

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

by

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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 effects 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 15 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 understand the contemporary world and master 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 was 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. However, for lack of fluency in French or competencies in modern subjects, some participants faced difficulties in terms of higher education and career. 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 need to 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 balance Islamic subjects and Arabic with 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.

Keywords: Madrasa, Islamic school, curriculum, Mali, West Africa

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Dedication

To the soul of our teacher, imam, and father, Abdoulaye Diarra, known as Jarakoroba. May Allah The Almighty shower His mercy upon you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

In Mali, West Africa, Muslims constitute over 90% of the population. Islamic education is offered through an institutional network of madrasas¹. The curriculum of these schools covers Islamic subjects (e.g., Quran, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *tawhīd*, *sīrah*, *tafsīr*) and Arabic alongside modern subjects (e.g., math, physics, geography, history, civic education) and French. The most recent official school enrolment statistics, I could find, indicate that in 2016 madrasa students represented 18.14% of primary school students of formal education in Mali (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2016).

From the inception of the first madrasa in 1945 (Cisse, 2006) to the present, the madrasas of Mali have struggled to overcome two major problems: meeting the expectations of the rulers of secular political institutions, who do not favor or promote Islamic education (Brenner, 2007), and effectively preparing students to specialize in all fields of knowledge needed in Malian society (Cisse, 2006, p. 17). This latter problem is partially due to how madrasa schooling started in Mali. The madrasa schooling was pioneered by educators with limited financial and technical resources to primarily improve the quality of Islamic education (Cisse, 2006, pp. 16-17), so before 2003 most madrasas focused on teaching Islamic subjects and Arabic while neglecting modern subjects and French.

¹ I will use “the madrasa” and “madrasas” interchangeably. The madrasa refers to Malian schools that fall in the category of “madrasa.” By definition, a madrasa is a privately owned Islamic school that provides K-12 education to students who want to acquire both Islamic and career-oriented knowledge.

Before 1982, the Malian state education department did not have a direct control over madrasa schooling, so madrasas independently designed their curricula (Kavas, 2003). From 2003, however, many madrasas agreed to implement a new curriculum designed by the state education department to facilitate the admission of madrasa students to public universities after passing the national high school exams (Villalón et al., 2012). By reinforcing modern subjects and French at the expense of Islamic subjects, madrasa teachers are afraid that the new curriculum may eventually strip the madrasa of its religious mission (Sidibe, 2015). Thus, while the problem of the old curriculum (before 2003) was the neglect of modern subjects, the new curriculum of 2003 inverted the problem by strengthening modern subjects and neglecting Islamic subjects. Cisse (2006) hence lamented that madrasas in Mali are still far from achieving the goal of providing an education that prepares students for all fields of knowledge.

Problem Statement

Madrasas serve two main functions in Mali. The first function is to develop students' Muslim identity, so they become cognizant, faithful, and observant Muslims who integrate the Muslim community and Malian society. The second function of madrasas is to prepare students for higher education, either in Mali or in the Arab world, with the long-term objective of working in Islamic religious or education sectors, the Malian civil service, or the private sector. To fulfil these functions, the madrasa must teach Islamic subjects and Arabic, on the one hand, and modern subjects and French, on the other hand. As referenced above, Malian madrasas' ability to adequately fulfill these functions was obstructed for political reasons and for reasons related to the curriculum, teaching, and internal functioning of madrasas.

While some previous studies have touched on the challenges madrasas face within the secular political context of Mali (e.g., Brenner, 2001; Kavas, 2003; Villalón et al., 2012), other studies have focused on problems related to the curriculum and teaching of madrasas (e.g., Al-Mojil & Maiga, 2017; Cisse, 2014; Mariko, 2013; Sidibe, 2015), and Cisse (2006) examined the effects of madrasa education in Malian society. Together, these studies cast light on how madrasas operate in Mali, what they have achieved, and what factors prevented them from fulfilling their mission.

To my knowledge, however, no previous study has investigated how madrasa education enables students to become believing and practicing Muslims, to engage in Malian society, to succeed in post-madrasa education, and to pursue careers in Islamic religious and education sectors, the Malian civil service, or the private sector. My dissertation may close this gap in the literature by exploring the experiences and views of five former madrasa students who are university graduates and working professionals. These former students have the range of experiences required to assess the outcomes² of madrasa education.

Researchers who studied madrasa education include Sidibe (2015). He reviewed the 2003 new curriculum and surveyed and interviewed principals and teachers to explore how this curriculum affected Islamic subjects in madrasas. His study found that teachers believe that the curriculum of the primary school was not well designed, the number of Islamic subjects was reduced in the middle school, in high school not enough time was designated to teaching Islamic subjects, and students did not care about Islamic subjects because students were not tested in these subjects in the national high school exam.

² Outcomes mean what happened to the participants as the result of their madrasa education.

Cisse (2014) is another researcher who studied the 2003 curriculum. He reviewed the curriculum and surveyed principals, teachers, and some parents to understand the factors that hindered the primary school of one of Bamako's madrasas from achieving the stated learning goals in the curriculum. Cisse's (2014) study showed that the curriculum included too many subjects, the teaching period of certain subjects was insufficient, and content information did not correspond well to students' level of education. Both Cisse (2014) and Sidibe (2015) described the problems of the new curriculum, but these studies could not indicate how the problems of the new curriculum would affect students' post-madrasa education, personal life, and careers. Therefore, a good way to tell how a given curriculum affects students' post-madrasa education or life is to seek former students' perspectives, as I am proposing in this study.

To shed light on how the French language is taught in madrasas, Mariko (2013) interviewed the management of one of Bamako's madrasas. His findings revealed that madrasas teach French to enable students to communicate and study in French after finishing their madrasa education. Mariko (2013) also found that the new curriculum reinforced the French language in madrasas in two ways. The weekly teaching time of French has increased, and scientific subjects are taught in French. While Mariko's (2013) study reveals why and how French is taught in the madrasa, his study is silent on how fluency or lack of fluency in French affects madrasa students in higher education or careers. His study also does not indicate whether or not using French as a language of instruction in madrasas disrupts the teaching of other subjects. Thus, my study may shed light on these questions by exploring the experiences of former madrasa students.

Regarding teaching Islamic subjects in madrasas, Al-Mojil and Maiga (2017) surveyed teachers to study the factors that hindered the teaching of Islamic subjects in the middle school of Bamako's madrasas. These researchers found that the teaching of Islamic subjects stressed learning by heart, the method of presenting content information did not evolve with time, teachers rarely received professional training, and teachers' salaries were low. Although these findings describe the problems associated with teaching Islamic subjects, one cannot conclude from these findings whether or not the teaching of Islamic subjects produces the intended educational outcomes, educating students to be knowledgeable, believing, and practicing Muslims. Therefore, my study may provide insights into the outcomes of teaching Islamic subjects in madrasas by exploring the experiences and views of former madrasa students.

A researcher who studied the effects of madrasa education in Malian society is Cisse (2006). His study involved reviewing decrees, reports, and policy documents, and exchanging with madrasa insiders. He concluded that by producing imams and preachers who invigorate Islam in Mali according to the spirit of the contemporary world, madrasas reinforce national unity, equality, and solidarity beyond ethnic divisions. He also concluded that the dynamism of Malian diplomacy and the Malian state's ability to attract Arab governments' aid relied heavily on former madrasa students. He also pointed out that madrasas contribute in increasing the literacy rate in Mali, former madrasa students enrich the intellectual life in Mali, and the restoration of the manuscripts of Timbuktu, written in Arabic, depends on the efforts of former madrasa students.

Cisse's (2006) study is similar to my study in regard to focusing on the effects of madrasa education. However, while his study focused on the effects of madrasas in

Malian society, my study focuses on the effects of madrasa education on former students who are university graduates and explores their views about madrasas.

Finally, Villalón et al. (2012) reviewed official documents, interviewed a sample of workers of the Malian state education department, and interviewed heads of madrasas to study the factors that drove the state's interventions in madrasa schooling since the colonial period. Villalón et al. (2012) found that the colonial administration legally restricted Islamic schooling and created Franco-Arab³ schools to educate Muslims who support colonization. After the independence in 1960, the Malian state tried without success to transform madrasas into Franco-Arab schools, but this time, with the objective of creating a pan-Africanist and production-oriented national education system.

Villalón et al. (2012) continued that in the 1980s, the state integrated madrasas into the national education system and designed a madrasa curriculum, and this time, the state insisted that madrasas teach modern subjects and French. After 1991, committed Francophiles and secularists ascended to power in Mali, so the new curriculum the state designed in 2003 has in practice changed madrasas into Franco-Arab schools through teaching many subjects in French and loading the curriculum with too many subjects. The new curriculum, thereby, disturbs the Islamic mission of madrasas. One negative effect of the new curriculum is that most students graduate from madrasas without mastering Islamic subjects and Arabic or modern subjects and French. However, the handful of

³ Franco-Arab school (*Ecole Franco-arabe*) is a K-12 school that uses French as the main language of teaching, and it teaches Arabic as a core subject. There are also Franco-Arab schools that use French as the main language of teaching but reserve 30% of the curriculum for Arabic and Islamic education.

students who succeed in mastering all these subjects possess an unmatched range of competences among all school students in Mali (Villalón et al., 2012, p. 42).

Villalón et al. (2012) also found that from the 1980s onward, the Malian state accepted madrasas into the national education system without demanding to secularize madrasas, in part, because the state needed madrasas to boost the national school enrollment rate. Similarly, in 2003, madrasas accepted a curriculum that disturbs their religious mission because they needed their students accepted in public universities. The study of Villalón et al. (2012) shows how the state's intervention in madrasa schooling has disrupted madrasa education, but their study does not show how madrasa education influences students' life, post-madrasa education, or careers. Hence, my study explores the effects of madrasa education on former students to provide insights into the effects of the old curriculum (before 2003) on former students. Insights into the effects of the old curriculum is also a source of inference about the possible effects of the new 2003 curriculum on students. These insights enable educators and decision-makers to capitalize on the strengths of the new curriculum and overcome its weaknesses.

In conclusion, there are two major gaps in the existing literature about madrasas in Mali. First, previous studies did not describe how madrasa education develops students' Muslim identity, enables them to engage in Malian society, or helps them succeed in higher education and careers. Previous studies did not also explore how students' lived experiences inside and outside the madrasa affect their views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. These gaps in the existing literature make Malian educators and policymakers less conscious of the implications of their actions and decisions for students and Malian society. These gaps also make current

madrassa students less conscious of the implications of their schooling behaviour on their future personal, social, educational, and professional life.

Additionally, these gaps make parents less conscious of the merits of madrasa education, the danger of bad educational policies and low educational standards, and the importance of parents' involvement in schooling. Finally, by not studying the real-life consequences of madrasa education and the views of former students, the existing literature, for the most part, has obscured how educational processes and policies affect students and Malian society.

Purpose of the Study

To close the above gaps in the existing literature about madrasas in Mali and to address the problems that arise from losing sight of the real-life consequences of madrasa education on students, I propose in this dissertation to explore the lived experiences and views of a sample of five former madrasa students, holders of university degrees and workers. Exploring the lived experiences of these students will cast light on the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on students. Also, capturing the perspectives of these students will cast light on the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

Hence, my study answers the research problems raised above, for I will describe how madrasa education enables students to be cognizant, believing, and practicing Muslims, to succeed in higher education and careers, and to engage in Malian society. I will also describe how students' experiences influence their views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. Thus, educators and decision-makers will be conscious of the implications of their decisions and actions for students and society.

Researchers will also be aware of the importance of studying the effects of educational processes and policies on students and Malian society.

Research Questions

- 1) Based on the lived experiences and perspectives of a sample of five former madrasa students, what are the outcomes of madrasa education and its curriculum on the development of students' Muslim identity, on their engagement in the society, and on their preparedness for higher education and careers within the socio-economic and political contexts of Mali?
- 2) Based on the lived experiences and perspectives of these students, how effectively do madrasas of Mali teach Islamic education alongside modern subjects?
- 3) According to these students, what is the role of madrasas in Mali, and how might madrasas be sustained for future generations?

Assumptions

I conducted this study based on my assumptions about Islamic education and my assumptions about the curriculum. Ware (2014) links his analysis of Islamic education in West Africa to the Quran, the sunnah of the Prophet, and longstanding Islamic scholarly traditions about knowledge, schooling, and education. Similarly, Babou (2016) links his analysis of Islamic education to longstanding Islamic traditions. This method of analysis describes how Islamic education conceptually connects to Islamic revelation, prophetic tradition, and the views of authoritative Muslim scholars. I assumed, however, that I should go beyond this method of analysis given this dissertation explores the views and experiences of former madrasa students.

Therefore, although I accept that what makes an education Islamic is its connection to Islamic revelation and prophetic tradition (Al-Attas,1980; Kahn, 1981), in the context of this study and because I explored my participants' views and experiences, I accept as Islamic what is declared by my participants as Islamic whether or not I am able to connect such declaration to Islamic revelation, and whether or not I agree with the participants. This is to say that I assume that belief as a subjective view calls for conformity, lies as an ideal in the heart and mind of the believer, and guides action just like belief as prescribed in the scripture. Hence, in this dissertation and depending on the context, when I refer to Islamic beliefs and norms or an Islamic belief, it could mean beliefs as in the scripture, beliefs as subjective views, or beliefs as shared religious views among specific groups of Muslims.

From a different respect, Brenner's (2001) analysis of Islamic education in Mali gives more importance to the political and social context than Islamic beliefs (p. 3). Similarly, Bouwman (2005) indicates that belief and attitude are the least important factors when Malian parents decide about their children's schooling (p. 158). Although I see the merit of considering political and socio-economic factors when analyzing Islamic education, and I agree that the Islamic belief is but one factor in Islamic education, I assume that Islamic belief is the most important factor in Islamic education. Islamic education primarily results from Muslims' aim to establish or preserve an Islamic way of life in a given society or educate a given individual to be a Muslim. To achieve this aim, Muslims contemplate strategies based on their understanding of their religion, the educational process, and the social, economic, and political context in which they live.

Therefore, the line of analysis I follow in this study is to look at how Islamic belief, as the most important factor in Islamic education, intersects with the characteristics of human actors involved in Islamic education in a given socio-cultural and politico-economic context. Through this lens of analysis, I try to tease out how my participants' or Muslims' views about Islamic education as a means toward an Islamic way of life or educating a Muslim change as the result of personal and contextual factors.

Besides my assumption about Islamic education, I assume that an important goal of Islamic schooling is to educate students through the formal curriculum to acquire an Islamic knowledge, and, in the case of the madrasa, to have both an Islamic and a worldly knowledge. Scholars disagree about the definition of curriculum (Ende & Davidoff, 1992; Mathews, 1989; Young, 2014). The definition of curriculum changes based on religion, philosophical school, and political ideology (Holmes & McLean, 1989) and based on the views of curriculum theorists (Taylor & Richards, 1985).

In segregated societies, many curricula simultaneously coexist in a country's education system (Kumar, 2019; Ryan, Tocci & Moon, 2020). In the last 35 years, the neoliberal capitalist politico-economic ideology has influence curricula in many countries (Kumar, 2019, p. 235). Globalization also affects how national curricula are designed (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Ranai, Rezai, Karimyan & Karimi, 2012). All these factors make the definition and design of the curriculum controversial and difficult.

It is difficult to define curriculum because there is a disagreement about what knowledge to include in the curriculum and why, who should choose the content of the curriculum, how the curriculum should relate to religion, society, culture, economy, and power, what role education plays in society, how to determine the effects of the

curriculum on students, how to optimally organize and teach the content of the curriculum to achieve the goals of education, how curriculum as prescribed differs from curriculum as taught, and what activities is regarded as part of the curriculum.

In this dissertation, I define curriculum as the body of knowledge teachers are expected to transmit to students to achieve some defined outcomes. By this definition, I want to emphasize that, in my view, the curriculum somehow outlines what students are expected to learn to achieve the goal of the educational process. This implies that decisions about the curriculum focus on expected outcomes of education. This definition is also meant to be broad enough to encompass both the traditional Islamic school, which has no written curriculum, and the madrasa, which has a written curriculum.

I also assume that a practical consequence of Islamic schooling is to create the space in which the hidden curriculum shapes students' character, values, beliefs, and attitudes through socialization with peers, teachers, and other workers in the school environment. Based on the works of Apple (2019), Çubukçu (2012), and Giroux (1981), I define the hidden curriculum as values, beliefs, attitudes, and competences that students develop through socialization at school. While the formal curriculum has set subjects and content information that enable teachers to measure students' mastery through standardized tests or some forms of outward demonstration of competencies, the impacts of the hidden curriculum on students cannot be measured or outwardly captured as easily.

The followings are examples, from my personal experience as a former madrasa student, of how the hidden curriculum shapes students in the madrasa environment. When we were in the madrasa, teachers insisted that students observe Islamic norms in the way they dressed. Some teachers would give the nickname of past scholars to brilliant

students, and teachers would often reference Quranic verses or the sayings of the Prophet to advise students. For instance, during exams, teachers used to repeat the saying of the Prophet, “Whoever cheats, he is not one of us [believers].” These interactions between us and our teachers affected our views and attitudes, but it would have been difficult for our teachers to measure if we truly internalized these views or if we were just complying with expected school norms.

With the foregoing discussion in mind, I assume that assessing the real-life effects of madrasa education on students is important for judging the madrasa’s success in its mission. I believe, on the one hand, that the influences of the hidden curriculum on students is difficult to observe or measure at the madrasa, and on the other hand, the formal curriculum prepares students for higher education and other dimensions of life, so the real-life outcomes of the formal curriculum is, in a sense, difficult to predict while students are in the madrasa. Thus, studying the real-life outcomes of madrasa education is possible through exploring former madrasa students’ experiences and views.

Rationale and Significance

Based on the above assumptions, I believe it is important to judge Malian madrasas’ success in their mission by exploring former students’ experiences and views. Exploring former students’ experiences may provide insights into the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional outcomes of madrasa education. Also, seeking their views may provide insights into the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. This study is thus significant because it explores the real-life outcomes of madrasa education with people whose life and thought have been shaped by the madrasa.

This study will enable curriculum designers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the madrasa curriculum, so the madrasa curriculum responds well to students' educational needs and career aspirations. This study will also enable principals and teachers to adopt pedagogical methods and school policies that create a supportive environment for students' learning and acquisition of Islamic values and characters. As for parents, this study will encourage them to get involved in their children's schooling and support the madrasa in its mission by informing parents of the merits of madrasa education for the individual and Malian society. Parents will also become aware of the problems of the madrasa and the importance of their support in helping the madrasa succeed in the mission of providing good education in Islamic and modern subjects.

