who grew up in the area, their encounters with youth provision and how they moved on to become youth workers. I believe their contribution exemplifies the influence of Muslims in youth work over the years, but also shows the relevance of Islam to the field in the contemporary period.

Overall, this chapter looks to draw attention to the relatively long history of the relationship Muslims have had with youth work provision in these areas of London and generate an analysis of the impact this has had on those concerned. This is achieved by highlighting how Islam has influenced the sphere of practice of particular workers and the way in which insights drawn from Islamic teachings and ways of

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'being' can inform contemporary practice on a generic basis, while often proving more relevant and appropriate than some of the deficit oriented philosophy/theory that can be found in the literature surrounding the practice of informal education and youth work.

I should say at the outset that I am not, by any stretch of imagination or metaphor and scholar of Islam. My Arabic is as limited as the reader's imagination might allow and mostly self-taught with the aid of one or two more learned, more linguistically aware friends. For these shortcomings I apologise in advance, but my first hope is that you can hear what I have to say in the spirit of Islamic theory of knowledge. This said, I have been involved in youth work for the best part of 40 years, much of this working alongside Muslim colleagues and with Muslim clients. My second hope is that this will be seen worthy enough to serve as a foundation of my position.

MUSLIMS AND YOUTH WORK

Any attempt to portray the general experience of an eclectic population such as Muslims feels bound to fail to do very much more than generate vague stereotypes in order to produce an image that has no real use and even less authenticity.

There is no 'one type' of Muslim. Most people know of that there are Sunni and Shia Muslims. However, just looking at Sunni Islam, within that grouping there are different schools of law and belief (Ash'ari, Maturidi, Murji'ah, Mu'tazili, Athari and Zahiri. Within Shia there are the Zaidiyyah, Alaw and Alevi).

However, Islam also encompasses Kharijite Islam, Sufism and Ahmadiyya Muslims, as well as Liberal, Qur'aniyoon and Heterodox groups, such as Mahdavidism, Moorish Science, Nation of Islam, Submitters, Druze and Ahl-e Haqq. Added to this are different cultural, national, tribal/clan, district, regional and even familial interpretations, understandings (and misunderstandings), translations, traditions, habits and customs. Many understand Islam to be united in the Arabic language, but Arab dialects can be almost languages in themselves and it can't be taken that a rural Bangladeshi farmer will understand the Arabic used by a middle-class Egyptian.

As might be predicted, not everyone within this diverse mixture of people will agree that all those included above are 'real' Muslims.

For all this, for most of its history the investigation of faith based youth work has ignored the participation and contribution of individual Muslims and the general influence of Islam. In saying this I invite, probably understandably, defensive responses; I have experienced some of the same over the last few years, both from Muslims and non-Muslims. These include variations of;

- 'Muslims haven't played much of a part in faith based youth work until relatively recently'
- 'There is no mainstream Islamic youth work'

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– ‘Muslims don’t have any time for anything other than formal education’

Such rejoinders, as is pretty obvious, come from people who believe they are able to speak for all Muslims over time and place. However, at the same time, such views also seem to make the point that Muslims have been and are people who play no significant part in conventional youth work.

YOUTH WORK AS A MUSLIM TRADITION

For me, a comment of a young Bangladeshi man (his family had come from what was in the mid-1960s still East Pakistan) named Naeem, with whom I worked in Bethnal Green (East London) in the early 1970s, summed this attitude up and as such it has stuck in my mind:

We (Muslims) have been invisible in youth work because what we do hasn't been seen as youth work. I organise a football match and I sort of disappear; it's as if it organised itself! Then all that anyone sees is the football match. They don't see the before and after of it; what it's like getting parents to agree, getting the kids to agree! I want to swear but I don't swear. Because after what is a great big work of diplomacy, negotiation, decision making, trying all the time to be democratic and fair, keeping everyone involved, stopping fights, arguments, getting people to see both sides, all anyone sees is the game! I think I am just taken as one of the kids or something.

This refusal to see Muslim youth workers, that gives rise to the stereotypical comments detailed above, I believe to be lazily myopic more than an effort to be purposely untruthful.

Youth work, as Naeem understood, does not have a mainstream as such. The discipline continues to be what it has always been, an eclectic and evolving response to young people, delivered in an almost overwhelming range of forms, in an apparently endless series of locations, deploying a continually growing array of techniques and approaches, which are motivated by a superfluity of motivations, policies and beliefs. Over time, because youth work practice has taken place in such a range of situations, it has been delivered under so many guises (currently often under the auspices of ‘childcare services’) and via a plethora of methods (including informal, non-formal, social, political education) adhering to a shifting, hardly ever definite philosophy. As such the idea of a typical or archetypal form of youth work is fanciful.

