

**MY LEADERSHIP CURRERE**  
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My leadership *currere* takes the form of an erasure poem. An erasure poem is created from a larger text. The author carves out all but the necessary words to weave a poem from what remains (About found poetry, 2016). Pinar's (2012) four step *currere* method (regressive-progressive-analytical-synthetical) is reflexively spelled out in my leadership philosophy. I provide the reader, my "meaning-making process" (Baszile, 2015, p. 120) as I grapple with my educational experiences, specifically focusing on my lived leadership journey. As Baszile (2015) remarks, one who engages in critical race/feminist *currere* seeks to "free oneself from the confines of oppressive ways of knowing and being" (p. 120). I adapted the erasure poetry form to unpack my leadership philosophy from a *currere* autobiographical approach. The poem is shared here. To conclude, I discuss the process of creating the work.

**MY LEADERSHIP CURRERE...**

My effort to return to my past; my regressive moment,  
Of course there are plenty, but,  
The predominant one is:  
"what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience"  
(Pinar, 1994, p. 20).  
In fact, what has been and what is now the nature of my leadership experience,  
I juggle with my memories; I regress,  
There is one predominant lived experience,  
Lasting through all my school years,  
from Grade 1 through Grade 12, and even through college,  
a label; a tag; a badge; that I wore on my school uniform,  
though in different terminologies,  
a "Class Leader," a "group leader," a "school pupil leader."  
But little did I know to critically reflect!

Pondering questions that are often ignored,  
Who am I?  
Do I have a purpose and mission in my life?  
What kind of a person do I want to become?  
What is my role and place in this universe?  
What is the purpose of my existence?  
Am I a leader?  
What does a true leader mean to be?  
These questions are thought provoking,  
Yet, remain mostly overlooked,  
What we believe and why we believe in it!  
About how our spiritual, faith, and religious perspectives inform our work  
(Goodman, Wilson, & Nicolazzo, 2015, pp. 122, 125).

Regretfully, without reflection, I cross my 20s,  
And now I sit back to observe the functioning in the past,

Bracketing what is not ordinarily seen (Pinar, 1994, p. 22).  
 My educational journey from India to Qatar to USA,  
 As the past “becomes,” my present is “revealed,”  
 And now, I regress, I progress, I analyze, and I synthesize,  
 My leadership *curre*re...

What’s said by traditional scholars is not what I believe in,  
 As they were concerned with peripheries of leadership:  
 Traits, personality characteristics, “born or made,”  
 Goal attainment, effectiveness, situations, and much more.  
 Concentrating just on the content of leadership,  
 Ignoring the nature of leadership: a process, a dynamic relationship,  
 Whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose  
 (Rost, 1993, p. 3).  
 It’s neither great man theory, nor group nor trait,  
 Not even solely behaviorist or situational!  
 As it is all so self-interested and individualistic,  
 Feeding into the industrial paradigm very well (Rost, 1993, p. 13).

I look the other way; my progressive moment,  
 What is not yet the case, not yet present,  
 But influences the present in complicated ways,  
 Forming my present (Pinar, 1994, p. 24).  
 I progress, my leadership *curre*re...

My leadership is a combination of many,  
 As what I believe in is a kind of spiritual leadership,  
 Also high on the leadership identity model,  
 Aligning well with stage six by integration and synthesis,  
 For it is a stage of commitment and life-long development,  
 As well as commitment to the congruence of their beliefs with their actions.  
 It’s a more relational leadership,  
 Changing the consciousness about self and others (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen,  
 Mainella, & Osteen, 2006, pp. 412-413).

Nurturing spiritual intelligence, yet complex with regard to truth value,  
 Also a variety of existential intelligence (Smith, 2008, n.p.).  
 Reminding that the purpose of one’s existence  
 Is what is emphasized in my religion.  
 Islam: goes beyond spirituality with a complete code of conduct to guide lives.  
 Islam: does not separate everyday life from spiritual life.  
 Islam: is my most salient identity that cannot be separated from me,  
 To lead in both personal and professional settings,  
 To follow the Quran<sup>1</sup> and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.)<sup>2</sup>  
 For Muhammad (p.b.u.h) is a role model for humans to follow,  
 For the Quran states, “verily in the messenger of Allah  
 ye have a good example  
 for him who looketh unto the last day,  
 and remember Allah much” (Al-Quran, 33:21, as cited in Toor, 2008, p. 16).

A leadership that is from heart, mind, and soul,  
 Not just for the life in this world,  
 But also for the life in the hereafter!  
 A leadership that is a social process,  
 Leader seeks to achieve organizational goals  
 With the support from relevant stakeholders  
 By fully complying with Islamic teachings and principles (Toor, 2008, p. 26).  
 Surrendering to Allah, Trusteeship of Allah, accountability to Allah,  
 Are extra dimensions of my leadership,  
 Not just for the leader but also for the followers.  
 For Prophet (p.b.u.h) said:  
 "...Allah loves the servant who is Allah-conscious  
 And is free from want and is hidden (from view of people)"  
 (Sahih Muslim, 42.7072, as cited in Toor, 2008, p. 29).  
 This is what is called the Islamic leadership,  
 And this is what I believe in!