When it comes to Malian state bureaucrats, this study will make them aware of the consequences of their decisions and actions on madrasas and madrasa students, and it will make them understand madrasa education based on insiders' account. This study will also bring to the consciousness of government decision-makers the merits of madrasa education for individual Muslims and Malian society, it will inform how bureaucratic decisions negatively affect the madrasa and its students, and it will indicate how the Malian state can help madrasas and help madrasa students to be good and productive citizens. Finally, it will shed light on how madrasas and the Malian state can cooperate without disturbing the religious mission of madrasas while respecting state regulations.

Regarding current students, they will benefit from this study by learning from the experiences of former madrasa students, so current students become more conscious of the consequences of their actions and attitudes on their future religious, personal, social,

educational, and professional life. This study will encourage current students to study all subjects seriously, develop positive characters, and espouse Islamic values.

In terms of academic research, this study closes an important gap in the existing literature about madrasa schooling in Mali by focusing on the factors that enable madrasa students to acquire Islamic knowledge, become good Muslims, engage in Mali society, and succeed in higher education and careers. By closing this gap, I hope to promote research about the effects of Islamic schooling, educational processes and policies, and teaching practices on students. Examining the outcomes of Malian madrasas and the perspectives of madrasa insiders could also contribute to challenging current dehumanizing/threatening stereotypes associated with “madrasas.”

The Researcher

In this section, I discuss my background, my opinions about madrasa education in Mali, and my learning experiences during data collection. I identify myself as a believing, practicing Muslim, and a Malian national born and raised in Mali. I started my education in a madrasa in Mali. After graduating from the 9th grade, I continued my study in Egypt where I received my bachelor’s degree. Thereafter, I did my master’s degree in the United States, and I conducted this study as a doctoral candidate in Canada.

My background as a former madrasa student enabled me to have an insider look at the research questions, and my connections with madrasa educators facilitated participants’ recruitment. Also, being a Malian national and knowing the culture of Mali facilitated my fieldwork. However, being an insider also raises questions of bias about my research design and my analysis of the findings. For example, I may focus on certain information I believe to be important for Malians or madrasa insiders, or I may take

certain information for granted although elaborating on that information may be valuable for an outsider to have a better understanding of my research topic. Hence, I adopted strategies to increase the transparency, trustworthiness, and believability of my research, so I extensively quoted my participants, I provided clarification in brackets, and I considered alternative viewpoints in my analysis. I shall elaborate more on the trustworthiness of my research in the methodology chapter.

To acknowledge both the benefits and drawbacks of being an insider, I took the following measures. I stated the assumptions that guide my thinking for approaching the research problem, designing the research, and analyzing the data. I described my research methodology, I justified the data collection methods, and I indicated my background and my perspectives. I also discussed my views about madrasa education, I shared the interview guiding questions in the appendix, I described research participants, I clarified participants' selection criteria, and I used participants' exact words in the findings and analysis chapters. I discuss these measures in the methodology chapter.

As a Malian national who studied in three foreign countries, I also had an outsider look at the research problem. For example, I discovered during data collection that my thought was influenced by the Eurocentric view of secularity and religiosity. I had a distorted view of how people perceive schooling in my country, Mali. I discovered that my participants classified subjects taught in the madrasa into two categories: religious subjects and Arabic, and modern subjects and French. Though my participants divided subjects into two categories, the division is functional but not ideological.

While the participants saw the mastery of Arabic as necessary for deciphering religious texts and linking Mali to its intellectual heritage, they did not consider Arabic as

a sacred language, and while the participants saw the mastery of French in Mali as necessary to study in public universities and work in the civil service, they did not consider French as a secular language. Similarly, the participants talked about religious subjects and modern subjects, but they did not see these subjects as two separate sets of subjects related to two separate spheres of life (i.e., religious and secular as in the Eurocentric view of the world). The participants saw that religious and modern subjects serve two necessary purposes for madrasa students.

While the participants divided the subjects taught in the madrasa into Islamic and modern subjects, I divided the subjects, in my research proposal, into religious and secular, as in the Eurocentric view. Although I consider myself as a madrasa insider, I found out that I did not know how madrasa insiders categorize subjects taught in the madrasa, so I wondered why did I not see subjects taught in the madrasa from the same lens as my participants? How had my thought evolved? What does it imply to describe non-religious subjects taught in the madrasa as modern instead of secular?

By reflecting on my experiences during data collection, I became aware that I absorbed the idea of dividing subjects into “religious” and “secular” through my Western education. This awareness taught me three things. First, I learned that ideology and beliefs manifest in the terminology used to describe things. For example, the terms “religious” versus “secular” subjects stress the religious-secular divide.

The terms “religious subjects” and “modern subjects” that my participants used stress variation and change. These terms suggest that religious subjects existed before modern subjects in madrasa schooling, so the term “modern subjects” implies that the evolution of time required the teaching of modern subjects in madrasas, as the participant

Khadija said, and students need both sets of subjects to be religious and productive in the contemporary society. This brings me to my second learning experience.

Being aware that I inaccurately categorized subjects taught in the madrasa, I concluded that the inaccurate description of a phenomenon by a researcher is not necessarily a willful misrepresentation. Concepts, models, terms, and dominant conventions used in academia reflect on research, and condition people's thinking and writing. For instance, I used the term "secular subjects" because it was dominant in the literature I reviewed. I wrote from within a western scholarly tradition, and I was primarily writing for western academics. Moreover, even if I chose not to use the term "secular subjects," when writing my research proposal, I did not have an alternative term. This brings me to my third learning experience.

I learned that living an experience does not mean fully understanding it. For example, my experience in the madrasa was conditioned by my student status. As a student, I was exposed to subjects taught in the classroom in forms of subject areas like language, religion, and science, but I did not know how educators and curriculum designers categorized subjects. When I was writing my research proposal, I could not recall the term "modern subjects" because my past student status did not enable me to experience everything in the madrasa environment.

I observed the same differences in my participants' responses. The three participants who worked in madrasas mostly categorized subjects as religious and modern, but the two participants who never worked in madrasas mostly referred to modern subjects as scientific subjects. However, the term "modern" describes a larger range of subjects than "scientific." For instance, while modern subjects include

geography and history as social sciences, scientific subjects do not include these two subjects. What is significant here is that while the three participants responded based on their lived experiences as both teachers and former students, the two participants responded based on their lived experiences as only former students.

Though the two participants did not often use the inclusive term “modern subjects,” the term they used, “scientific subjects,” is understood by insiders. In my case, though I used an inclusive term, “secular subjects,” this term does not represent how madrasa insiders perceive subjects taught in the madrasa. Thus, I decided to use the term “modern subjects” throughout this dissertation to accurately represent participants’ views about subjects taught in madrasas.

It is important, I think, to untangle the conceptual, educational, and political implications of categorizing the subjects taught in the madrasa as Islamic and modern subjects versus categorizing these subjects as religious and secular. Untangling these implications is important for bridging the gap between the viewpoints of pro and anti-madrasa state officials within the Malian state bureaucracy, and between state officials and madrasas union⁴. Similarly, these implications are important for bridging the gap between the perception of madrasa insiders and outside observers, especially people from a western scholarly background.

Classifying the subjects taught in the madrasa as religious and secular instead of Islamic and modern may seem as using different appellations to describe the same

⁴ The madrasas union, *Union Nationale des Médersas Arabo-islamique du Mali (UNMAIM)*, called by Malian state officials as *Union Nationale des Médersas du Mali (UNMM)*, is the National Union of Arabic-Islamic Madrasas of Mali (also known as Etihad [union]), an association that fosters cooperation between madrasas and represents them in their negotiations with the Malian government.

subjects. I, however, see that conceptually, dividing the subjects taught in the madrasa into religious and secular – through the lens of the religious-secular divide – may imply the followings: what is religious is not secular, the more something is religious the less it is secular, so in order for what is religious to be acceptable from a secular standpoint it must be made less religious or non-religious.

For example, Villalón et al. (2012) qualify the increase of modern subjects and French in Malian madrasas as an increased secularisation of the madrasa. My participants, however, did not qualify the increase of modern subjects as a secularisation of the madrasas. They saw it as an improvement of madrasa education that broadens students' intellectual purview and their educational and career prospects. My participants, however, wished that the curriculum would satisfactorily cover all subjects, including Islamic subjects, the Arabic language, modern subjects, and the French language.

Looking at the subjects taught in the madrasa as religious versus secular also turns the design of madrasa curriculum from an educational and technical problem into an ideological and political problem. For instance, the Malian government in 1993 reversed the decision of preceding governments and refused that holders of the madrasa high school diploma study in public universities, arguing that madrasa students' fluency in French was inadequate (Bouwman, 2005). Using this argument as a pretext, the Malian state education department increased the French language content in madrasas including teaching many subjects in French (Villalón et al., 2012).

The argument of the education department is perhaps politically and ideologically driven. It is a fact that non-francophone students from all over the world go to France to pursue higher education. Instead of creating a good French language program for

madrassa students, the Malian state insisted on making madrasas less Islamic and less Arabic in order to accept madrasa students in the francophone secular university system. Contrary to the ideological and political views of the Malian state, my participants looked at madrasa students' lack of fluency in French as an educational and technical problem. While the participants acknowledged that madrasa students need to be fluent in French, they thought that learning French should not disrupt Islamic subjects and Arabic because students need all these subjects.

Another problem that arises from looking at the madrasa curriculum based on the religious-secular divide is unnecessary tension between state officials and the supporters of madrasas. As I shall elaborate on in the findings and analysis chapters, by insisting on making madrasas less religious and less Arabic in order to accept them in the francophone secular university system, the Malian state makes madrasa insiders, like my research participants, believe that without a reasonable balance of power, the secularists of the state will not accept madrasas without abandoning or changing their religious mission. Supporters of madrasas may thus resist state regulations.

Reporting my above learning experiences and thoughts is significant because my role as a researcher includes producing knowledge to describe inside phenomena for outsiders. The connotation of terms used in my description changes from culture to culture, from context to context, and between disciplines, so choosing terms alien to insiders may result in misconception for outsiders and misrepresentation for insiders. At the same time, choosing terms alien to outsiders may leave outsiders confused. Therefore, I will use insiders' terms and explain their meaning as understood by insiders. By so doing, I hope that my study will contribute in bridging the gap between the viewpoints of

madrassa insiders and state officials. Thus, the improvement of madrasa curriculum and the integration of madrasas into the Malian education system become an educational and technical problem instead of a political and ideological problem.

Before concluding this section, I will present my opinion about the madrasa education in Mali. As a Malian Muslim, I argue that the madrasa, despite its shortcomings, is the best school system for educating Muslim children in contemporary Mali, better than both the traditional Islamic school and the French school. It is common knowledge that Malians including Muslims have accepted to send their children to the French school, not because this school was adapted to their educational needs, but because it has been imposed by the political establishment. French schooling also became an unavoidable path to access power and certain privileges under the political and economic order that resulted from French conquest.

Before the French conquest, the traditional Islamic school was better suited for educating Muslim children because in pre-colonial Malian society there was no organic connection between schooling and most occupations in society. There was no organic connection between schooling and financial gain or political power. Political authorities mostly did not interfere in schooling, and a relative harmony existed between the different segments of our society. Malian rulers then, regardless of their religions, did not see state management as antithetical to religion.

Moreover, the decentralized political system and economic model of pre-colonial Malian society promoted social stability by enabling a substantial number of communities to stay together for generations, with limited exposure to other cultures. Social stability facilitated cultural reproduction, preservation of religious traditions, and

transmission of technical and organizational expertise from one generation to the other. In this context, traditional Islamic schools could thus focus on religious education only.

The French conquest resulted in dramatic changes to this social order, so, I think, Malians must re-examine the role of schooling in sustaining our socio-cultural values and an Islamic way of life within the politico-economic order the French established in Mali. For all the reasons I discussed so far, I think, madrasas are better suited for educating Muslim children than both traditional Islamic schools and French schools.

Additionally, French colonization imposed centralized political and judicial institutions guided by a secular ideology that tacitly and explicitly chases religion from public life, irrespective of the views of the Malian population. French colonization also imposed a Western economic model which caused rapid urbanization and constant mobility of people. These factors make large segments of the population constantly move away from their local cultures in search of seasonal or permanent work.

The colonizer also imposed French schooling, intended to alienate Malian children from their home cultures. It is mostly children schooled in French schools who later become the rulers and intellectuals of Mali. Paradoxically, it is these rulers and intellectuals who are supposed to guarantee the political independence and socio-economic development of Mali. However, the paradox fades away if one agrees with Fanon (1963) that most of these leaders and intellectuals are caricatures of the colonizer, and their main concern is to accumulate wealth and enjoy consumer goods by exploiting the rest of the population and maintaining ties with the former colonizer.

The purpose of French schooling, during colonization, was to expand French language and ideas and to educate Africans who would collaborate with the French

(Diakité, 2000, p. 6). The French aimed to alienate Malian children because the oppressor attempt to turn the oppressed from subjects able to affirm their full humanity into objects used to serve the system of oppression and satisfy the needs of the oppressor (Freire, 1993). The French did not intend to educate human subjects able to affirm their linguistic, religious, and socio-cultural identities or human subjects ready to use their intellectual ability for the socio-economic development and political independence of their country. The French intended to displace students' subjectivity and turn them into human objects used to sustain French political, economic, and cultural domination in Mali.

For the colonial French school to educate reliable collaborators, the school had to alienate and detach students from Malian local cultures, and the mean to that end was French language and ideas. To maintain France's imperialist interests in Mali after the independence, the purpose of the colonial school had to be, somehow, reinstated in schools. "Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly" (Smith, 1999, p. 19). I conclude from the work of Villalón et al. (2012) that the curriculum reform of 1962, under President Modibo Keita (1960-1968), geared schooling in Mali toward nationalist, pan-Africanist, and socialist ideals to educate productive students attached to their society and culture. Curriculum reforms after Modibo Keita, however, moved away from these ideals⁵.

After Modibo Keita, the Malian education system was redirected to serve the capitalistic job market, by and large dominated by France's imperialist interests, and

⁵ There are many parallels between curriculum reforms in Mali and curriculum reforms in Niger (also a francophone country in West Africa), in the sense of moving schooling away from serving the real socio-culture, economic, and developmental needs of the population to serving the needs of the state and the capitalistic job market (see Idrissa, 2010).

promoted the French language. The French government's influence grew in the Malian state bureaucracy, especially after 1991, with the ascension of francophone-secularists to positions of power (Villalón et al., 2012), and French interests grew in the economy, by gaining control over the monetary system and by dominating major sectors of the economy including banking and telecommunication.

Given the overwhelming majority of the Malian population work in occupations that do not require French schooling, and given some major providers of jobs that require French schooling are the civil service, banking, telecommunication, and French schools, I argue that redirecting schooling in Mali to serve the job market and promote French language is turning schooling away from serving the real socio-culture and economic needs of the Malian population to serving France's imperialist interests. Yes, the colonizer only develops the sectors of the colony's economy that serve the colonizer's interests, links these sectors to the economy of the metropole, and thus enriches a small segment of the former colony's population while causing or worsening the poverty of the bulk majority of the population (Fanon, 1963, p. 159).

By this argument, I am not implying that schooling in Mali should be or can be detached from the job market or that the French language should not be taught. I am also not implying that everyone who attends a French school will be alienated from their local culture or will not be religious. Further, I am not suggesting that no good came out of French schooling in Mali, that traditional schooling should be abandoned, or that Malian state officials did not do anything to improve the national education system, promote our national languages, or develop the country.

Rather, I want to say there is more to schooling than serving the needs of the francophone civil service or specific sectors of the economy. Schooling must serve the socio-cultural and economic needs of all Malians. Schooling should not promote one language, promote distinct sectors of the economy, or impose foreign ideas. Schooling should not also be detached from Malian cultures or religions. In contemporary societies children spend more time at school than they spend with their parents. The role of schools is thus not limited to intellectual and professional training. The role of schools expands to the transmission of religious and socio-cultural values and the cultivation of creativity and productivity, leading to economic and organizational improvement for all segments of the society. Hence, I maintain that French schooling is failing the people of Mali even though it is serving the employment needs of a small segment of the Malian population.

Besides French schooling, Malian children are also alienated by distractions that come through information technologies such as TV, radio, the Internet, and smartphones. The content of these technologies is mostly produced by foreigners to disseminate foreign cultures. Even content produced by Malians do not always stimulates intellectual awareness or the good manners stemming from our socio-cultural and religious values.

In Mali, information technologies are mostly used to entertain, produce marketable contents, and promote the French language. For instance, I noticed in the last 20 years or so that more and more Malian movies and TV series are produced in French – a phenomenon I hardly recall 25 years ago. The supporters of this new phenomenon argue that foreigners are more receptive to movies produced in French. This sounds to me as a deceptive argument because people from all over the world produce movies in their local languages without necessarily translating them for foreign audiences.

Using French language in movies and TV series may be a reinforcement of an agreement, signed in July 2006, between the Malian and French governments to promote the French language in Mali in education, the cultural domain, and the media. I consulted this information in a document I obtained from the Malian ministry of education titled “LE SECTEUR DE L’EDUCATION ET LA COOPERATION FRANÇAISE AU MALI” (the education sector and French aid agency in Mali). I will discuss this in the findings chapter.

Based on all the above, I am compelled to say that the colonial school system and the misused information technologies are, in a sense, destructive forces for Malian languages, local cultures, and ways of life. These forces also do not fully serve the social or economic needs of most Malians. Therefore, the changes brought by colonization and modern technology place a considerable strain on Malian Muslims to sustain an Islamic way of life in the contemporary world. The problems arising from these changes persist and exacerbate due to the relative failure of Malian intellectuals⁶ and leaders to devise effective and sustainable indigenous solutions to the problems of Mali, in a world characterized interconnectedness and constant and rapid changes.

Failure to cope with the change and resolve the problems emanating from French colonization creates an intergenerational gap. It thus become difficult for parents and elders to pass on the cultural and religious traditions to the next generation as it was done before colonization. Passing on the tradition to the next generation becomes even more

⁶ Intellectuals (or *mɔ̀kɔ̀kalanlɛn ’u*, learned people) mean Malians who attended schools or who can read and write in any language, who presumably have more knowledge than the average Malian, and who presumably have better understanding of people and their context or some specialized area of knowledge.

difficult in the context of a globalized world. I see that globalization makes the fear of cultural annihilation a topical issue everywhere in the world. Non-Western countries are strained by Western cultural, technological, economic, and institutional pressure, and Western countries are pressured by the flood of skilled workers, immigrants, and refugees. Globalization is also characterized by constant change, mobility, secularization, westernization, interconnectedness, and relativization of values and beliefs.