This point is exemplified by Hala Saeed, a Muslim woman, who was born in Somalia and migrated to the UK in 1995. She is the youngest child of the Saeed Abdiquader family and was raised, along with her four siblings, by her mother. She now has a young daughter herself, Fatima. Hala’s involvement in youth work is much more recent than Naeem’s. She gained her professional qualification in youth work in 2009 from the YMCA College in East London, and has been involved with several projects in the London borough of

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Hounslow, including the Hounslow Youth Offending Service. She is also a Family Program Leader, working with vulnerable Somali parents. She has recently qualified to Teach English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at Kingston University.

For some years Hala has been involved with community action, often being an advocate for the Somali community in Hounslow and beyond. At the time of writing she was setting up a private community interests company, aimed at supporting Muslims families, while volunteering as a teaching assistant, focusing on Somali refugee children in West London. She hopes to move forward with her teaching career and studies with a Masters degree in Education.

Hala sees youth work and Islam coming together quite logically. For her it would be unreasonable to expect people to successfully meet the responsibilities that come as adulthood dawns without people who have moved beyond that stage being willing to walk with young people as they enter this new phase of their lives;

In Islam, puberty marks the entry to the challenges and responsibilities of life. As such it is described as the age of 'taklif', or legal obligation. From this time onwards a young person is obliged to perform the religious duties as an adult Muslim.

For Muslims, their first reference point is the Qur'an, which describes itself as "... a guide and a healing to those who believe" (S.41: V. 44). This plays a significant role in satisfying physical as well as spiritual needs. We as Muslims, and as adults, have an ethical, religious and moral duty make ourselves helpful to young people as they enter the process that taklif involves.

Islam teaches a code of behaviour, social values and gives meaning for our existence. Of particular value during the adolescent transition is its guidance towards toleration and developing adaptive capacities in the face of stressful life events. It can also act as a means of developing a sense of self-respect, while offering teaching about the virtues of family life, and the need to work towards a cohesive society, via a sense of relatedness.

My faith incorporates a comprehensive set of values, ethics and code of behaviour in techniques of social learning, which I believe can provide young people with the opportunity to use their influence and find their personal authority on individual, local community and Ummatic levels. I feel this is what youth work is about.

Traditionally a central consideration of youth work has been justice. The Qur'an shares this concern.

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do. [An-Nisa 4:35]

Hala has a deep commitment to this kind of sentiment in her work, but in particular with young women (of course anti-sexism has been a basic principal of modern youth work);

Somalis coming to England have gained greater independence, not born of expectation, but necessity. Many arrived in the 1990s as single parents, with several children to support, their husbands killed in the civil war. But the public voice of the Somali community continues to be male. Those unfamiliar with Somali culture perceive women as being in the background, mostly focused on homemaking and raising children.

The reason women's rights in Islam need special concern is because of the position of women in some Muslim countries. What adds insult to injury is the justification of this oppression of women in the name of 'Islam'. How can these societies be 'healed', in the sense that the Qur'an puts it, unless Muslims live up to the ideals of their faith, which teaches them to honour women and ensure that their rights, which are given to them by God, are secured?

In Islam, men and women are asked to equally submit to God, and both are ennobled by the Creator. Despite some stereotypical images and representations of Muslim women as repressed and oppressed, many Muslim women today are actively affirming the rights and responsibilities that they believe the Qur'an affords to them. They are affirming that men and women are created from one soul, to be partners to each other; that males and females have the same religious responsibilities.

The discussion of Muslim women and their roles is an important one for every Muslim, firstly because it's an area in which there are many misconceptions by non-Muslims, which need to be corrected, and secondly some Muslims treat women unjustly in the name of Islam. However, their actions are often a result of cultural or tribal customs and not connected to the religion.

While the role of motherhood is among the highest states a believer can achieve, being a mother and a wife are not the only roles open to a Muslim woman. Islam, amongst other things, permits the women to perform Hajj (pilgrimage), to exercise the vote, engage in politics, to take up employment and run her own business.

In Islam females are associated with 'rehmat' (mercy) fortune and joy. As a wife one is the companion to man (and the man is her companion) in all social, physical and economic endeavours and should not be subjugated in any way. Muslim women have traditionally played a crucial part in their communities, not just in customary roles. Historically women took part in teaching, scholarship, medicine and other significant activities. They were a long way from being subjugated to the men as they were valued for both their courage and wisdom. Within Islam religion is understood as a guide to living and life; it provides a structure and boundaries within which women are held in high regard, with as much potential to be respected and followed as a role model within her community and wider society as men.

