**Press Release**

Establishment of the Readership in Islamic Education Post at the University of Warwick.

The Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, with support from the DCD Family Trust has appointed a Reader in Islamic Education, the first such a post to be created in British Higher Education System.

The Centre for Education Studies (CES) was set up by the University of Warwick to operate a hub and spoke model offering connections with expertise in education within departments across the University. The CES through the Warwick Religions Education Research Unit (WRERU) promotes research and debate concerning the ways in which the social significance of religion impacts primary, secondary and tertiary education both in the context of public institutions and faith-based institutions.

Since their arrival after the Second World War, Muslim communities in the UK and across Western Europe have experienced a complex set of socio-economic, political and educational challenges. The rise of religiously motivated global terrorism, home-grown extremism and overwhelmingly security-focused official policy responses to these events have further undermined social and community cohesion. Muslim children and young people, who constitute the highest percentage within the overall Muslim demographics, have been most affected by these developments. The identities of Muslim communities, particularly the young, are shaped by the uncertainties of an inherited post-colonial Muslim world and the expectations of wider secular and multicultural societies.

Bringing about confident Islamic self-understandings through reflective pedagogies of studying Islam, its rich legacy and nurturing intercultural and inter-religious engagement, as well as developing competence for active citizenship, remain essential for the community and the wider society to address. Education in general, and Islamic Education in particular, are critical long term areas of investment that will shape our longer term responses to the significant set of issues that concern the society at large. However, the relevance of the current models of Islamic Education in adequately addressing the present contexts and facilitating a positive transformation within the community and the wider society require re-examination. There is an urgent need to develop research-based scholarly approaches in the field so that a set of professional standards can inform and guide its diverse practitioners.

In recognition of the increasing social significance of religions within the wider multicultural secular society and in response to the specific set of educational and pedagogic concerns facing British and European Muslim diaspora, the Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, with support from the DCD Family Trust has established a Readership post in Islamic Education.

The initiative is inspired by a shared transformative educational vision and signifies a model collaboration between community and university in contributing effectively to civic engagement, social cohesion and educational inclusion within contemporary British society. This partnership highlights the willingness of the Muslim community to support any civic and educational project that facilitates constructive engagement with the issues that concern the society as a whole and renew the trust in the shared deeper value of serving the common good.

The creation of the first Readership post in Islamic Education at Warwick University signifies an innovative development within the British Higher Education system. The initiative aims to establish a hub of excellence in research and teaching on Islamic Education at Warwick through encouraging interdisciplinary and inter-departmental collaborative projects in the field that has already been recognised within the wider European Higher education Institutions.

The taught and research activities of the post aim to open up professional development pathways for diverse groups of Muslim educators and faith leaders who work within the context of formal and informal Islamic educational settings. This includes Muslim youth workers, chaplains, teachers and managers within Islamic schools, higher education institutions and traditional seminaries, as well as, religious education practitioners who wish to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Islam and be able to respond effectively to the educational and spiritual needs of Muslim children and young people under their care.

The initiative aims to generate new knowledge and insights on Islam's heritage of critical/reflective education and, through a creative dialogue with contemporary social scientific research, humanities, theology and pedagogic studies, facilitate opportunities of encounter, exchange and engagement among diverse groups of Muslim educators and the wider communities of educational researchers and practitioners. This will create opportunities for intercultural and interfaith dialogue and public understanding of Islam.

The aim is to disseminate values of transformative education to inspire positive change within Muslim communities and wider society. This vision of educational empowerment is intended to contribute significantly to educational capacity building within the Muslim communities and the development of a shared long term educational policy in addressing contemporary challenges such as the impact of extremism on Muslim communities and wider society.