When I put the local conditions of Mali in this global context, I see that it is challenging for Malian Muslims to educate their children to live an Islamic way of life (i.e., preserving a fourteen hundred-year-old tradition in a world where everything is constantly changing, and traditional values and beliefs are subject to question). Although religion also changes with time, from an Islamic point of view, it is the application of religious norms that adapt to time and places and to the specific circumstances of believers. However, the core of the religion and its overarching principles do not change (e.g., the *tawhid*, the oneness of God; divine guidance comes through Prophet Mohamed and the Quran; and Muslims must follow this guidance at all times and in all contexts). When I say to preserve an Islamic way of life, I mean these principles. Simply put, an Islamic way of life is a way of life based on the concept of *tawhid* and inspired by the divine guidance that comes through Prophet Mohamed and the Quran.

Considering my arguments about colonization, technology, the Malian political context, Islamic religion, and globalization, I see the madrasa as the best mass education institution for educating Muslim children in contemporary Mali. I believe this because Mali has no real economic, institutional, or intellectual independence on the international scene, so to preserve an Islamic way of life in Mali, Muslims must strengthen Muslim

youths' adherence to Islam, intellectual awareness, creativity, and productivity. The madrasa is partially doing this by teaching Islamic subjects and Arabic in addition to modern subjects and French.

My background as a former madrasa student, a Malian national, and a person with an insider knowledge of the socio-cultural specificities of Mali, made me a suitable researcher for undertaking this research project. Being an insider enabled me to understand the meanings madrasa insiders attribute to phenomena, navigate the social landscape in Mali, and communicate easily with my participants. I also benefited from my experience of living outside Mali for several years, so I looked at my data and reflected on my research process with the critical eye of an outsider.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced my research topic, problems my research will answer, research questions, and the research purpose. I pointed out that previous researchers left a gap in the literature about madrasa schooling in Mali because they mostly neglected how the madrasa educates students to acquire Islamic knowledge, succeed in higher education, and pursue careers. I suggested to close this gap by studying the real-life effects of madrasa education on five former madrasa students, who are university graduates and working professionals. This dissertation thus explores how madrasa education affected these five students as individuals, Muslims, workers, and Malians. The dissertation also explores these students' views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

As a former madrasa student, I assume that both the Islamic worldview and socio-cultural, economic, and political factors are important when studying Islamic schooling. I

maintain that the madrasa is important for preserving and reproducing an Islamic way of life in contemporary Mali. I am hopeful that this dissertation will benefit current and former madrasa students, parents, teachers, madrasa owners, principals, state bureaucrats, and researchers interested in Islamic schooling in Mali.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of five former madrasa students who are university graduates and working. This study focuses on how madrasa education influenced these students religiously, personally, socially, educationally, and professionally. This study also documents these students' perspectives about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. Understanding the lived experiences and documenting the views of these students will make madrasa stakeholders conscious of the implications of their decisions and actions for students' educational, career, personal, and social life. Exploring the lived experiences and views of these students will also promote research about the effects of Islamic schooling, educational processes and policies, and teaching practices on students. This chapter undertakes a critical review of the literature relevant to this study.

I reviewed the literature in three stages, before writing my research proposal, during data collection, and while writing the final report. Before writing my research proposal, I reviewed books, eBooks, online articles, dissertations, and theses. While collecting data, I reviewed unpublished theses at the Arabic department of the teachers' training school (EnSup⁷) in Bamako, Mali. When writing the final report, I re-examined the literature I had, and I consulted additional literature to add new details to my paper.

I searched the sources using the keywords “Islamic education in Mali”, “Islamic education in West Africa”, “Islamic schools in Mali”, “Islamic schools in West Africa”,

⁷ ENSup is the acronym for *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, a Malian higher education institute established in Bamako in 1963 to train teachers and school administrators and perform academic research.

“madrasa in Mali”, “medersa⁸ in Mali”, “education in Mali”, “Islam in Mali”, and “school in Mali.” I used these keywords to search books at the University of Victoria (Uvic) library and request books via interlibrary loan. I also searched electronic sources and databases accessible via the Uvic website. Next, I used the same keywords in Arabic and French to search sources on Google.

While reviewing the literature, I observed that Malian and foreign scholars adopt different interpretive stance regarding the Malian state’s decisions about Islamic schools. For example, while foreign scholars often regard the Malian government decisions about madrasas as an attempt to control or exploit madrasas (e.g., Bouwman, 2005; Brenner, 2007, 2001; Kavas, 2003; Roy, 2016, 2012), Malian scholars mostly regard these decisions as benevolent (e.g., Boly, 2013; Cisse, 2006). I also observed that while scholars from a non-Muslim background often focus their analysis of Islamic schooling on external socio-cultural, political, and economic factors, scholars from a Muslim background tend to link their analysis to Islamic beliefs and norms. For instance, in analyzing the difference between the traditional Islamic school and the madrasa, Brenner (2001) focuses mostly on the contextual factors of the West African society. However, when Babou (2016) and Ware (2014) do the same analysis, they consider Islamic beliefs and norms, and they link their analysis of Islamic schooling in West Africa to Islamic schooling in the wider Muslim *ummah*⁹ and to longstanding Islamic traditions.

⁸ The word *medersa* is the French spelling for madrasa. Madrasa is largely used in English. Madrasa is also spelled in English as madrasah or madrassa. I use madrasa throughout this dissertation.

⁹ *Ummah* in Arabic means nation or community. Muslims use this word to refer to the Muslim community around the world. It implies that all Muslims belong to the *ummah* of the Prophet.

I further observed that madrasa insiders focus mostly on studying the problems of the madrasa and their possible solutions (e.g., Cisse, 2006; Sangare, 2014; Sidibe, 2015; Tangara, 2017). Madrasa outsiders, however, may study the madrasa from a political perspective (e.g., Bleck, 2015, 2013; Brenner, 2001; Villalón et al., 2012), from an anthropological perspective (e.g., Bell, 2015), or an organizational perspective within the Malian educational landscape (e.g., Boyle, 2014; Roy & Humeau, 2018). Observing these trends in the literature influenced my approach in this study in three ways.

First, the assumption that drives my study is to seek a balanced approach between examining Muslims' normative views grounded in the Islamic beliefs, personal factors, and external factors in the Malian context. Second, in my literature review, I diversify my sources to include enough background information to help my readers to see my research problem from many angles, so readers can put my analysis and research findings into a broader perspective. Third, in my analysis, I attempt to identify the intersections, overlaps, and connections between the Islamic beliefs and norms, personal views, socio-cultural and politico-economic factors.

The Madrasa and the Evolution of Islamic Schooling in Mali

The first Islamic madrasa in Mali was established in 1945 in Kayes by Al-Hajj Mahmoud Ba (Cisse, 2006). Prior to that date, the traditional Islamic school, which still exists today, fulfilled the schooling needs of Malian Muslims. Contrary to the madrasa, modeled after western schools, the traditional Islamic school is not institutionalized into a hierarchy of education service providers with a centralized management of people and resources, and it is not embedded into a bureaucratic organization that allows outside third parties to intervene in the educational process within the school.

The traditional Islamic school is centered around the teacher (Saad, 1983; Tamari, 2016), its curriculum is centered around books (Saad, 1983; Sanankoua, 1985; Tamari, 2016), its teaching method is individualized (Tamari, 2016; Ware, 2014), the school schedule and school breaks are integrated into the daily and religious life of the Muslim community (Tamari, 2016), teaching takes place at the teacher's house or the mosque (Sanankoua, 1985), and teaching is not done in exchange for money (Tamari, 2016).

The traditional Islamic school comprises the elementary level, focused on the memorization of the Quran, and the advanced level, focused on studying books (Kaba, 1976; Sanankoua, 1985; Tamari, 2016). Elementary students may attend schools in their places of residence, or their parents send them away to study (Saad, 1983; Tamari, 2016). Advanced students look for teachers specialized in the field they want to study (Kaba, 1976; Saad, 1983; Tamari, 2016). However, many students stop attending school when they acquire enough education to practice their religion (Sanankoua, 1985).

Those who continue to study receive *ijaza* (recognition of mastery) from their teacher after memorizing the whole Quran in addition to mastery of Islamic sciences (Sanankoua, 1985). Students may help their teacher with household jobs and productive activities such as farming (Kaba, 1976; Tamari, 2016). Teachers receive donations from parents and the community (Tamari, 2016; Saad, 1983). Muslims perceive donating to teachers as honoring them for serving Islam (Saad, 1983; Tamari, 2016).

Traditional Islamic schooling was restructured along the western school model into madrasas. While traditional Islamic schools are structured around people and communities, madrasas are structured around institutions, so the relationship between people is mediated through contracts, bureaucratic procedures, and regulations. These

differences are significant for analyzing how the madrasa reshaped Islamic schooling, people's experiences, and people's perceptions about Islamic schooling.

In my view, the adoption of the western school model created the conditions for some of madrasas' problems. For example, the traditional Islamic school was a private school financially supported by the whole community to educate all the children of the community. The madrasa, however, became mostly a for-profit commercial venture initiated by individuals with limited financial means (Cisse, 2006), so finance continues to be a source of problem for most madrasas (Roy, 2012). The dearth of financial resources partially causes a deterioration of the quality of teaching in some madrasas (Bouwman, 2005). In my view, madrasas' financial problems are inevitable because the adoption of a western school model requires a mass mobilization of financial and human resources, which is beyond the ability of most initiators of madrasas.

Another problem is that the madrasa is an incomplete education system. The traditional Islamic school was a complete education system comprising all levels of education suitable for pre-colonial Malian society. By adopting the western school model without a mass mobilization of financial and human resources to create a complete education system suitable for post-colonial Malian society, the madrasa became limited to providing primary to high school level education. Hence, the madrasa made the higher education needs of Malian Muslims dependent on foreign universities or francophone universities in Mali.

The lack of a complete Islamic education system from the primary school to university reduces Malian Muslims' ability to make substantial intellectual production as their forefathers have done in Timbuktu, Djenne, and Macina. Nonetheless, the founders

of Islamic madrasas¹⁰ might have not foreseen these problems, but they set the basis for a school system that increased Muslims' ability to preserve their religious tradition in the aftermath of the French conquest. The French utilized schooling including establishing madrasas to serve the colonial project.

According to Denise (1966), the French completed the conquest of Mali around 1898. From the early days of the conquest, a French school was established in 1884 in Kita. French schooling fulfilled two main functions: to train auxiliary civil servants, and to maintain long-term French domination by assimilating Malian youths into French culture (Denise, 1966, p. 230). Malians resisted French schooling to the point that the colonial administration had to use arms to repress the revolt of the population of Fodebougou who refused to send their children to the school established in 1884 in Kita (Denise, 1966, p. 233). This source also indicates that [in 1886¹¹], "*l'école des otages*¹²" was established in Kayes to forcibly school the children of defeated chiefs and notables.

Against a backdrop of conquest and using schooling for political and cultural domination, the French considered Islamization, Muslim scholars, and Islamic schooling

¹⁰ I am using the term Islamic madrasas to distinguish the madrasas established by the French in Timbuktu and Djenne to serve the colonial agenda from the madrasas established by Malian Muslims for religious reasons. The term Arabic Islamic madrasas is used by madrasas union to distinguish madrasas in this sense from other schools that provide some forms of Islamic education or Arabic language instruction.

¹¹ Malian educators consider 1886 as the year when French schooling started in Mali in Kayes. A possible reason for choosing this date is that in 1889 the French gave the school of Kita to Catholic missionaries.

¹² *L'école des otages* means the school of the hostages. The school was later renamed *l'école de fils de chef* (the school of the children of chiefs). Indeed, according to Denise (1966), all the first French schools took Malian children as hostages, so when a given children did not come to school, his father was fined or imprisoned. The imposition of a head tax in 1888 enabled the expansion of colonial school network.

as major obstacles to colonial domination (Boly, 2013; Kavas, 2003; Peterson, 2011; Soares, 2005). Thus, according to Boly (2013) and Peterson (2011), Islamic schooling was restricted by all possible means, Muslim scholars and religious leaders who did not cooperate with the colonizer were persecuted, and Muslims were often prevented from making pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. In 1906, the French set up a bureau to manage Muslim affairs. They also created two colonial madrasas in order to educate Muslims and religious leaders who would cooperate with the French (Brenner, 2001; Kavas, 2003). These madrasas initially taught some forms of Islamic education but later dropped Islamic subjects from the curriculum (Brenner, 2001). I would not consider these madrasas as Islamic because they were not established for religious reasons.

Four decades after the establishment of these French madrasas, Malian Muslims incepted the first Islamic madrasas. Thus, in 1945, al-Hajj Mahmud Ba moved from Dakar, modern-day Senegal, to settle in Kayes, modern-day Mali, (Kane, 1997; Ware, 2014) and established a madrasa. Saada Oumar Toure (d. July 1, 1997) established a madrasa in Segou in 1946 (Kavas, 2003). In 1949, a group of al-Azhar university graduates opened a madrasa in Bamako (Kaba, 1976, 1974).

The pioneers of these Islamic madrasas were inspired by their schooling experiences. Saada Oumar Toure was quoted by Brenner (2001) saying, “[f]our years in the French school have borne fruit; I read and I understand what I read” (p. 75), but in the traditional Islamic school, only advanced students could properly read and write. The al-Azhar graduates also found out when they went to study in Egypt that the “majority of the students from the Soudan [Mali] had studied the Quran long enough to memorize

many verses, but they were not always satisfactorily prepared to speak and write correct Arabic” (Kaba, 1976, p. 413, 1974, p. 76).

Thus, for the pioneers of madrasas, these experiences meant that the improvement of Islamic schooling was done through the adoption of western school models and pedagogy. These experiences also made the pioneers see that the acquisition of linguistic skills at the madrasa must start from the elementary school instead of advanced education (as in the traditional Islamic school). Hence, the first madrasas were created with the goal of improving Islamic schooling.

The French considered Islamic schooling as dangerous for the colonial enterprise because it impeded their efforts to spread western schooling and impose French culture in Mali (Boly, 2013; Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1976; Kavas, 2003). Thus, they curtailed the teaching of Arabic in madrasas, and they forbade madrasas from teaching French (Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1976). The first madrasa of Bamako was closed in 1951 on “the legal grounds that the number of hours devoted to Arabic exceeded the legal limits” (Brenner, 2001, p. 103). This indicates the existence of an institutional policy to undermine Islamic madrasas.

After the independence of Mali in 1960, Muslims were able to freely open madrasas (Boly, 2013; Brenner, 2001; Cisse, 2006; Kavas, 2003). The regime of Modibo Keita (1960-1968) even sent some madrasa students on state scholarship to study in Egypt. These students were recruited into the public service after graduation (Boly, 2013; Brenner, 2001; Cisse, 2006). From 1968 to 1991, the regime of Moussa Traore promoted Islam, and Mali had good diplomatic relations with Arab countries (Brenner, 2001; Cisse,

2006). Under Moussa, madrasas were integrated into the national education system in 1982 (Cisse, 2006; Kavas, 2003; Roy, 2012).

In 1986, madrasas that accepted to implement the state-reformed curriculum took part in the national sixth-grade exam (Brenner, 2001; Roy, 2012; Villalón et al., 2012). In 1989, these madrasas participated in the national ninth-grade exam, and in 1992, they participated in the national high school exam (Cisse, 2006). However, in 1993, madrasas' participation in the national high school exam was revoked under the pretext that madrasa students' mastery of French was insufficient for pursuing higher education in Malian public universities (Bouwman, 2005, p. 105), so in 2003, a new curriculum was designed to reinforce French and align madrasas with public schools (Bouwman, 2005; Villalón et al., 2012). Madrasa insiders criticize the new curriculum for its inadequate coverage of Islamic subjects (Sidibe, 2015). This curriculum is also criticized for increasing the number of subjects and an imbalanced distribution of class time between subjects, so many topics cannot be fully covered during the allotted class time (Cisse, 2014).

The madrasa school network steadily grew after the independence of Mali. It grew from 26 in 1969, to 288 in 1985 (Kavas, 2003), and to 2538 in 2016 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2016). This steady increase indicates the absence of an official state policy to undermine madrasas, as it was the case under French colonization. However, state officials of independent Mali have conflicting views about the promotion of madrasas and the Arabic language. Brenner (2001) reported the minister of education of President Modibo Keita (1960-1968), Abdullahi Sangare, saying "that due to his support for Arabic language teaching, he was later pushed out of office by the Marxist

wing of the party¹³” (p. 212). In 1993, the minister of education, Baba Akhib Haidara, also faced many difficulties for supporting madrasa high school graduates and for opening the Arabic section in the teachers’ training institute, ENSup (Cisse, 2003).

The tension that exists within the Malian state bureaucracy regarding madrasas may be, in part, explained by the fact that state officials, like in the above examples, may believe that the state must support madrasas based on the principles of equity and justice. However, for other state officials, secularization, including marginalizing madrasas, is needed in the contemporary world (Villalón et al. 2012, p. 34). Bouwman (2005) quoted one of these officials, saying that the “government really only promotes French education. Only because it cannot prevent parents from opting for Arabic education in private madrasas, the government had to accept the madrasas as part of the educational landscape.” Nonetheless, state officials opposed to madrasas do not dare making such opposition publicly, fearing being accused as anti-Islamic (Kavas, 2003, p. 187).

The preceding discussion is significant for understanding how the madrasa continues to evolve in the political context of Mali, how macro-level institutional policies take shape at the implementation phase based on the views of state bureaucrats, and how macro-level policies intersect with bureaucratic politics to define room for maneuver for micro-level actors of the madrasas. Discussing the political context is important because this study explores former madrasa students’ perspectives about the future of madrasas in Mali, and the political context also affects the future of madrasas in Mali.

¹³ The party refers to US-RDA, Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (Sudanese Union-African Democratic Rally). This party governed Mali after the independence from 1960 to 1968.

What Role the Madrasa Plays in Mali

Socially, the madrasa facilitates the mass spreading of Islam in Mali, and thereby facilitates social cohesion among the culturally diverse population of the country (Cisse, 2006). Madrasas “provide opportunities to learn ... Muslim principles, scripture, and history, helping children grow into adults who will live in accordance with the accepted precepts of Islam” (Bell, 2015, p. 52). Moreover, the madrasa educates self-conscious Muslims who preserve their Muslim identity while participating in the modern political economy of Mali (Brenner, 2001; Roy, 2012). The madrasa also contributes in the mass schooling of children (Boyle, 2014; Kavas, 2003). It is for its mass schooling role that international agencies, like UNICEF and UNESCO, and the Malian government supports madrasas (Brenner, 2001; Gandolfi, 2003). Some Arab countries also support madrasas for promoting the Arabic language (Bouwman, 2005).