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At least from the time of Naeem's entry into the field to Hala's involvement, Muslims have been part of youth work, as participants and facilitators. As such, Islam has stimulated and informed youth work practice ever since its birth as a national, generic service phenomenon in the 1960s. There was also a Muslim presence before this, in some of the numerous enclaves of missionary, religious, instructional, moral and disciplinary attention to young people from the 19th Century onwards that some historians mistakenly propose as straightforwardly the direct progenitors of today's practice. In the 18th and 19th Centuries the influence of Islam was strong enough to attract converts amongst the English upper classes.

For all this, it is probably enough to say that Muslims, and thus Islam, have been part of youth work in the UK at least as long as living memory. The following pages, in a small way, are, added to the other aims of the chapter, an effort to engender some recognition and understanding of this.

'ILM' AND YOUTH WORK

The term used for knowledge in Arabic is *'ilm*, which has a much wider connotation than its synonyms in English and other Western languages. 'Knowledge' falls short of expressing all the aspects of *'ilm*. Knowledge in the West is often taken to mean information about something, divine or corporeal, while *'ilm* is an all-embracing term covering theory, action and education; it gives these activities a distinctive shape. It has been argued that this type of comprehension is of supreme value for Muslims and indeed, *'ilm* is Islam, in that Islam is the path of 'knowledge'.

Outside of Islam it is arguable if any other religion or ideology puts so much emphasis on the importance of *'ilm*. Each of us, being the creations of Allah (the first educator and the absolute guide of humanity) no matter how humble or even ill informed, has the potential to access and add to *'ilm*; attempting to understand and listen to our fellow humans (not necessarily agreeing with them). This can be understood as one of the basic precepts of *'ilm* and it is why (I think) *'ilm* is at least one of the pillars of youth work and as such necessary to the thoughtful practice of the same.

This perspective is, in my experience, part of the treasure that many Muslim youth workers have brought to their practice. However, this kind of contribution has gone largely unacknowledged, partially because when we talk of the conjoining of youth work and Islam we understand it, as an expression, as a relatively recent aspect of the wider field of practice, and partly because it has been carried into youth work as part of a 'Muslim package' that has been delivered, in the main, quite unselfconsciously. By that I mean that most effective youth workers bring facets of themselves to their practice and it is the resultant heterogeneity of response that makes youth work a uniquely responsive and eclectic discipline. At times, in certain places, *'ilm*, as an aspect of Islamic identity

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and culture, has been infused into youth work practice in a pleasingly informal way and much of what follows will relate to this.

Naeem described how youth work can be recognised as *'ilm*

You can only really teach so much and perhaps certain things; you can pass on information and guidance and kids can remember all that, and that might be thought of as knowledge. But people need something more than just being taught or instructed. People have the means within them, a sort of light, which can illuminate understanding. At the same time that is a gateway that allows awareness to sort of happen. No one can do that for someone, although shutting kids up and cutting them off can do a lot to stop it. But experience, action, going out and doing things in the world provides the sparks. That is what I want to do as a youth worker, and I grow from it too.

How do I know this? Well, the Qur'an tells you this. It encourages people to come together, care for each other, teach each other, be tolerant, listen, collaborate and that is how things happen and how people become more than what they are. No matter how frustrating youth work can be, it's being able to make some room for all that to happen which makes it worthwhile...more than worthwhile for me – it expresses what I am as a Muslim and a human being!

Yes, you can be taught, but in the end you can't be taught everything by someone else, you have to do the learning for yourself – you can get people to teach you, but that is no good unless you are going to learn. But we have it in us to do that, working and living with others.

ISLAM, SCIENCE AND YOUTH WORK

My first job as a professionally qualified youth worker took me to Tower Hamlets and the Arnold Circus, Brick Lane district. From my agency in Virginia Road I undertook a number of projects with young Muslims, in liaison the now legendary 'Avenues Unlimited', on the Chiksand Estate. Much of this work was relatively instinctive, you kind of learnt as you went along. Looking back, the kids we worked with must have been very patient or perhaps felt sorry for us; they probably worked more with us than we did with them. However, in the last few years there has been a growing consciousness of the need to think about youth work in Muslim contexts. More recently perhaps there has been a few of us who have been endeavouring to bring attention to how the teachings and traditions of Islam can and do contribute to our efforts to serve young people from a range of backgrounds, regardless of religious affinities. This being the case, in this chapter I want to highlight a sense of the development of youth work influenced by Islam. I will argue that this has a history of at least half a century, although the dynamics of what might be called the 'Islamic world-historic legacy' underpin the nature and conduct of practice just as law, education, medicine and the foundation of the achievements of Occidental science have significant roots in Islamic heritage.