I also believe that everyone is a leader, as  
 The messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) said,  
 "All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock.  
 An imam<sup>3</sup> is a shepherd, and he is responsible for those in his care.  
 The woman is a shepherd in respect of her husband's house  
 and is responsible for those in her care.  
 A servant is a shepherd in respect of his master's property  
 and is responsible for what is in his care.  
 All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock."  
 (Jalali, 2014, p. 2)  
 A modern-day equivalent to a shepherd is a leader and ,  
 "All of you are leaders and each of you is responsible for his flock."

As I pen down my leadership *currere*...  
 In the analytical moment,  
 I analyze my biographic present (Pinar, 1994, p. 26),  
 Break it into parts, reconstruct it (Poetter & Googins, 2017).  
 Then, I see that Islamic leadership is also a shared vision,  
 Not just an idea, a force in people's hearts,  
 A force of impressive power to see, as if it exists,  
 A sense of commonality with a coherence to diverse activities.  
 A common caring, a shared vision is a true commitment!  
 It reflects my own personal vision,  
 Uplifts people's aspirations, compels courage  
 Towards an overarching goal,  
 Also fosters risk taking and experimentation,  
 A strong sense of personal direction, a powerful synergy,  
 What "I/We truly want,"  
 A commitment to truth and creative tension.  
 Each shares responsibility for the whole,  
 A shared responsibility, a shared vision (Senge, 2006, pp. 192, 196).

But, all of this is connected to a larger purpose,  
 About gaining rewards for the life after,  
 And pleasing the Almighty Allah.  
 Which also helps me escape a force,  
 A hairball, which is an inexorable pull, a corporate gravity,  
 That tugs me towards the tangle of the hairball;  
 By established guidelines, techniques, methodologies, systems, and equations,  
 The hairball's gravity! (MacKenzie, 1998, p. 32)

Diversity, as I see, is divinely created,  
 One of the laws of nature, a natural phenomenon.  
 For Allah says: "O people, we created you all from a single man and a single woman,  
 And made you into tribes so that you should get to know one another"  
 (Al-Qu'ran, 49:13, as cited in Shah, 2008).  
 I believe in the same, respecting the differences and diversity of mankind.  
 I see Islamic leadership involving *Adab*: "a beautiful action or good behavior"  
 (Shah, 2008, p. 529),  
 A broad framework for values and behavior.  
 Positioning equality within diversity supports vulnerability,  
 Rejects discrimination, celebrates diversity, and promotes innate human dignity.  
 "Different but equal" is what I believe in as a leader,  
 Not by eliminating differences, but by respecting diverse philosophies and concepts  
 (Shah, 2008).

Spiritually, by reflecting on my religious values,  
 Looking at myself concretely, I synthesize  
 The past, present, and future,  
 Its multidimensional interrelations (Pinar, 1994, p. 26).  
 I put my experiences, myself together (Poetter & Googins, 2017).  
 I navigate easily without being sucked into the hairball,  
 By Orbiting—a responsible creativity, operating beyond corporate mind set,  
 Yet, connected to corporate mission!  
 By personal courage to be genuine and individual,  
 Measured assertion of uniqueness,  
 That creates a dynamic relationship with the hairball! (Mackenzie, 1998, p. 33)

I believe that deeper learning fosters deeper leadership,  
 For deeper learning is a commitment to a level of learning,  
 That pushes us so deeply into our own questions,  
 Those thought-provoking questions,  
 And these conclusions are unforgettable! (Roberts, 2007, p. 17)  
 From a religious lens, deeper learning  
 Inspires me to dig deep into religious texts and teachings,  
 Informing my Islamic leadership practices  
 For a better life now and hereafter.

I believe in doing things for other people (Bayda, 2003, p. 1),  
 And I know it is a good syndrome: A helper syndrome,  
 But the intention behind is what is counted.

It's not just to please people, but Allah,  
 To move away from self-centered to life-centered (Bayda, 2003, p. 1),  
 A "life" that is for the good of the present and the future.

This is what is called the Islamic leadership,  
 My lived leadership *currere*,  
 A leadership that I practice daily in all my roles,  
 A social-being, a mother, a daughter,  
 A wife, a sister, a student, and a teacher,  
 And this is what I believe in!

To construct my leadership *currere* erasure poem, first, I began with thinking about the regressive; "reactivating the past" (Pinar, 2012, p. 5), then, the progressive; "contemplating the future" (Pinar, 2012, p. 5), followed by analytic; thinking about the present and the ways the past and anticipated future have shaped it, and finally, in syncretical step, I put together, my past, present, and future to construct my *knowledge*, my *identity*, my *meaning*, and my *leadership currere* (Poetter & Googins, 2017). Reflective journaling and conversations with my husband and mother helped me critically reflect on my lived experiences and make possible connections with my present and progressive future. Additionally, I continued to read and reread the data sources on leadership and *currere* as I participated in this reflexive self-study. After writing my experiences descriptively, I selected the required paragraphs or pages from my writing and research articles that formed the stanzas of my poem. After each stanza was written, I organized the stanzas to create my leadership *currere*. Furthermore, I used connecting/binding words and/or statements in between each stanza to make the poem cohesive. Although my poem reflects religious orthodoxy, I believe in social justice and address diversity and equity issues as I juggle my leadership *currere* from an Islamic leadership perspective.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The holy book of Muslims revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (p. b. u. h)

<sup>2</sup> p. b. u. h stands for "Peace be upon him."

<sup>3</sup> Imam is a person who leads the daily prayers, Salah, performed by Muslims in congregation.