Parents who send their children to the madrasa mostly claim that secular schooling is dangerous for children’s Islamic belief (Bell, 2015; Brenner, 2007). Some of these parents appreciate any form of education as long as it helps Muslims live their life in this world to prepare for the life after death (Bell, 2015). Many parents also believe that God will ask them in the hereafter whether they had educated their children to be Muslims (Bouwman, 2005). Moreover, the madrasa provides the benefits of both an Islamic and a worldly education (Boyle, 2014; Brenner, 2007; Kavas, 2003), it makes children abide to the wishes of their parents (Boyle, 2014), it helps children practice the accepted interpretation of Islam, and it helps them develop socio-cultural skills (Bell, 2015; Boyle, 2014; Brenner, 2001).

Nevertheless, Malians had initially resisted secular schooling, but once they realized its importance for gaining status and privileges under the political economy imposed by colonization, many parents, including chiefs and religious leaders, sent their children to secular schools (Kaba, 1976, 1974). Indeed, Saad (1983) sees that one of the reasons for the decline of Islamic scholarship in Timbuktu after colonization is that many scholarly families accepted to send their children to secular schools. It is also a fact that only 18.14% of primary school children in Mali were registered at officially recognized madrasas in 2016 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2016).

Moreover, some parents send some of their children to Islamic schools and others to secular schools (Bouwman, 2005). Other parents send their children to secular schools at first and later send them to madrasas or vice versa (Bell, 2015). However, many secular school children attend traditional Islamic schools on weekends, during school breaks, or on weekdays (Tamari, 2016). Also, parents with sufficient financial means hire private tutors to teach their children at home (Bell, 2015).

Some researchers explain the popularity of madrasas by drawing a correlation between parents' and children's educational backgrounds. According to Roy (2012), Malian children's schooling is influenced by predetermined factors including parents' educational background, so parents who attended Islamic schools do not send their children to French schools as often as parents who attended French schools (p. 95). The unemployment of public-school graduates is also cited as a reason for the popularity of madrasas (Bell, 2015; Kavas, 2003). For Bouwman (2005), parents decide about their children's schooling based on a hierarchy of factors, the most important of which are availability and cost, and the least important are religion and attitude (p. 158).

The above explanations are insightful, but they do not cast light on the mechanisms through which families decide to send a given child to an Islamic school or a secular school. These explanations also fail to tell why a family opposed to secular schooling suddenly sends its children to secular schools, or why some families continuously send all their children to Islamic schools, overlooking the benefits of secular schools. My study may offer some explanations to these questions by seeking the views of former madrasa students.

The Organization and Operation of the Madrasa

Throughout its history, the madrasa's ability to operate as a modern school and teach Islamic and modern subjects depended largely on the ingenuity and social network of their founders, the political context of Mali, and the financial resources available to the owner of a given madrasa. I already discussed the political context. Here I will focus on the organization and operation of madrasas.

Malian madrasas depend largely on school fees, but they may also receive financial help from the community, from abroad, and from the government (Boyle, 2014, p. 20). Some Arab governments have also supported madrasas financially, provided teaching staffs and school supplies, and provided scholarships to madrasa graduates (Bertele, 2014; Roy, 2012, 2016). With money mostly provided by NGOs and private donors from the Arab Gulf, the large madrasas have improved their school infrastructure (Kavas, 2003; Roy, 2012, 2016). Arab financial support has, however, dwindled starting from the 1990s (Kavas, 2003). Due to financial shortage, most madrasas lack adequate modern school facilities (Boyle, 2014; Sangare, 2014).

The studies I just cited describe the material condition of madrasas but do to describe how the deteriorated material condition impacts students' learning. Also, these studies do not establish whether the lack of adequate facilities correlates to negative student and teacher performances. My study may provide some answers to these questions by exploring the experiences of former students.

Nevertheless, the large madrasas are able to diversify their teaching by not strictly following the government curriculum, but small madrasas cannot do that (Kavas, 2003). This may be an indication that large madrasas are able to deal more effectively with the negative impacts of the new curriculum on Islamic subject and Arabic. Some madrasas also suffer from a lack of planning and good management (Sangare, 2014). Additionally, there is a dearth of adequate school supplies and books in madrasas (Boyle, 2014). Through export of books to Malian madrasas, some Arab countries promote their ideas in Mali (Kavas, 2003). Notwithstanding, I could not find any study that investigated how imported books influence Malian students.

Moreover, it is not clear from the literature whether the import of books rather than using locally produced textbooks is solely due to financial shortage, or if it is due to lack of cooperation between madrasas. What is clear in the literature is that there are locally produced textbooks. People like Saada Oumar Toure have written many books for madrasas (Brenner, 2001; Kavas, 2003). The Malian state department of Education has also published some textbooks (Kavas, 2003). This brings me to the diversity of views about madrasa education.

The Diversity of Views about Madrasa Education

There are three orientations in madrasa schooling in Mali, including traditional *Maliki*¹⁴, *Salafi* Maliki, and modernistic Maliki (Denon, 2014). The traditional strictly follows the Maliki school's interpretation of the tenets of Islam with an acceptance of Sufism, the Salafi¹⁵ follows the Maliki doctrine while adopting conservative views regarding certain aspects of Islam, and the modernistic follows the Maliki school while stressing the teaching of scientific subjects alongside Islamic subject to enable madrasas students to do everything French school students can do (Denon, 2014). The literature is, however, silent about how these differences influence parents' decision when schooling their children in the madrasa. Hence, exploring former students' experiences may shed light on how these differences influence parents' decision.

Muslims have also differed about the soundness of the madrasa project. Some Muslim scholars opposed the first madrasas out of fear that teaching modern subjects would distort religious schooling (Brenner, 2001). Some scholars also rejected madrasas, arguing that it was un-Islamic to imitate the schooling practices of non-Muslims (Denon,

¹⁴ The Maliki doctrine or school interprets the teachings of Quran and Sunna related to Islamic jurisprudence according to the rules established by imam Malik ibn Anas [d. 179 H /795 CE]. Malian Muslims are Sunnis and they follow of the Maliki doctrine. At the same time, they may be adherents of Sufi brotherhoods, they may hold Salafi views, or they may be simply Maliki without adhering to a Sufi brotherhood or holding Salafi views.

¹⁵ In the Malian context, Salafi are referred to by some Muslims as Wahhabis, but Malian Muslims who hold Salafi views refer to themselves as *Sunamɔko* (defenders of the Sunna of the Prophet). These are Muslims who object to certain practices many Muslims do, on the ground that these practices are innovations that did not exist at the time of the Prophet and the early generations of Muslims, e.g., celebrating the birth of the Prophet or collective invocations Sufi brotherhoods do.

2014). Other Muslims have opposed madrasas, alleging that madrasas were Wahhabi schools (Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1974). Thus, in the colonial era, the French financed some opponents of the madrasa to established pseudo-madrasas that teach French and local languages to sabotage the madrasa project (Brenner, 2001).

According to Kaba (1976, 1974) and Kavas (2003), the internal competition among Muslims has, in a sense, led to the acceptance of the madrasa, the reinforcement of the Arabic language in the madrasa, the revival of religiosity, and the spread Islamic teachings in Mali. Moreover, many families who used to have traditional Islamic schools changed their schools into madrasas (Cisse, 2006).

Madrasa insiders also have competing views regarding government curriculum reforms. For example, the curriculum of 1985 was designed by CPLA¹⁶, headed at that time by a former madrasa student who claimed that this curriculum had adequately covered Islamic subjects. Many madrasas, however, rejected this curriculum on the ground that it did not adequately cover Islamic subjects (Brenner, 2001).

The fight over the government curriculum of 1985 led to the establishment of the Arabic Islamic madrasas union, which succeeded in pressuring the government to revise the curriculum in collaboration with madrasas to better cover Islamic subjects (Denon, 2014; Roy, 2012). It seems like a revision of the new curriculum of 2003 may also be underway because the revision of madrasa curriculum is one of the goals of an education project financed by the Islamic Development Bank for the period of 2016-2020 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, n.d.).

¹⁶ CPLA stands for *Le Centre de promotion de la langue arabe* (the center for the promotion of the Arabic language). It is located in the Malian Ministry of Education.

Given the diversity of views among promoters of madrasas and among state officials about madrasa schooling, it is possible that the new curriculum revision being financed by the Islamic Development Bank is also a result of pressure from within and without the Malian state bureaucracy. Pointing out the diversity of views about madrasa education is significant because besides the interests of parents, the evolution of madrasas in Mali is largely determined by the views, decisions, and actions of state bureaucrats and madrasa owners. This background information also helps to contextualize the findings and my analysis of the findings.

Teachers and Teaching Methods of Madrasas

The teachers of Malian madrasas are mostly former madrasa students who do not have university degrees (Boyle, 2014; Kavas, 2003). There are also teachers who hold university degrees from Arab countries or from Mali (Bouwman, 2005; Kavas, 2003). Some teachers receive in-service training while others do not (Boyle, 2014; Kavas, 2003). Teachers' salaries vary based on their credential and where they teach (Boyle, 2014), but mostly their salaries are low (al-Mojil & Maiga, 2017; Sangare, 2014). However, the financial condition of madrasa teachers is not very different from the majority of Malians (Kavas, 2003, p. 286). Some teachers choose to teach at madrasas, but others teach at the madrasa only because they cannot find another job (Kavas, 2003). Despite the low salary, however, teachers who see themselves in a religious mission are committed to their jobs (Boyle, 2014).

Many madrasa teachers do not hold teaching certificates (Kavas, 2003), receive in-service training, or apply modern pedagogical standards (al-Mojil & Maiga, 2017). I see that criticizing teachers based on bureaucratic standards, academic credentials, or

modern pedagogies overlooks students' learning experiences and teachers' competences. Moreover, reporting that low salary is a demotivating factor for some teachers does not indicate how teachers' demotivation impacts their teaching or students' learning. This study may help cast light on these points by exploring the views of former students.

Teaching methods in madrasas vary based on the subject. For instance, the Quran is recited and memorized, but other religious texts are read in Arabic and explained in local languages (Bouwman, 2005). The Quran must be memorized in its Arabic form because Islamic norms stipulate that only the Arabic form is considered as the Quran itself. Only the Quran itself is used in ritual prayers such as the five mandatory daily prayers, Friday prayer, or reciting the Quran as an act of worship. The translations of the Quran to other languages are considered as the translations of the meanings of the Quran but not the Quran itself. These translations should not be used in ritual prayers.

Another reason why the Arabic language is important for Muslims is that it is the only language used to perform rituals like the five daily prayers or to make *adhan* (the public call to prayer) regardless of whether these prayers are performed individually or collectively. Also, Arabic is the prime language for Islamic religious scholarship. Without mastering classic Arabic, one cannot understand the meanings of the Quran, as used to establish norms and rules of interpretation in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) or as used to substantiate theological arguments.

In Malian madrasas, the Arabic language is taught by explaining and rehearsing the rules, collective rehearsals in loud voice, conversations, and dictation (Kavas, 2003, p. 320). The teaching of grammar starts with examples, goes to explaining grammatical rules based on the examples, and ends with rehearsing and memorizing the rules

(Bouwman, 2005). Madrasa teaching is teacher-centered, and in many regards, it is similar to the teaching methods in Malian public schools (Boyle, 2014, p. 22).

Madrasa teaching methods are criticized for stressing memorization and recitation (al-Mojil & Maiga, 2017; Bell, 2015), and for not applying modern pedagogy or using instructional technologies (al-Mojil & Maiga, 2017). The literature is, nonetheless, silent about whether madrasa teaching methods fulfill the goals of Islamic education or equip students to succeed in their post-madrasa education. By asking former madrasa students, university graduates, this study may offer answers to these questions.

Post-Madrasa Education and Careers of Madrasa Graduates

According to Denon (2014), when students graduate from madrasas, they go through one of the following paths: direct or test-based admission to Malian public universities, studying in Malian private universities, studying abroad, or entering the workforce immediately (p. 11). Career-wise, most former madrasa students work in free enterprises (Cisse, 2006). Free enterprise in this sense means any job outside the public service sector or institutionalized private sector. When it comes to institutionalized jobs, most madrasa graduates work in teaching or Islamic religious services such as preaching, *dawah*¹⁷, and imams (Bouwman, 2005; Brenner, 2001; Cisse, 2006; Kavas, 2003). Madrasa graduates also work for Islamic NGOs, the Malian civil service, and in Malian diplomacy (Cisse, 2006; Kavas, 2003). Some madrasa graduates travel abroad to seek employment (Denon, 2014).

¹⁷ *Dawah* means calling people to adhere to Islam. It also means in the Malian context, calling Muslims to revive the teachings of Islam.

Madrasas are criticized for not preparing students for careers that contribute to the development of the country (Brenner, 2001), for not preparing student for lucrative jobs (Kavas, 2003), and for limiting the career prospect of students (Bleck, 2013). Criticizing madrasas based on the criteria that apply to French schools (e.g., preparing students for high-paying jobs) stems from a patronizing attitude. It overlooks the merits of madrasa education from parents' and madrasa insiders' perspectives. These critiques are also biased considering the relative stability of the madrasa school system in the context of an almost failed Malian education system.

According to Diakité (2000), the failure of the Mali education system since 1991 is due to many factors including: the voluntary retirement of competent teachers due to the structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the recruitment of non-qualified part-time teachers, the lack of adequate school infrastructure and supply, a curriculum unfit for the socio-cultural and economic realities of Mali, the widespread corruption in the school system, ongoing disruption of the schoolyear due to strikes from students and teachers, the indiscipline of students, and students' carelessness about learning. These factors result in the incompetence of university graduates and low admission rate, as low as 26% in 2000, in the national high school exam (Diakité, 2000). The 2000 statistics may seem dated, but the admission rate in the national high school exam was 25.12% in 2019 and 21.56% in 2020. In 2019-2020 schoolyear, Malian schools were closed for several months due to teachers' strike.

With the above in mind, I would say that the criticisms levelled at madrasas by some outsiders are biased and patronizing to people who choose to school their children in the madrasa. The critics of the madrasa also overlook the opinion of former madrasa

students, their contribution to the development of Mali, and their career choices. Thus, exploring the views of my participants provides insights into madrasa students' opinions about madrasas, their career choices, and their contribution to the development of Mali.

The Madrasa within the Malian Education Landscape

Twenty years ago, Dumestre (2000) qualified the condition of Malian schools as disastrous -- Mali had one of the lowest school enrollment rate in the world, the Malian state had no means to educate all school-age children of Mali, private schooling was regarded by many as a profitable business venture, spending on education had dropped from 3.7% of Mali's GDP in 1985 to 2.2% in 1995, and sub-Saharan Africa including Mali was the only region in the world where children mostly learned in a language that is not used in everyday life (pp. 172-177).

The 1962 educational reform, under President Modibo Keita, envisioned the use of national languages in schools. In 1979, a national language was used at four experimental schools, under President Moussa Traore, and in 1991, four national languages were used at 108 schools throughout Mali (Traoré, 2001, pp. 4-5). This experiment failed for lack of proper teaching methods, competent teachers, and adapted textbooks and instructional materials, difficulties transitioning from national languages to French, and low school performance (Traoré, 2001).

This experiment was followed by a relatively more successful experiment called converging pedagogy, developed in Belgium, to teach children their native languages and gradually introduce French, the only language used in teaching after Grade 6 (Traoré, 2001). Some parents and teachers resist the converging pedagogy because they believe it does not help students succeed in the francophone school system, there is still not enough

well-elaborated instructional materials in national languages, and Malian universities do not train specialists in national languages (Skattum, 2010).

Going back to the condition of Malian education system, in 2018 Mali had a 61.2% of primary school enrolment rate against 78.2% average in sub-Saharan Africa and a 5.5% participation in higher education against 9% in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2019, p. 11). In 2008, more than 50% of the education sector in Mali was financed by foreign aid, and in 2009, spending on education was about 4% of Mali's GDP (UNESCO, 2011). Civil servant teachers are mostly dissatisfied with their employment conditions (UNESCO, 2009, p. 113). The latest official statistics I could find indicates that in 2011, 48.8% of all primary and middle schools in Mali were public schools, 12.3% were private schools, 21.3% were community schools, and 17% were madrasas (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2011a).

In urban areas, students/teacher ratio averages 75:1 in public schools, 40:1 in private schools, 50:1 in community schools, and 46:1 in madrasas, and in rural areas the ratio averages 56:1 in public schools, 39:1 in private schools, 35:1 in community schools, and 38:1 in madrasas (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 2011b). Private schools refer to private French schools including Catholic schools (financed by the state and parents); community schools are not-for-profit private schools built and financed by communities (Diarra et al., 2001). A community school serves specific literacy or training needs for the community that owns the school (Villalón et al., 2012, p. 16). Some villages also build what can be called as community madrasas (Dumestre, 2000).

The national forum on education in 2008 concluded that the Malian education system suffered from insufficiency of competent and trained teachers, school curriculum

was not adapted to the socio-cultural and economic realities of Mali, many civil servant teachers also taught at private schools, and many private schools did not have adequate school infrastructure (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2008). At this point the reader should see that the madrasa in Mali is part of a national education system faced with a myriad of problems.

Madrasas in Mali and Madrasas in Select Muslim Countries

In this concluding section, I present some shared features between madrasas in Mali and madrasas (or Islamic schools) in select Muslim countries. My presentation focuses on Muslims' views about Islamic education, the effects of colonialism, secularism, and Western interference on Islamic education, curricular reforms and Islamic school insiders' responses to these reforms, the consequences of curricular reforms on Islamic subjects, and the financing of Islamic schools.

Muslims have different views about what constitutes an Islamic education, who can legitimately define that, and for what purpose (Hefner, 2007; Zaman, 1999). In Muslim countries like Turkey (Islam, 2010), Morocco (Wainscott, 2014), Egypt (Aşık, 2012), Syria and Jordan (Leirvik, 2004), Malaysia (Haji Ahmad, 1998), and Indonesia (Nuryatno, 2014), secular public schools offer some forms of Islamic education. Yet, many parents in these countries opt for educating their children in a full-time Islamic school, like the madrasa in Mali.

Colonialism and secularism have constrained Islamic schools. For example, after the secularisation of the state in Turkey, the state closed existing Islamic schools and opened state controlled Islamic schools called Imam-Hatip (Ozgur, 2012). During colonization in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the British seized the endowment used to

finance madrasas (Qasmi, 2005) and, at the same time, subsidized madrasas that accepted to teach non-religious subjects (Zaman, 1999). In Africa, colonizers saw that Islamic education stood in the way of their domination, but the British were much more tolerant toward Islamic education than the French (Launay, 2016). In Pakistan, many state officials are hostile to madrasa education, and without a great success, the state has attempted many times to bring madrasas under state control (Sajjad, 2013). Idrissa (2010) also notes that state officials in Niger are hostile to madrasas. In Malaysia, between 2001 and 2003, the state turned against Islamic schools that did not use the state curriculum because the promoters of these schools were against the ruling party (Kraince, 2009).

I conclude from my readings about Islamic schools in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (see Bano, 2012; Berkey, 2007; Metcalf, 2007; Moosa, 2015; Qasmi, 2005a; Rehman, 2014; Sajjad, 2013; Sikand, 2008; Zaman, 1999), Malaysia (see Hefner, 2009a; Kraince, 2009), Indonesia (see Azra, 2014; Azra, Afrianty & Hefner, 2007; Cassity, 2010; Hefner, 2009b), and Niger (see Idrissa, 2010) that while supporters of Islamic schools in these countries feel the need for curricular reforms to respond to changing socio-economic conditions, secular governments' push for curricular reforms either due to internal political considerations or external Western pressure. In these countries, the challenge Islamic school insiders face is how to find an optimal way to reform the curriculum without jeopardizing Islamic schools' religious mission. Some schools thus accepted state-reformed curricula while others refused. Islamic school insiders in these countries, however, acknowledge that reformed curricula have negatively affected students' mastery of Islamic subjects.

When it comes to financing, Islamic schools are financed through tuition fees, annual fundraising, donations, government subsidy, and *waqf* (endowment). For example, in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh many madrasas are financed by donations from the Muslim community (Qasmi, 2005b; Rehman, 2014). In Indonesia, schools are financed through donations and tuition fees (Azra, Afrianty & Hefner, 2007). In Malaysia, the state finances schools that implement the state-reformed curriculum (Kraince, 2009). In Senegal, the al-Azhar school network is financed by tuition fees, endowment, donations, and government subsidy (Babou, 2016).

To conclude, I would say that the controversy about Islamic schooling is partially due to Muslims' inability to effectively deal with the aftermath of Western political and economic domination. The controversy is also due to an active attempt of secular Muslim governments and their Western allies to undermine Islamic schooling because it is perceived as something that stands in the way of progress as understood from a Eurocentric point of view and stands in the way of Western hegemony (Berkey, 2007). While promoters of Islamic education mainly see education as a means for conservation and stability, some of those who hold a Eurocentric view of education want to use education as a means for social engineering and change (Berkey, 2007).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the relevant scholarly works to my research topic by identifying gaps in the existing literature that my research may possibly close. In my review, I talked about the viewpoints of insiders and outsiders, I related the history of madrasa schooling, I talked about the diversity of views among madrasa insiders and among state bureaucrats regarding madrasa schooling, I pointed out the factors that

motivate parents to send their children to the madrasa, and I described state policies regarding madrasa schooling as well as madrasa curriculum reforms. Moreover, I discussed the curriculum and teaching methods of madrasas, the funding and management of madrasas, and the criticisms levelled at madrasas. I also described madrasa graduates' post-madrasa education and career.

I hope I gave my reader a concise overview of the evolution of madrasas in Mali, the diversity of views regarding madrasa schooling, the actions of macro-level state actors and micro-level madrasa actors, and the views of social actors who benefit from madrasa schooling. This overview should enable my reader to better understand my guiding assumptions and contextualize my findings and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This study explores the experiences of a sample of five former Malian madrasa students, who are university graduates and workers, to understand how madrasa education influenced them religiously, personally, socially, educationally, and professionally. This study also offers their views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas. To these ends, I asked three questions:

- 1) Based on the lived experiences and perspectives of a sample of five former madrasa students, what are the outcomes of madrasa education and its curriculum on the development of students' Muslim identity, on their engagement in the society, and on their preparedness for higher education and careers within the socio-economic and political contexts of Mali?
- 2) Based on the lived experiences and perspectives of these students, how effectively do madrasas of Mali teach Islamic education alongside modern subjects?
- 3) According to these students, what is the role of madrasas in Mali, and how might madrasas be sustained for future generations?

This chapter outlines the research methodology I used to answer these questions. I present the rationale for choosing the case study approach, participants' selection criteria, overview of my research design, data collection methods, strategies of data analysis, ethical concerns, trustworthiness of my research findings, and limitations of my research.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

The features of qualitative research include encompassing diverse worldviews, respecting subjective views, acknowledging the complexity and interconnectedness of socio-cultural phenomena, and describing people's experiences, views, and actions within temporal and physical contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2009, 2007; Kirby et al.,

2017; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Merriam, 2002; Taylor et al., 2015). These features made qualitative research suitable for achieving the goals of this study, i.e., how madrasa education affected five former students and what they think about madrasas. Conducting this study following a qualitative approach uncovered the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on the participants, and it offered their views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

The features of the qualitative research described earlier are also in line with my assumptions. I assume that studies about Islamic education must consider Islamic beliefs and norms as well as external socio-cultural and politico-economic factors. I also assume that educating students according to an ideal or training them to acquire skills are two important objectives or consequences of schooling, so evaluating the effects of schooling on students is a good way to judge a school's success in its mission. These assumptions and my research questions call for a qualitative research design.

According to Creswell et al. (2007), a qualitative research can be designed as a narrative inquiry to study how people's life experience evolved over time, as a grounded theory to explain the factors that condition the evolution of a phenomenon, as a phenomenology to study the most essential feature of an experience, as an action research to describe the process of social changes, or as a case study to use select cases to provide insights into an issue (p. 239). This study used five former madrasas students as cases to provide insights into my research problem.

Rationale for Case Study Methodology

Researchers use the qualitative case study to explore a case or cases for an in-depth description of phenomena from the perspectives of social actors within temporal

and physical contexts (Abma & Stake, 2014; Chadderton & Torrance, 2011; Creswell et al., 2007; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2012, 2009). There are several definitions of the case study approach to research (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998; Dul & Hak, 2008; Gerring, 2006; VanWynsberghe, & Khan, 2007). In this dissertation I use the following definition:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 245).

I chose this definition because it comprises the essential feature I found in every definition of the case study I came across (i.e., gaining insights into a phenomenon that applies to a large population by closely studying a clearly delineated entity within that population). This definition is also broad enough to make case study suitable for a broad range of research situations. For example, contrary to Yin (2009), who restricts the application of the case study approach to studying contemporary phenomena, Creswell et al. (2007) do not make such restriction, so their definition applies to both past and contemporary phenomena.

My dissertation has all the features of a case study as defined by Creswell et al. (2007). Their definition applies to my dissertation for the following reasons:

- a) I conducted a qualitative research;
- b) I investigated well-defined phenomena (i.e., the religious, personal, social, educational, and career outcomes of madrasa education on former madrasa

students; and the opinion of these students about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas);

- c) I investigated these phenomena through exploring bounded systems, i.e., five former madrasa students, who are university graduates and who were working at the time of data collection;
- d) The investigated phenomena occurred over time in a real-life context (i.e., between 1980 and 1993, when three participants attended the madrasa, between 1992 and 2009, when two participants attended the madrasa, after these dates when each participant attended the university and when each participant graduated from the university to look for employment, and from the time each participant started working to the present);
- e) I explored these bounded systems through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (i.e., two face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each participant, one follow-up interview via WhatsApp with each participant, and documents review);
- f) I reported a case description (i.e., I gave the background information of each participant);
- g) and I reported a case-based themes in my findings chapter (i.e., while reporting the themes that emerged from the data, I clearly stated the effects of madrasa education on each participant, and I provided each participant's views).

It was advantageous to conduct this study as a case study because by understanding the effects of madrasa education on five former students, who are university graduates and workers, I highlighted how madrasa education enables students

to become believing and practicing Muslims, to engage in Malian society, to succeed in post-madrasa education, and to pursue careers in the Islamic religious and education sectors, the Malian civil service, or the private sector. I also highlighted the views of former madrasa students about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas.

Research Participants and Selection Criteria

The five participants, the cases in this research, were selected based on a purposeful sampling strategy, whereby the researcher recruits participants whose characteristics presumably allow them to provide in-depth information about the phenomena being studied (Emmel, 2013; Gentles et al., 2015; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 1999). By virtue of being former madrasa students, university graduates, and working professionals, I think the five participants had the necessary characteristics to provide in-depth information about the phenomena I studied. Each of the five participants was a bounded system through which I explored the religious, personal, social, educational, and career effects of madrasa education on students. I also elicited the perspectives of each participant to gain insights into the views of former madrasa students about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. Thus, I was able to answer my research questions.

The characteristics shared by the five participants make them a bounded system among former madrasa students (because not all madrasa graduates pursue higher education, and those who pursued higher education are not all in the work force), and the characteristics of each participant make him/her a bounded system among the five participants (because each participant has a distinct background). It is thus fair to describe my dissertation as a multi-case study. It is also fair to assume that my dissertation

provides a macro-level and a micro-level insight about the outcomes of madrasa education and about the views of former madrasa students.

At the macro-level, this multi-case study included five participants who possessed the range of real-life experiences required to gain insights into the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on students, whose characteristics resemble my participants. Similarly, exploring the views of my participants provided insights into the views of former madrasa students, whose characteristics resemble my participants, about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

At the micro-level, however, because each participant has a distinct background, each case I studied provides a unique insight into the effects of madrasa education on students and into the views of former students. Thus, whenever the experiences and views of the participants converge about a given phenomenon, it is fair to assume that those experiences and views may apply to other madrasa students, whose characteristics resemble these participants.

Now, the discussion turns to my recruitment process and my relationship with the participants. I knew four of the five participants before this research, and I recruited one participant through what is known as snowballing, whereby recruited participants refer potential participants (Handcock & Gile, 2011; Kirby et al., 2017; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Noy, 2008). Recruiting participants from people I know and through snowballing had the advantages of saving time in recruitment and facilitating the diversification of participants' demographic, professional, and educational backgrounds. Thus, I could easily recruit male, female, civil servants, or self-employed participants. I

understand there may be drawbacks in recruiting people I know. I will soon address the ethical considerations that may arise from recruiting people I know.

I know one of the participants because we live in the same neighborhood, but there is no close personal relationship between us. I know the second participant because we used to participate in some social activities together, but beyond that, there is no close personal relationship between us. As for the third participant, there is a personal relationship between us, but we do not see each other frequently. The fourth participant, however, I know closely, and we see each other frequently, when I am in Mali.

As I stated earlier, I did not know the fifth participant before this research. Hence, my prior knowledge of most of the participants enabled me to have a sufficient basis for recruiting participants of diverse backgrounds. The diversity of participants' backgrounds yielded two benefits, understanding how participants' backgrounds affect their views and understanding the shared views and experiences among all the participants.

To select the participants, I defined the following criteria: 1) being a former Malian madrasa student and a university graduate; 2) being above the age of 18; 3) being a worker; and 4) working either in the Islamic religious or education sector, a skilled job, the public sector, or self-employment. I chose these four sectors of employment because most madrasa graduates work in these sectors (Cisse, 2006), and because each of these four sectors requires the acquisition of certain skills at school. Diversifying participants' employment backgrounds casts light on the effects of madrasa education across employment sectors, as I shall discuss in the findings chapter.

I included being a former Malian madrasa student and a university graduate in selection criteria because my study is about madrasas in Mali and the views and

experiences of madrasa students. Recruiting university graduates also provided insights into the effects of madrasas on students' higher education. The selection criterion of being above the age of 18 allowed recruiting people who did not need parental consent. It also increased the chances of recruiting participants with richer lived experiences.

Each participant in this multi-case study was an adult, a former student who spent more than nine years in the madrasa in Mali, a university degree holder, and worker. My first participant is Ibrahim. He is married, and he has school-age children, all of whom attend the madrasa, and he thinks about sending all his children to the madrasa. Between 1980 and 1992, he attended the madrasa in three different cities in Mali. After obtaining, the middle school diploma, DEF¹⁸, he continued his education in the Arab world. There, he graduated from the university with a degree in sociology. At the time of my data collection, he lived in Bamako and worked there as the director of studies in a madrasa.

My second participant is Amina. She is married, and she has school-age children. Some of her children attend the French school while others attend the Franco-Arab school. Amina started her education in her grandfather's traditional Islamic school. Then, she attended the madrasa between 1981 and 1992. After obtaining the DEF, she travelled to the Arab world to continue her education. There, she attended the university to study sociology and to specialize in social work. Her study was cut short, however, because she had to return to Mali to get married. In Mali, she went back to the university to get a degree in Arabic literature. Later, she obtained a diploma in teaching. At the time of my data collection, she lived in Bamako and worked there at a foreign embassy.

¹⁸ DEF is the acronym for *Diplôme d'Etudes Fondamentales*. In Mali, students receive DEF after passing the national Grade 9 exam. Each madrasa also organizes its local exam and delivers its own DEF to students.

My third participant is Issa. He is married, and he has school-age children. One of his children attends the French school while the rest attend the madrasa. He started his education in the French school while at the same time attending the traditional Islamic school. Because of his paternal aunt's insistence, his father removed him from the French school and sent him to the madrasa. He attended the madrasa in two different cities in Mali, between 1981 and 1993. After obtaining his DEF diploma, he continued his education in the Arab world. There, he obtained a degree in architecture. At the time of my data collection, he lived in Bamako and worked there as a self-employed architect.

My fourth participant is Khadija. She is married, and she has school-age children all of whom attend the madrasa. She started her education in her grandfather's traditional Islamic school. Between 1992 and 2003, she attended the madrasa in two different cities in Mali. After obtaining the high school diploma, BAC¹⁹, she attended the university in Mali. There, she obtained a degree in Arabic literature. She also has a diploma in teaching. At the time of my data collection, she lived in Bamako and worked there in the Malian civil service.

The fifth participant is Mohamed. He is married with no school-age children. However, he plans to send all his children to the madrasa. He attended the madrasa in Mali, between 1995 and 2009. After obtaining his BAC, he attended the university in Mali. There, he obtained a degree in Arabic literature. He also has a teaching diploma and a diploma in building design. At the time of my data collection, he lived in Bamako and

¹⁹ BAC is the acronym for *Baccalauréat*. In Mali, students receive BAC after passing the national high school exam. Each madrasa also does its local exam and delivers its own BAC to students.

worked there in the Malian civil service. See Table 1 for a recapitulative of participants' background information.

Table 1

Recapitulative of Participants' Background Information

Name	Sex	Time in Madrasa	Credentials	Employment
Ibrahim	Male	1980-1992	B.A. sociology	Madrasa
Amina	Female	1981-1992	B.A. Arabic literature /B.A. of teaching	Foreign embassy in Mali
Issa	Male	1981-1993	B.S. architecture	Self-employed
Khadija	Female	1992-2003	B.A. Arabic literature /B.A. of teaching	Malian public service
Mohamed	Male	1995-2009	B.A. Arabic Literature / B.A. of Teaching /diploma of building design	Malian public service

Before closing the discussion about the participants, I should point out that initially I planned to recruit eight participants including four men and four women. I also intended to recruit two people from each of the four employment sectors noted earlier, and I intended to conduct four interviews with each participant. However, because it was difficult for me to find people who fulfilled the participants' selection criteria and had the time to commit to four face-to-face interviews, I reduced the number of participants to five and the number of face-to-face interviews to two.

Required Information to Achieve the Goals of the Study

The goal of this multi-case study was to understand the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on five participants, and to get their perspectives about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. To achieve these goals, based on my assumptions and using a case study approach, I asked three research questions. I answered my research questions by obtaining four types of information:

- 1) Perceptual information: by this, I mean information needed to understand the perception of the five participants about madrasa education and its outcomes; I obtained this information by asking the participants;
- 2) Demographic information: by this, I mean information that describes the participants' backgrounds. I asked the participants to obtain this information;
- 3) Contextual information: by this, I mean information used to situate my study within the existing body of literature, within the socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts of Mali, and within the context of Islamic schooling in Mali. I obtained this information by reviewing the literature;
- 4) Methodological information: by this, I mean information needed to design and conduct my study following a rigorous methodology able to produce an ethical and a trustworthy knowledge about the phenomena I studied. I obtained this information by reviewing the qualitative and case study literature and by reviewing the old and new madrasa curriculum documents.

Overview of Research Design

The stages I followed to design and conduct the present multi-case study included reviewing the literature, writing and defending my research proposal, and obtaining the approval from the Human Ethics Board of the University of Victoria to conduct the study (see appendix F). Following the approval of my research, I started recruiting participants via WhatsApp. Later, I travelled to Bamako to collect the data. In Bamako, I conducted two face-to-face semi-structured interviews with each of the five participants. I also conducted a semi-structured follow-up interview with each participant via WhatsApp. By interview, I mean asking the participants open-ended questions to get them to use real-life examples to describe how madrasa education affected them religiously, personally, socially, educationally, and professionally. I also asked them to provide their perspectives about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

I used interviews as my main data collection technique because exploring the outcomes of madrasa education through the five cases I studied was best done through interviews. Also, “interview is a prime source of case study data” (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p. 165). This assertion perfectly applies to this multi-study because I explored the effects of madrasa education on five former student and the views of these students. I also used documentary sources in this multi-case study. I used the old madrasa curriculum (i.e., prior to 2003) and the new madrasa curriculum (i.e., after 2003).

At the start of my research, I did a preliminary literature review to understand how scholars have studied madrasas in Mali and what aspects of madrasa education were still unexplored. After identifying some unexplored aspects of madrasa education, I set the goals of my research, and I wrote three questions to achieve those goals. Then, I

reviewed the qualitative research literature to look for a research approach suitable for my study. I also continuously reviewed the literature while writing my proposal, collecting data, and drafting my final report.

Through the continuous review of the literature and receiving feedback from my supervisory committee, I refined my research proposal until completion. Then, I met with my supervisory committee to discuss my proposal. Afterward, I submitted my application to the Human Research Ethics Board of the University of Victoria with the assistance of my supervisor. Once the Board certified that my study conformed to the ethical standards of the University of Victoria, I started recruiting potential participants via WhatsApp. When contacting potential participants, I described to them the goals of my research, and I asked if they were willing to participate or if they could recommend potential participants. Thus, two people accepted to participate.

From March 21, 2019 to May 5, 2019, I travelled from Canada to Bamako, Mali, for my data collection. Upon arrival in Bamako, I recruited more participants mostly via the telephone. I explained to them the goals of my research and what I expected from them. I asked those who accepted to participate to suggest the time and date they were available for the first interview.

Then, I translated into Arabic the participant consent form (see appendices D and E). For convenience, I handed this form to the participants on the day of the first interview. I verbally explained the purpose and content of the form in *Bamanankan*²⁰, and I asked the participants to sign the English version of the consent form.

²⁰ *Bamanankan* is one of Mali's national languages. The overwhelming majority of Malians are able to communicate in this language.

Data Collection Methods

The case study approach investigates phenomena by exploring bounded systems over time “through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports” (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 245). In this multi-case study, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with each participant. I also reviewed madrasa curriculum documents as well as documents I obtained from the Malian ministry of education.

Because my research explored how five former students perceived the madrasa education and its effects on them, I used semi-structured interviews. Using semi-structured interviews to understand people’s perception allows the researcher to keep the discussion focused around research questions while leaving room for probing questions to find out more about the studied phenomena (Wengraf, 2001; Yin, 2012). Using semi-structured interviews in this study elucidated the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on the participants and probed participants’ perceptions about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

I conducted three semi-structured interviews in *Bamanankan* with each participant, so I developed three interview guides (see appendices A, B, and C). I created the first interview guide based on the three research questions. After the first interviews, I listened to the recordings to review and cross-check participants’ responses, to identify topics that needed further elaboration, and to paraphrase certain questions for clarity. Then, I created the second interview guide. In this guide, there are participant-specific questions. I developed the third interview guide when writing my analysis chapter to get the participants to elaborate on some of the findings.

In the first interviews, I reiterated to the participants the goals of my research, and I explained why it is important to study the madrasa education and its outcomes based on the perspectives and lived experiences of former madrasa students, who are university graduates and workers. I also reminded the participants of their right to withdrawal, I promised them to keep their identities confidential, and I disclosed the risks and benefits of participating in my research. In the second interviews, I asked the participants if they had questions or if they wanted to withdraw. At the end of each interview, I asked them if they wanted to add details to their responses or give me feedback.

With each of the five participants, I conducted two face-to-face semi-structured interviews, making a total of ten interviews. On average, each interview lasted about an hour. I interviewed two participants at their workplaces, one participant at their house, and one participant at my house. In the case of one participant, the first interview took place at their workplace and the second interview at their house.

After the interviews, I obtained and reviewed copies of the old and new curriculum. I also obtained some documents about madrasas and education in Mali, from the Malian ministry of education. These documents included decrees, government report, policy documents, and statistics. I reviewed these documents to put the interview data into a broader perspective. Moreover, after writing the first draft of my analysis chapter, I reached out to the participants via WhatsApp to make sure I did not misinterpret their views, so I wrote the third interview guiding questions based the conclusions I drew from the two face-to-face semi-structured interview data.

Method of Data Analysis and Synthesis

I began my analysis while collecting the data. The analysis continued until I finished writing the findings and analysis chapters. After the first interviews, I listened to the recordings to make sense of the data and to prepare the second interview guide. After the second interviews, I listened to the recordings again, and I reviewed the madrasa curriculum documents to compare the old with the new curriculum.

Because I interviewed the participants in *Bamanankan*, I had to translate the data into English. I translated at the transcription stage. Translating at this stage increases the contextual details and meanings that may be transferred into the second language (Santos et al., 2015). Cross-language research may pose problems for qualitative researchers because idioms, colloquialisms, metaphors, and other culturally-bound expressions are hard to transfer to another language without distortion (Helmich et al., 2017). I thus think researchers must seek balance while translating to avoid misrepresenting insiders' view or causing misconception for outsiders. Balance means that, when possible, researchers should preserve the spirit of the language insiders use including idioms, colloquialisms, and metaphors. At the same time, researchers should explain in brackets, when needed, to enable outsiders to understand the meaning based on the context of the speech.

Therefore, in this multi-case study, I translated each interview into English by listening to participants' full responses to a given question. Then, I translated each response by preserving its wording, whenever I felt that the meaning could be understood word-for-word in English. When I felt the meaning would be distorted in English, I used the closest English equivalent. In some cases, I translated participants' words verbatim

and provided the closest English equivalent in brackets. Moreover, I revisited the audio recordings whenever a section of the transcript needed refinement.

For each participant, I transcribed the interviews in a Word document named after the participant (e.g., *Amina-Transcript*). I divided the participant's responses based on the beginning and end time of each response in the recording. Then, I created a second Word document for coding each participant's transcript (e.g., *Amina-Code*). This document organized and labelled the responses in tables. The label I1_AM_F0:45-1:24 refers to interview 1 for Amina, and response located at 0:45 to 1:24 in the recording (see Table 2). Labeling the data in this way made it easy to retrieve the responses when needed.

Table 2

Example of the Code Table

Segment I1_AM_F0:45-1:24	Topic
<p>Amina: “before, I entered the madrasa, I was first in <i>blonkənəkalan</i> [traditional Islamic school]. I started school in <i>blonkənəkalan</i>, and when I arrived at <i>Sabih</i> [I learn the Quran up to <i>Sabih</i>], my <i>tcəkərəba</i> [grandpa] said that I go the madrasa.”</p>	<p>Starting in <i>blonkənəkalan</i> Being sent to madrasa Grandpa deciding about her schooling</p>

Following the transcription and coding, I created a master Word document named, “*Themes Based on Research Questions.*” In this document, I wrote the three research questions, and under each question, I wrote all the topics the participants discussed. For instance, under the second question, I wrote as a topic heading each subject the participants talked about, each teaching method they described, and each

school activities they described. Under each topic I created a table with all the responses related to that topic. Next to each response, I included my observations (see Table 3).

Table 3

Sample Table in the Themes Document

Segment	Quotation	Observation
I1_AM_F1:40- 2:28	Amina , “He said their children never enter <i>ekoli</i> [French school]. He engaged in a battle so I will not be sent to <i>ekoli</i> , and this was a reason. It marked me to the point that the French course they gave us at school [madrasa], I was not interested in it.”	Family tradition and schooling Power dynamics within family Psychological barrier to mastery of French: liking French to <i>ekoli</i> . Despising <i>ekoli</i> causing lack of interest in French course in madrasa
I1_IB_F26:13- 27:26	Ibrahim , “In addition to that, the French language which is the language of the state. We did not also have a French teacher.”	Lack of French teacher in madrasa causing lack of mastery of French

To report the research findings, I classified what stood out for me in the participants’ responses into categories and sub-categories. In this classification, I was not concerned with the order of research questions. My concern was the relevance of the findings to the purpose of my study, research questions, and harmony between categories and sub-categories. I thus organized research findings under five categories: 1) the

madrasa seen as a necessity for preserving Islam in Mali; 2) the diversity of curriculum and teaching of madrasas; 3) the madrasa shaping participants' identity; 4) the madrasa determining participants' education and career paths; and 5) sustaining the madrasa by improving its weaknesses. These categories are discussed in the findings chapter.

To write the findings, I looked for common threads that ran through participants' responses, and I picked out responses that did not fit the common thread. I also looked for both positive and negative responses about the different topics, and I was attentive to variations and nuances. I wrote the findings using my own voice, and I quoted the participants to honor their voices and to ground my voice in the data.

When analysing the findings, I looked for intersections and overlaps between the normative, personal, and contextual. I presented my insights about the findings, and I situated my contributions in the context of the existing literature about madrasas in Mali. Then, I contemplated the implications of my study to make recommendations for madrasa owners, teachers, policymakers, researchers, and curriculum designers.

After writing the first draft of my analysis chapter, I contacted the participants to make sure I did not misrepresent their views. Before contacting the participants, I re-read the transcript of all interviews to gain fresh insights about the data and to put participants' responses in the context of the interview. I thus considered how the interviews unfolded to produce participants' answers, how a given participant expressed their views, how the same view was expressed by all the participants, and how the same concept was expressed differently. I also looked for the nuances I might have overlooked while coding or important themes I might have missed while focusing my coding on search questions.

As a result of these reflections, I developed the follow-up interview guide, and I contacted the participants via WhatsApp for follow-up interviews. Based on these interviews, I revised my findings chapter to add new data including participants' views about language and schooling. I also reformulated my description of some of the concepts such as participants' views about the will of God. I brought balance to my analysis (i.e., I interpreted the data considering multiple alternatives). For instance, I included alternative interpretations to explain participants' views about some madrasa owners' attitudes toward money. Another reason I included new data in my findings was to have enough supporting evidence for my analysis, recommendations, and conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics in research involving human beings revolves around safeguarding research participants from misinformation, mistreatment, misrepresentation, and potential risks that may result from participation (Atkins, & Wallace, 2012; Christians, 2005; Flick, 2009, 2007; Kirby et al., 2017). Hence, following the guidelines of the Human Ethics Board of the University of Victoria, I did my due diligence to inform the participants about my background, the goals of my study, their rights and responsibilities, and potential risks that may result from participation. I communicated this information to the participants verbally and in writing, by translating the consent form into Arabic.

I also kept participants' identities confidential. I removed from my paper any information that reveals participants' identities such as names, workplaces, madrasas they attended, or countries where they studied. I was the only person who had access to the recordings and transcripts. Moreover, I accurately represented participants' voices by asking them to clarify what they meant by their responses during the interviews, by

quoting their responses when writing the findings, and by doing the follow-up interview. To honor their contributions, each participant will receive a copy of my dissertation.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The congruence between my research design, research goals, research questions, investigated phenomena, my guiding assumptions, and data collection methods enabled me to produce trustworthy knowledge about the effects of madrasas on the participants and their views about madrasas. By trustworthiness, I mean that I correctly described participants' perceptions about the studied phenomena, the collected data was corroborated from multiple sources, alternative viewpoints were considered in my analysis to the best of my ability (Creswell, & Miller, 2000; Denzin, 2012; Flick, 2009; Patton, 1999; Whitemore et al., 2001; Yin, 2013, 2012).

To correctly describe participants' perceptions, during the interviews, I asked them to clarify their answers, and I recapitulated the essential points of their answers and asked them to confirm whether I correctly understood what they said. In the second interviews, I paraphrased some of the questions I asked during the first interviews to get the participants to elaborate on certain points. By recapitulating participants' answers and cross-checking their answers by asking the same question differently, I am confident that the data I obtained from the participants accurately represents their voices.

Accurately recording and reporting participants' voices does not make the information provided by a participant true in itself. Although a participant's views may not contain factual information or a true account of something, it is interesting because it represents a true account of how they experienced and perceived their madrasa education. I thus set multiple trustworthiness criteria based on the information the participants

provided. In the context of establishing trustworthiness criteria, I categorized the information provided by the participants as normative information, perceptual information, factual information, and constructed information.

Normative information is when a participant provided a given datum and claimed that this is what a Muslim should do, or this is true because it is in line with the Islamic beliefs or norms. When a participant states that one will answer to God in the hereafter if they do not educate their children to Muslims. This is an example of a normative information because it calls for conformity as Islamic canons do. I consider a normative information as triangulated if many participants or the literature confirm it.

By perceptual information, I mean information the participants provided based on how they perceive things, whether such things exist independent of participants' perception or not. For example, when the participants claimed that madrasas must be sustained or that the madrasa had positive or negative effects on them, this information may be triangulated when confirmed by many participants. Even if such information is not shared by many participants, it still holds value because it represents their perception.

By factual information, I mean information that exists independent of participants' perception. For instance, when the participants claimed that the number of hours dedicated to Islamic subjects was reduced in the new curriculum. This information exists in the curriculum and in the teaching of madrasas irrespective of participants' views. I cross-checked factual information by comparing participants' responses and reviewing the curriculum documents.

By constructed information, I mean information participants recalled about past events. Constructed information can be a mixture of the other types of information

discussed above, but in this instance, I am not concerned with whether the said event occurred or not. Here, the trustworthiness criterion is to accept the information as true because one participant cannot confirm another's experience by definition. When the participants related such information by expressing doubt, however, I asked them to confirm if they remembered the event in question. Indeed, every participant occasionally claimed that they did not remember certain events or did not know about certain things.

Nonetheless, someone may be critical of the trustworthiness of my study on the ground that I knew four participants, so my acquaintance with them might have influenced their responses. The soundness of this critique depends on the information the participants provided. This critique applies to information pertaining to preference or judgment. To make sure my acquaintance with the participants did not influence their responses, I asked them to address alternative views and objections, whenever possible. For example, when a participant stated that madrasas were needed to promote Islam in Mali, I asked: "what would you tell someone who objects to this opinion on the ground that Islam can be promoted in Mali through other alternatives?"

Another critique one may level against the trustworthiness of my study is that, given I only interviewed five people, to which extent does this study represent all madrasa graduates' lived experiences and views? Does it achieve a saturation of all views? If so, how? If not, what advantage does its particularity offer? My answer is that in qualitative case study, the case is inextricably linked to the context (Abma & Stake, 2014; Creswell et al., 2007; Patton, 1999). A case study does not claim generalization or extrapolation to other contexts; notwithstanding, studying specific cases provides insights

into similar cases assuming the similarity of contexts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Saldana, 2011; Yin, 2012).

Therefore, this study gives insights into former students' views about madrasas in Mali and the influences of madrasa education on students, whose background resemble that of my participants. Moreover, as I cross-checked the data from multiple sources, whenever possible, I assume that educators, parents, students, researchers, and decision-makers can easily see whether or not the insights gained from this study about madrasa education extend beyond the cases I studied.

Someone may still say that given I am a former madrasa student and in favor of madrasa education, I could have manipulated my research design or select specific data to produce biased findings. To this critique, I would say that I am confident that my research design and findings were not biased because I adopted a balanced approach in every stage of my research, and I clearly stated the rationale for my design and my decisions. By balance, I mean considering alternative viewpoints in my analysis, whenever possible, reporting participants' perspectives, providing additional information when needed, using the literature produced by Malian and foreign scholars, and considering in my assumption the Islamic beliefs as well as contextual factors.

Moreover, I presented various viewpoints, and I looked at the studied phenomena from multiple angles. I extensively quoted from the data, and I juxtaposed my findings with other scholarly works. I also exercised reflexivity which is self-scrutiny (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 411). Through reflexivity, I was aware that my support for the madrasa could bias my analysis and that my acquaintance with the participants could bias their responses to my questions. I already detailed how I addressed these biases. Also, as

I said in the introduction chapter, reflexivity made me aware that although I am a former madrasa student, my academic experience made me a relative outsider in comparison to my participants. Through reflexivity, I was also aware of the limitations of my analysis. Therefore, I maintain that I did my due diligence to produce a well-rounded study that reflects participants' voices and informs the reader of my decisions.

When it comes to the strengths of my analysis, my analysis enables the reader to understand how the micro (i.e., the lived experiences and views of my participants) relates to the macro (i.e., Islamic norms, socio-cultural, and politico-economic context of Mali). My analysis also brings to the fore the combination of factors that help explain the differences in participants' experiences, views, and decisions. By understanding how the micro relates to the macro and how factors combine to give rise to complexity and differences, I am able to explain the mechanisms and dynamics that drive people's decisions, actions, and views about madrasa schooling in Mali.

A limitation of my analysis, however, is that some readers may find my reasoning hard to follow, or they may believe that I drift away from my data or my topic because when I analyze the data, I do not convey my insights directly. Rather, I make long introductions by concatenating many ideas to first build the framework that enables the reader to understand why I interpret the data as I do and how I arrive at my conclusions. Some readers may find this confusing, but I think it is important to proceed in this way because once the readers understand the process I follow to arrive at my conclusions, they can see the merits and shortcomings of my analysis. Then, they can judge whether or not my views are convincing. This limitation gives rise to a second limitation,

repetitiveness. Because I am aware that some readers may find it hard to follow my reasoning, I tend to repeat the same thing over and over to refresh the reader's mind.

Another limitation of my analysis, I would assume, is that because my analysis leans toward explaining complexities, finding differences, and describing mechanisms and dynamics, some readers may find that my description of individual cases is not rich enough. Because this is a multi-case study involving five participants, some readers would have expected to see two levels of analysis including a detailed analysis of the distinctiveness of each case, and then an overarching analysis about shared features among the five cases. Although my analysis includes both these two levels, I do not analyze individual cases separately. I mostly talk about individual cases while analyzing shared features among the five cases.

Finally, a reader may feel that my analysis is biased because I am not very critical of the madrasa, I expose some downsides of the French school or the traditional Islamic school while I do not say much about their positive aspects, or I am critical about French interference in Malian education while I am not critical about Arab aid. A reader may have these feelings, I would assume, if they do not read my analysis through the lens of my assumptions and the criteria I set for analyzing a given topic. As I stated above, I always try to convey to the reader the reason why I choose to analyze a given topic the way I do, so the reader can see the merit and shortcoming of my analysis.

For instance, in the introduction chapter, I argued that given the madrasa teaches both Islamic and modern subject, Arabic, and French, it is more suited for educating Muslim children in Mali than both the traditional Islamic school and the French school. I presented the premises up which I based this argument, so, I would assume, if a reader

does not accept those premises – or at least judge the merit and shortcoming of my argument based on those premises, such a reader may see my argument as biased.

Chapter Summary

I hope this chapter transparently presented the reasons that motivated my methodological choices, the steps I followed to design and carry out my research, the criteria I set for selecting the participants, the steps I took to increase the trustworthiness of my research, address ethical issues, and be reflexive about my biases.

Chapter 4: Findings

This multi-case study explored how five former madrasa students perceived the effects of madrasa education on them, and how they viewed the madrasa. I believe understanding the personal, religious, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education through a case study is an effective way to gain insights into the real-life outcomes of madrasa education on students. I also believe that exploring the views of these students as a case study is an effective way to gain insights into former madrasa students' views about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali.

This chapter reports the findings I obtained from 15 semi-structured interviews, including two face-to-face interviews and one WhatsApp interview with each participant. I organized research findings under five categories: 1) the madrasa seen as a necessity for preserving Islam in Mali; 2) the diversity of curriculum and teaching of madrasas; 3) the madrasa shaping students' identity; 4) the madrasa determining participants' education and career paths; and 5) sustaining the madrasa by improving its weaknesses.

For each finding, I briefly introduce the main category followed by a detailed discussion of the subcategories. I first report the views the participants share. Then, I highlight exceptions, nuances, or negative cases. Whenever relevant, I quote from the participants and discuss the quotation in a separate paragraph to avoid having long paragraphs. I include quotations from each participant to honor their contribution, I present multiple perspectives about each finding, and I supplement the discussions about the curriculum with the findings from reviewing the curriculum documents. I also supplement the discussions about the Malian state policies regarding madrasas with the findings from reviewing the documents I received from the Malian ministry of education.

Finding 1: The Madrasa Seen as a Necessity for Preserving Islam in Mali

This finding discusses how the participants unanimously saw an inextricable connection between the madrasa and the preservation of Muslim traditions in Mali. The participants expressed this connection by saying that madrasas were necessary for preserving Islam in Mali, by relating how their parents referred to Islamic norms to justify the need for madrasa education, by describing the merits of madrasa education, and by explaining the needs for the Arabic language for Muslims and Malians.

The reader should bear in mind that whenever the participants refer to Islam or what constitutes Islamic, they are referring to Islam as accepted by the mainstream of the Muslim community in Mali, and they are referring to Islamic teachings as interpreted by mainstream Muslim scholars. This form of Islam is preached in mosques, taught in madrasas, and taught in traditional Islamic schools. Malian Muslims are Sunnis, and they follow the Maliki doctrine in jurisprudence. At the same time, they could be members of Sufi brotherhoods, Salafi, or simply Maliki without being Sufi or Salafi²¹.

It is this diversity embracing interpretation of Islam that my participants refer to as Islam or as the true teachings of Islam. For instance, Mohamed stated, “[the madrasa] allowed us to truly know what Islam is,” and he added, when “scholars differ with each other, you don’t have to say this person is right or that person is wrong.” Ibrahim also argued that “Terrorists are fought by showing true [Islamic] knowledge to people.” Thus, if truly knowing Islam includes understanding why there is a diversity of interpretations within the Islamic scholarly tradition (like Mohamed said), showing true Islamic

²¹ See the literature review chapter, page 45, for a discussion of the meanings of these terms.

knowledge to people becomes an effective way to counter the extremists who try to impose one interpretation of Islam (like Ibrahim argued).

Below I discuss the three subcategories that emerged from my first finding: 1) why participants' parents sent them to the madrasa; 2) participants' views about sending children to the madrasa; and 3) participants' views about the role of madrasas in Mali.

Why Participants' Parents Sent Them to the Madrasa

All the participants stated that their parents sent them to the madrasa for religious reasons. However, the socio-cultural factors that reinforced the religious motive differed from one participant to the other. Also, the mechanisms that drove participants' parents' decisions differed from one participant to the other, and participants' stories varied when it came to parents' openness to send their children to French schools.

In the case of the participant Amina, her grandfather sent her to the madrasa on the ground that the "madrasa is the way of Islam." Her grandfather – who owned a traditional Islamic school where Amina started her education – decided that she must attend the madrasa despite her uncle's attempt to send her to *ekoli* [French school]. Besides the religious motive, Amina's grandfather reminded her that they came from a scholarly lineage, so she must attend the madrasa and acquire Islamic knowledge as had many other women from their extended family who memorized the whole Quran and taught children.

The story of Amina shows that her family was open to schooling their children in either the madrasa or *ekoli*, but deciding which child attended which school was a matter of power dynamics between decision-makers within her family. The stories of Ibrahim, Issa, and Khadija also reveal that their parents were open to both the madrasa and *ekoli*.

For choosing the madrasa, their parents cited religious beliefs. In the case of Ibrahim, his father said, “in the hereafter, Allah will not blame him for not giving his children religious education.” All the children of Ibrahim’s family, with two exceptions, attended the madrasa. Other than the religious motive, Ibrahim’s father also told him that his grandfather was a scholar who taught in *majlis*²². However, two of Ibrahim’s siblings were sent to ekōli, the first due to the pressure of their maternal uncles and the second due to the pressure of their paternal aunt, and it was only because of her intervention that Ibrahim’s father eventually assented to send his siblings to ekōli.

In contrast to the siblings of Ibrahim, the paternal aunt of Issa persuaded his father to remove Issa from ekōli and send him to the madrasa instead of his little brother. Issa related his story as follows,

One day, our *tenemusō* [paternal aunt] was talking to our *tcōkōrōba* [father]. My *tcōkōrōba* said to her that he was going to send one of our little brothers to the madrasa because he wanted someone in our family to understand the Arabic language and speak the Arabic language. Our *tenemusō* said to him [our father], “no” if someone must attend the madrasa in the family that must be me because I am the namesake of her husband, and her husband is a *mōri*²³.

The previous story of Issa lends support to the reoccurring theme in Amina’s, Ibrahim’s, and Khadija’s stories. The stories of these participants showed that their parents were open to both the madrasa and ekōli, and the madrasa was chosen mainly for

²² *Majlis* means learning circle for advanced students in the traditional Islamic school.

²³ *Mōri* means marabout. This may be a scholar, a religious leader, or a learned person who know esoteric sciences.

religious reasons or, in Issa's case, for religion and the Arabic language. As I elaborated on in the literature review chapter, the Islamic religion is inextricably connected to the Arabic language for two major reasons. The first reason is that only the Quran in its Arabic form should be used in prayer. The second reason is that Islamic religious scholarship is not possible without the mastery of the Arabic language because Islamic norms and rules of interpreting the Quranic text are based on the Arabic form of the Quran. Although Muslims do not consider Arabic as a sacred language, its de facto status as the language of prayer and religious scholarship gives it a distinctive status in Islam.

With these participants, the religious reason that made their parents sent them to the madrasa was reinforced by socio-cultural reasons like family tradition, but family dynamics determined largely which child was sent to which school type. In Khadija's case, her grandfather owned a traditional Islamic school, and later, he opened a madrasa where he sent the school-age children of Khadija's family. Before Khadija's grandfather sent her to the madrasa, he got the agreement of the woman who was raising her.

Nevertheless, the case of Mohamed slightly differs from the above stories. His story does not indicate whether or not his parents were open to sending their children to *ekoli*. His story, however, clearly shows that his parents had a strong preference for Islamic schooling because they sent all their children to the madrasa. According to Mohamed, his father and uncle sent all the children of his family to the madrasa. His father and uncle also studied and worked in the madrasa. Overall, Mohamed and other participants' stories show that their schooling was not always decided by their immediate families, so family norms and traditions played an important role in participants' schooling decisions.

Participants' Views About Sending Children to the Madrasa

Khadija and Ibrahim sent all their school-age children to the madrasa, and they also plan to send the rest of their children to the madrasa. Mohamed, who does not have school-age children, also said he would send his children to the madrasa. These three participants believe that despite the shortcoming of the madrasa curriculum, it is possible for courageous and well-supported students to specialize in any discipline and to eventually work in any profession like French school students. Therefore, these participants argued that sending children to the madrasa has the double benefit of mastering Islamic knowledge while studying modern subjects and speaking two languages which gives madrasa students an edge intellectually and more career options.

These three participants also thought that sending children to the madrasa as opposed to *ekoli* raises children's Islamic consciousness and the chances that they became good practicing Muslims and obedient to their parents. According to Khadija,

If you educate your child [in the madrasa], so he knows his religion. This is what Allah says, and this is what the Prophet says. ..., in the madrasa, you are taught to respect your parents. You are told that your place in paradise is under the foot of your mother. ..., if you are educated with that from Grade 1, you will only believe that if you trip even a little bit, you will fall in the fire [hellfire]. On the opposite, you will not hear that over there [in French school]. It is heard that a child must be given his rights.

In this quotation, Khadija not only believes that the madrasa was the way of Islam, as Amina's grandfather argued, but she also justifies her preference for the madrasa by comparing the effects of madrasa education on children with the effects of

ekoli. She said that unlike the madrasa, where children learn that respecting parents is a religious obligation, the French school does not teach children the religion or their obligations toward their parents.

Moreover, unlike their parents, all the participants decided about schooling their children without the involvement of extended family members. Hence, these research participants' outlook about schooling differed from their parents' outlook in two respects, not involving extended family members in children's schooling decisions and deciding based on the perceived effects of schooling on children in religious and career terms. Accordingly, Ibrahim argued,

I did not say in another country, but here in Mali, if a madrasa student strives, and studies hard, they can work in any profession like French school students. I think this is true because if the curriculum we have now is worked out as it should [if Islamic education is well balanced with modern subjects in the new curriculum], it will serve both the religious and worldly purpose [of madrasa education]. Well, [the lack of rigorous worldly education in madrasas] was the reason for French school students to surpass them [madrasa students in terms of career] ..., so as we go forward [if the new curriculum is worked out well], ... if [a madrasa student] studies seriously under surveillance, they will not wish to be like anybody [they will not envy French school students when it comes to career].

In the above comment, Ibrahim not only presents the madrasa as the way of Islam, as Amina's grandfather did, but he also thinks that the madrasa gives well-supported and courageous students (i.e., students who strive as Ibrahim states in this comment) a competitive edge over French school students. Thus, religion aside, in Khadija's and

Ibrahim's views, the madrasa is better than the French school if madrasa students receive rigorous religious and worldly education.

Both Ibrahim and Khadija sent all their children to the madrasa. Amina, however, sent her oldest children to ekoli, but she removed her youngest children from ekoli and put them in a Franco-Arab school²⁴, where students learned Islamic education and Arabic besides the normal French school curriculum. To reinforce her children's Islamic education, she hired a private tutor to teach them at home. She did not send her children to the madrasa because she did not want them to face difficulties career-wise. She said,

I did not send the children to the madrasa because I see how things are in the country [Mali]. The country needs francophones more than arabophones [in Mali, the state primarily employs people who studied in French schools]. However, lately, my latest children, the little ones [I removed my latest children from ekoli and sent them to Franco-Arab school]. When we were attending the madrasa, we used to learn Arabic. It was just a veneer that you [we] learn French and English [we did not master French or English in the madrasa]. ... [that is why this year when I learned that some of my old schoolmates] opened a madrasa saying they have the classic [French school curriculum plus basic Arabic and religion], [I removed my] latest children from ekoli.

Thus, Amina sent her children to ekoli and the Franco-Arab school based on the rationale that the Malian state employs French school students more than madrasa students. Because Amina is aware that the French school was the way of a career and not the way of Islam, she hired a private tutor for her children's Islamic education.

²⁴ See the introduction chapter, pages 6, for the definition of Franco-Arab school.

In the case of Issa, he sent his first boy to ekoli because he is named after his father, who also studied in ekoli. He sent his second boy to the madrasa because he was the namesake of the Prophet, and he sent his daughter to the madrasa because he believes women who master Islamic sciences can greatly benefit their families and society. He also believes God will reward the parents of such women. In Issa's view, home support and supervision are more important for children's education than the type of school they attend. He said that children can learn religion, master Arabic, and be fluent in French through home tutoring – which is only available to children whose parents can pay a tutor or children whose parents have the knowledge and time to teach them at home.

Issa's story supports my analysis that the participants and their parents have different outlooks about schooling. For instance, while Issa's father sent him to the madrasa to learn the religion and speak Arabic based on his paternal aunt's insistence, Issa did not consult any extended family member when schooling his own children.

Participants' Views about the Role of Madrasas in Mali

All the participants believe that the madrasa plays a crucial role in preserving the Islamic character of Malian society and promoting Islamic values in Mali. They insisted that no other school system can substitute for the madrasa in that role. The participants expressed the distinctiveness and role of the madrasa in many ways. For instance, Ibrahim argued that religious leaders educated in the madrasa can adapt their preaching to the contemporary context.

Another role the madrasa plays in Mali, according to all the participants, is that madrasa graduates help spread Islamic values and knowledge in the society by teaching Malians who have limited Islamic knowledge and by being role models in their families,

neighborhoods, and workplaces. Moreover, the participants said there was an inextricable link between Islam and the Arabic language in Mali's religious, historical, and cultural heritage. Therefore, they posited that the madrasa is the only school system in modern-day Mali able to offer mass education that links Mali to its religious and cultural roots.

Ibrahim commented,

... [as someone who studied in the madrasa when it comes to your religion, you are confident about understanding the religion to the point of being able to guide others in religious matters]. Also, when it comes to managing livelihood, you can live without depending [financially] on [other] human beings. Well, nowadays in our country besides the madrasa, the institution [school system] able to do that [to combine religious and career-oriented education], I don't see any such institution. Because it is them [madrasas] that can form ... imams who understand the world and who are able to guide people and orient them toward Allah with things they understand based on the conditions of this age.

In this comment, Ibrahim advances three reasons to justify why the madrasa is needed in Mali. First, madrasa education makes students more knowledgeable about Islam than the average Malian Muslim, so to some extent, without necessarily being religious leaders or scholars, madrasa students are able to assist others in religious matters. Second, religious leaders or scholars educated in the madrasa understand contemporary issues, so these leaders tailor religious teachings to the contemporary context. Third, the teaching of career-oriented subjects in the madrasa helps students to be financially independent and broadens career opportunities for madrasa students.

Ibrahim's comment also implies that these features distinguish the madrasa from both *ekoli* and the traditional Islamic school.

According to Issa, madrasa education also raises the Islamic consciousness of students, so students observe the precepts of Islam and are able to guide others. Issa expressed this opinion as follows,

To really have the consciousness of the religion, you must study Arabic [attend the madrasa]. If you master Arabic learning, it creates the consciousness of the religion in the human being. There are things if Allah has created you for salvation, you will not be involved in them. At the same time, when you see others doing what is not good, you can talk about that. ... I want to say Arabic learning [the madrasa] in Mali has a great role to play in [sustaining] the religion.

Issa's comment relates back to my earlier discussion of the importance of the Arabic language for Muslims. Arabic is the language of Quran, the language used in ritual prayers, and a necessary language for Islamic religious scholarship²⁵. Issa's comment implies the importance of Arabic regarding Islamic religious scholarship and the importance of Arabic in the Malian context for increased religious awareness by enabling Muslims to understand religious texts and have a broader perspective about Islamic teachings. Having a broader perspective about Islamic teachings makes the believers see the merits of these teachings and understand the application of the teachings in the different situations of life. Muslims who have a broader perspective about Islamic teachings can guide others in religious matters. Hence, Issa insisted that the madrasa

²⁵ See the literature review chapter, page 48, for more details about the importance of Arabic.

plays a great role in sustaining Islam in Mali by educating students who are Islamically conscious and who promote Islamic values and ideals in Malian society.

Besides promoting Islamic consciousness in Malian society, Mohamed argued that madrasa education is also important in Mali for cultural and historical reasons,

Our history itself, our teachers told us. Even we did a workshop recently about the manuscripts. All the manuscripts, even if they were in our local languages, were all written with the Arabic alphabet. So, if we care about our history and knowledge They [manuscripts] must be restored.

Mohamed said in this quotation that, by teaching the Arabic language, the madrasa connects Mali to its historical and cultural roots. The madrasa connects Mali to its cultural roots because the intellectual heritage in ancient manuscripts is written in the Arabic alphabet, so by educating students who are fluent in Arabic, the madrasa offers the education needed to restore part of Malian intellectual heritage.

Besides the Arabic language, the revival of Mali's intellectual heritage is done using the *N'Ko*²⁶ alphabet and the French language. French and N'Ko, however, are used to preserve the oral tradition but not to restore written documents. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to argue that documents written in French since the colonial era and documents written in N'Ko since 1949 are all part of the Malian intellectual heritage. N'Ko is also used to make Islamic religious knowledge, and, to a lesser extent, other sciences accessible to people who do not read Arabic or French.

²⁶ The *N'Ko* alphabet was invented by Solomana Kante, a traditional Islamic schoolteacher, in 1949 to write all the Manding languages including Bamanankan.

Nevertheless, neither N’Ko nor French can substitute for the Arabic language in restoring Malian intellectual heritage contained in the manuscripts written in Arabic or in African languages using Arabic alphabet. Thus, as Mohamed argued, not only the Arabic language is important for Malians for religious reasons, but it is also important for academic, cultural, and historical reasons.

Besides being a vehicle for spreading Islamic knowledge and moral values or linking Malians to their history, according to Ibrahim’s following comment, two additional roles of the madrasa in Mali are to provide an Islamic teaching that protects Malian youths from falling victim to preachers of an extreme interpretation of Islam. Also, the madrasa helps the Malian state to educate the population. When I asked Ibrahim how he would convince state officials of the importance of madrasas in Mali, part of his answer was that,

Those whom you are afraid of to say terrorists, terrorists²⁷. Terrorists are fought by showing true [Islamic] knowledge to people, to instill the love of the country in them, to make them conscious of themselves, to let them know that the stability of the country is their own stability, and to put them on the path that makes the country move forward. It is possible to do that in the madrasa when you organize it very well. Well, but if you devise plans to close that, and people went to do that on the side and to do on the side studies..., if they want to fight the terrorists or fight that instability, they should value the matter of madrasa so that people are

²⁷ Ibrahim uses the terrorists here to refer to armed groups that occupied northern Mali in 2012 claiming they were going to create an Islamic state. These groups include many nationalities, Malians, people from some neighboring West African countries, and people from some Arab countries.

educated. The mind is opened, and so if the mind is opened so that extremism will disappear.

In this comment, Ibrahim said that by devising plans to destroy madrasa education in Mali, state officials are creating a condition for people to seek Islamic knowledge outside organized schooling. This condition makes people potential preys to politicized extremist networks and preachers. He also indicated that if Malian state officials want to protect people from being attracted to the preaching of extremist groups that occupied northern Mali in 2012, they have to promote madrasa education. The above comment lends support to the idea that the promotion of madrasa education in Mali raises people's religious and worldly consciousness and serves Malian national interests, especially given the political development in Mali since 2012.

Therefore, Ibrahim pleaded that the Malian state support madrasas to provide an Islamic and worldly education to make students conscious of their religious and national duties and to give students hope for careers, so students contribute to building Mali. Ignorance of the true teachings of Islam, as Ibrahim described, makes extremist politico-religious discourses easily resonate with people. I see that Ibrahim's comment implies the following arguments: 1) good Muslims make good citizens; 2) exposing students to the teachings of Islam fortifies them against extreme views and reductionist interpretations of Islam; and 3) Malian state officials ignore these realities expressed in point 1 and 2.

Ibrahim implied that Malian state officials ignore the fact that madrasas serve the interests of the state because madrasas educate good Muslims who become good citizens

and open-minded Muslims who embrace the diversity of views within Islam²⁸. Ignorance of this reality causes state officials to try undermining madrasas. Accordingly, Ibrahim emphasized that the fulfillment of citizenship duties requires consciousness of these duties, so madrasa students' awareness that it was a religious duty to serve one's country increases their loyalty toward the nation state, for a stable nation state creates the conditions for a stable religious community within the nation state.

Ibrahim further elaborated that madrasas serve Malian national interests by fortifying students intellectually against extremist political discourses, so students understand the true teachings of Islam including the diversity of views within the Islamic scholarly tradition. In Ibrahim's view, understanding this truth about Islamic scholarly tradition is the best way to uncover the false claims made by extremist militant groups.

Hence, for madrasas to serve the national interests of Mali, madrasas have to offer an excellent quality Islamic education instead of a shallow Islamic education the government has imposed in the new curriculum. It is dangerous when people have a shallow or no understanding of Islamic teachings because they become prey to extremist discourses, and they fail to see the overlaps between their religious and citizenship duties. Promoting good quality Islamic education based on mainstream interpretations of Islam in Mali, serves the interests of the Malian state because this form of Islamic education makes people accept the mainstream views about Islam as practiced in Mali and the

²⁸ Some Muslim academics, e.g., the Malaysian Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and the Egyptian Muhammad Qutb (d. 2014), claim that the goal of education in Islam is to educate the good human being whose positive attributes manifest in all circumstances of life.

mainstream views within the Islamic scholarly tradition. Thus, people will readily reject the extreme interpretation of Islam promoted by armed militants.

Ibrahim and Mohamed also argued that madrasa education is a matter of national interest in Mali because madrasas help the state to educate the Malian population. For Mohamed, “the madrasas also take a big chunk of government students,” and for Ibrahim,

A country that was not able to educate its children [citizens]. It was not able to educate them even in western education. ... people were found who were teaching people inside the vestibule [traditional Islamic school] and showed them the religion, and that [traditional Islamic school] evolved to become the madrasas. Those madrasas are also taking in over hundreds of thousands of people and educating them in their country. ..., the state must subsidize us [madrasas]. Here in Mali, Catholic schools have an agreement with the government of Mali. That agreement was signed in 1979. The government of Mali takes 80% of their operating cost. Only 20% is on them, but we saw that one is a religious school. To look at our Arabic language madrasas are also religious schools, no subsidy is given to us. What justice is that? There is no justice.

In this quotation Ibrahim talks about the importance of madrasas in Mali by referring to madrasas' contribution in providing mass education, which the state is unable to guarantee to all Malian children. He also argues that the state must treat all educational establishments in Mali on an equal footing. In the quotation, Ibrahim not only defends the madrasa in terms of its religious appeal to the Muslims, but he also pleads the cause of the madrasa by appealing to broader national political and educational considerations. By pointing out that the state unfairly treats madrasas in comparison to Catholic schools, he

alludes that the Malian state is still acting with a colonial mindset, favoring one form of religious education over another. In fact, Catholic schooling started in Mali from the early days of colonization. The French encouraged Catholic schools in parallel with French schools as part of the colonial project (see page 36 in literature review chapter).

Ibrahim's previous comment also illustrates that these research participants are well aware of the Malian political context and how to defend the interests of madrasas in that context. When I asked Khadija how she would convince Malian state officials to support madrasa education in Mali, part of her response was,

... all substantial aid that came from abroad to this country, Mali, came from Arab countries. The aid came to help the religion. None of it came because they [the Arabs] simply liked Mali. They brought it [the aid] because, they saw religious education [madrasa education] here. That is the first [reason why the Malian state should support madrasa education]. The second [reason is that] people of the government [state officials] ... whenever there is a problem in the country, they ask religious people [religious leaders] to read the Quran, so Allah has mercy on the country.

This comment is another example that shows that the participants saw madrasa education in Mali as a matter of national interest, economically and socially. What Khadija was saying is that many Arab governments provide financial aid to the Malian government because Mali is a Muslim country, so because madrasas contribute in promoting the Islamic identity of Malian society, supporting madrasas is economically advantageous for the Malian government. By the same logic, because Malian state

officials ask religious leaders for support when there is a crisis in the country, supporting a school that promotes religion in Mali is in the interest of the Malian government.

To conclude the discussion, the first finding shows that the participants were sent to the madrasa primarily because their parents believed the madrasa was the way of Islam. The participants also thought the madrasa was the way of Islam, but for the madrasa to better serve the Muslims, it must rigorously teach Islamic and Arabic subjects as well as French and modern subjects. Also, they claimed that the role played by the madrasa in Mali cannot be substituted with other types of schools. Thus, the madrasa is the best Islamic school for educating Muslim children in contemporary Mali.

Finding 2: The Diversity of Curriculum and Teaching of Madrasas

This finding discusses how the participants expressed that there are many curricula used in the madrasa school system and that teaching standards vary from one madrasa to the other. Issa summarized this view as follows, “In Arabic, you will find that sometimes curricula are many, subjects are many,” and Amina added that “you leave one madrasa you find that everybody has their own curriculum.” In this section, I will also include my findings from reviewing a sample of the old (pre-2003) and new (2003) curriculum to enable the reader to understand the differences between these curricula, so the reader can relate participants’ comments to what exists in the curriculum documents.

This finding is discussed under five subcategories: 1) the old and new curriculum based on official documents; 2) the curriculum that existed when the participants attended the madrasa; 3) participants’ perception about the reformed curriculum; 4) participants’ perception about teaching in madrasas; and 5) participants’ accounts of how they were taught in madrasas.

The Old and New Curriculum Based on Official Documents

In what follows, I will comment on a sample of the old curriculum, designed before 2003 and still used in some madrasas, and the reformed government curriculum of 2003, used in many madrasas. Each curriculum includes three separate documents, primary, preparatory (middle), and high school. On the next page, Table 4 compares the old and new curriculum using the weekly teaching time and subjects taught in Grade 6. This comparison should give the reader some ideas of the differences between the old and new curriculum (see excerpts of the old and new curriculum in appendices F and G).

Table 4*Comparison of Old and New Curriculum: Subjects and Teaching Hours in Grad 6*

The old curriculum		The new Curriculum	
Subjects	Hours per week	Subjects	Hours per week
Quran	3 hr	Le saint Coran	1 hr 20 min
Ḥadīth	2 hr	Théologie	1 hr
Tawḥīd	2 hr	Jurisprudence	1 hr 20 min
Fiqh	2 hr	Al Hadith et Moral	1 hr
Sīrah	2 hr	Histoire du Prophète	30 min
Reading	1 hr	Histoire	30 min
Writing	2 hr	Géographie	30 min
Grammar/Morphology	2 hr	Educ. Civique et Morale	30 min
Dictation	1 hr	Lecture	1 hr 30 min
Recitation	1 hr	Rédaction	30 min
Calligraphy	1 hr	Ecriture	30 min
French	3 hr	Dictée	1 hr
National History	1 hr	Récitation	30 min
Geography	1 hr	Grammaire	1 hr 30 min
Physics	1 hr	Conjugaison	45 min
Science	2 hr	Français	5 hr
Math	3 hr	Calcul	2 hr
		Géométrie	1 hr
		Système Métrique	1 hr 30 min
		Problème Pratique	45 min
		Dessin	40 min
		Travail Manuel	40 min
		Education Physique	40 min
		Science Naturelles	30 min
		Agriculture	30 min
		Sciences Physiques	30 min

In the old curriculum document I reviewed, the name and location of the school appear on the title page, there is no date to specify when the document was written, and nothing is said about the author (which could then be interpreted as the school being the corporate author or the real author did not want to take credit for their work). On the first page, a table indicates the grades, the name of subjects, and the number of weekly teaching hours. Then, the succeeding pages specify the content of each subject area and the required textbooks.

The primary school curriculum (Grades 1 to 6) lists 18 subjects, but the number of subjects vary from grade to grade. On average, 75% of weekly teaching time is reserved for Islamic and Arabic language subjects. Arabic subjects represent 57% of teaching time in Grade 1. Then, the time dedicated to Arabic decreases to 54%, 34%, 37%, 33%, and 27% while the percentage of time dedicated to Islamic subjects inversely increases. In Grades 1 and 2, math and French are each taught for 2 hours per week, and in Grades 3 to 6, they are each taught for 3 hours.

The percentage of weekly teaching time, 75%, dedicated to Islamic and Arabic subjects, shows that madrasas that use a curriculum like this prioritize religious subjects over modern subjects. Allocating this much time to Islamic and Arabic subjects highlights that this curriculum possibly gives students a strong foundation in these subjects. The status of French and math also indicates that these two subjects are more important than all the subjects that do not fall in the categories of Islamic and Arabic. A possible reason why math and French are important in the old curriculum is that they benefit students regardless of the field of knowledge they pursue.

The curriculum of the secondary school (Grades 7 to 9) also shows the trend of prioritizing Islamic subjects, Arabic, French, and math over other subjects. For instance, the weekly teaching time is 30 hours, 43% of this time is reserved for seven Islamic subjects, 27% for five Arabic language subjects, and 30% for modern subjects and French, taught for 3 hours. There are 18 subjects in Grades 7 and 8, and 19 subjects in Grade 9. Math is taught for 2 hours, and history, geography, chemistry, biology, and physics are each taught for only 1 hour per week.

In high school (Grades 10 to 12), the weekly teaching time is 30 hours, 60% of this time is reserved for Islamic subjects, and 20% for Arabic subjects. Among the 20 subjects taught in high school, there are 12 Islamic subjects and three Arabic subjects. French is taught for 2 hours. English, math, geography, and biology are each taught for only 1 hour per week. At this point, the reader can observe that the old curriculum does not quite balance Islamic and Arabic subjects with modern subjects and French. Thus, in the upcoming sections, when the participants talk about the merits or problems of the old curriculum, the reader must bear my current discussions in mind.

The discussion now turns to the 2003 government-reformed curriculum. The documents of this curriculum are as follows. The title page indicates that this is the official curriculum for Arabic Islamic schools, 2003 edition. On the first page, it is stated that the groups that participated in the technical work included the national bureau of education, the union of madrasas, the technical partners of Mali (i.e., foreign countries and international organizations), local unions, and student parent's association. It is also stated that the goal of the curriculum reform was to make madrasa education respond to the needs of the job market while respecting the teaching of religious subjects and

reinforcing the French language. Inside the documents, the content of each subject is described as well as recommended teaching methods, but no required textbook is listed.

Looking at the new curriculum document, I see that the designers of this curriculum considered the teaching of Islamic subjects in madrasas as a matter of secondary importance. It is also clear to me that the designers of this curriculum were more concerned with determining what subject must be taught, for how long, and how, than they were with structuring the curriculum to meet the goals of madrasa education.

For example, in the primary school, the weekly teaching time is 26.5 hours. In Grades 1, 2, and 3 almost 60% of the teaching time is reserved for Islamic and Arabic subjects. From the fourth grade onward, about 54% of teaching time is dedicated to modern subjects and French which is taught for 5 hours per week starting from the third grade. Fifteen subjects are taught in the first and second grades, and the number of subjects increase to 22 in the third grade, 25 in fourth grade, and 26 in the fifth and sixth grades. Looking at the number of subjects in comparison to weekly teaching time and the proportion of time dedicated to French, it is evident that the designers of this curriculum did not give much thought to the time required for the adequate coverage of all subjects.

This trend of prioritizing French and cluttering the curriculum with too many subjects continues in the preparatory school. For instance, the weekly teaching time is 32 hours in the seventh and eighth grades and 34 hours in the ninth grade. About 57% of teaching time is reserved for modern subjects and French (3 hours) and English (1 hour). There are 17 subjects total, but mostly two subjects are combined into one. For instance, physics and chemistry form a single subject taught for 2 hours per week in the seventh

and eighth grades and for 3 hours in the ninth grade. Ten such twin subjects are taught each only for 1 hour per week.

In high school, the Grade 10 curriculum has 11 subjects, seven of which are modern subjects plus French and English. Arabic subjects are combined into one subject taught for 5 hours per week. Islamic subjects and civic education are combined into one subject taught for 5 hours out of the 34 weekly teaching time. In Grade 11, the high school curriculum divides into two pathways, literature and humanities. The number of subjects is 10 in the literature and 12 in the humanities.

This overview of the new curriculum shows that the high school curriculum gives very little importance to Islamic and Arabic subjects when compared to modern subjects and French. It also shows that the curriculum does not fully deliver the promise of preparing students for the job market because only the literature and humanities educational pathways exist in madrasas. Scientific pathways are totally missing, so in a sense, the new curriculum takes away from madrasas the strong Islamic and Arabic curriculum they used to have without giving madrasas a strong modern subject curriculum. By doing so, the new curriculum practically makes madrasa students less able to compete with French school students in higher education and career and less able to study Islamic sciences in the university.

In summary, the old curriculum stresses Islamic and Arabic subjects over modern subjects and French. Arabic subjects are emphasized in primary school, but in preparatory and high school, the emphasis shifts to Islamic subjects, and modern subjects and French are slightly neglected. In the new curriculum, however, Islamic subjects and Arabic are relatively balanced with modern subjects and French in primary school, but

the emphasis shifts to modern subjects in preparatory school. In high school, Islamic and Arabic subjects are almost neglected, and madrasa students can only specialize in humanities or literature. Thus, while the old curriculum fulfils the religious mission of madrasas but fails to teach modern subjects and French adequately, the new curriculum, aside from adequately teaching French, does not fully fulfill either the religious or the promised career-oriented goal of madrasa education.

Nevertheless, the new curriculum has evolved since 2003 because Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed said that TESCO (economic sciences) was introduced in the madrasa high school. Also, a document issued by the Malian education department titled “LES MEDERSAS AU Mali” states that the Malian state borrowed from the Islamic development bank to improve madrasa education from 2016 to 2020, and one of the improvements envisaged is a curriculum reform. This shows that the curriculum reform of 2003 might have not been perfect, but since this curriculum was subject to changes, I would say that madrasa education in Mali will most likely improve in the long run.

The Curriculum That Existed When the Participants Attended the Madrasa

The participants unanimously agreed that the curriculum that existed when they attended the madrasa adequately covered Islamic education, the Arabic language, and social studies subjects (i.e., history, geography as a social science, and civic education). Ibrahim recalled, “even when we went to the Arab country, the level of education we had in these subjects was enough for us”, so because their madrasa education made them well-versed in Islamic and Arabic subjects, even the participants who went to study in the Arab world did not encounter any difficulties in these subjects.

Concerning scientific subjects, Khadija and Mohamed, who attended the madrasa between 1992 and 2009, stated that they studied the same science curriculum in Arabic as French school students. For Ibrahim, Amina, and Issa, who attended the madrasa between 1980 and 1993, however, their experiences varied. Issa said that competent teachers taught him scientific subjects (i.e., math, biology, physics, and chemistry), but when he went to the Arab world to continue his studies, he needed to take private courses to increase his mastery level in scientific subjects. For Amina, there was no competent science teacher in her madrasa, and some of the teachers who taught science did not understand Arabic, and students did not understand French, so the courses were ineffective. In the case of Ibrahim, he did not study science because there was no science teacher in his madrasa.

The discussion so far signifies the diversity of the madrasa curricula prior to the introduction of the new curriculum in 2003. It also shows that while all madrasas in the past strived to adequately teach Islamic and Arabic subjects, the rigorous teaching of scientific subjects was not a matter of concern in many madrasas. Therefore, participants' post-madrasa education was negatively affected to the extent they needed to study a subject that was not adequately taught in the madrasa they attended.

Regarding the French language, all the participants agreed that the number of hours dedicated to French was insufficient and that many students resisted learning French. However, Ibrahim said, “[from] primary to preparatory [middle school], we were not even taught French. In high school, the French teacher would come, and we would go out because the mark that allowed you [us] to pass, we already had that.” Issa substantiated, “I remember when we were in the madrasa, they used to say that French

was *kafirikalán* [learning of disbelievers]. Sometimes when the French teacher came, some people in our class used to go outside.” Khadija also commented,

... my French teacher gave me a piece advice saying, “I see in you that you want to continue to study, but, in Mali, without French, you will not be able to.” I said I could because I knew I could. [My view was] I did not come [in the madrasa] to study French, [if I was interested in studying French], I could have gone [to] *ekòli* ... [because of this negative attitude toward French,] I saw it greatly influenced [me]. Sometimes I would not participate in its [French] exam. I would not revise it [French]. I did not consider it as a subject. However, when I copied my transcripts to present my application for the admission exam [to the university], French became a problem because there was no grade ...

These comments illustrate that French was taught in some madrasas as a subject but not as a language that students must be fluent in. Students were not taught to effectively write, read, and speak French. The comments also show that there are psychological and organizational barriers to students’ mastery of French. Psychological barriers include the belief that French is for *ekòli* and Arabic for the madrasa. Organizational barriers include not hiring French language teachers or not requiring that students pass in all subjects before they can move to the next grade. According to Ibrahim and Khadija, their teachers looked at students’ cumulative grades in all subjects to decide if a given student would move to the next grade. This method of evaluation makes it possible for students to ignore French courses without serious consequences.

Participants' Perception about the Reformed Curriculum

All the participants agreed that the new curriculum negatively impacted Arabic and Islamic subjects, but since Amina and Issa admitted that they learned about the new curriculum from third parties, the discussion here could only be based on information provided by Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed, who worked or are still working in madrasas and hence know the curriculum first hand. These three participants said that madrasas accepted the government-reformed curriculum because madrasas hoped that accepting this curriculum would enable students to know their religion in addition to modern subjects and French in order to pursue higher education in Malian universities.

The new curriculum enables madrasa students to be directly admitted to public universities without admission exams, as used it to be the case. However, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed thought that the new curriculum greatly reduced the content and time dedicated to teaching Arabic and religious subjects in favour of modern subjects and French. This situation, the three participants thought, could jeopardize the religious mission of madrasas in Mali. Moreover, modern subjects were no longer taught in Arabic, especially in high school. Modern subjects are now taught in French. Also, because religious subjects were not tested in national exams, students did not care about them. Mohamed expressed his thoughts about the new curriculum as follows,

... before that AP [preparatory year] system came, all madrasa students who used to attend university in this country, here in Mali, ... it was linked to an admission exam. The success rate in that exam per year did not exceed 30 people., this was a factor that discouraged many people in the madrasa because they [students] saw it [madrasa education] had no future. ... select people could have the chance

to go to Arab countries. That is what has pushed the union of madrasas and heads of madrasas to fight so madrasa students could be admitted to the university [without admission exam] because they were also citizens of the country [Mali].

.... The government also said they could not unconditionally accept them [madrasa students] unless they [madrasa] agreed to that [new] curriculum.

Here, Mohamed depicts the social pressure that might have forced madrasas to accept the new curriculum. The pressure came from the increase in number of students who hoped to continue their higher education after graduating from madrasas. Students only had the options to study in Arab countries or pass the admission test to study at Malian public universities. Students thus saw that madrasa education offered them limited opportunities for higher education and career.

This pressure led madrasas to negotiate the madrasa curriculum reform with the government. Hence, the government was in a stronger bargaining position to impose the new curriculum because madrasas desperately needed the state to accept their graduates in public universities without the restriction of the admission test. Stating her opinion about the new curriculum, Khadija said,

It [the curriculum reform] was good, for it gave chance to our youths to go and study in all universities. However, it greatly affected our religious subjects because there is no time to teach religious subjects. You find that per week, they [ministry of education designated] one or two hours to teach all religious subjects in that timeframe, ..., that is a catastrophe. That is at the level of high school. If we continue that way, religious subjects will be destroyed.

In Khadija's view, the curriculum reform had positive and negative effects. The positive effect was to enable madrasa graduates to be easily admitted to Malian universities, and the negative effect was that it limited the number of teaching hours dedicated to Islamic subjects. For Khadija, limiting the teaching hours of Islamic subjects is catastrophic because these subjects cannot be fully covered. Ibrahim agreed with this view stating that,

... the system that existed when I started teaching people, if you look at that system, going forward, Islamic education will be killed from the matter of madrasa, and if that is killed from it [if religious education was seriously weakened in the madrasa], that will be the loss of its distinguishing feature. The Arabic language also, you see that everyone [students] who did not do the literature pathway cannot speak anything in Arabic.

In the above quotation, Ibrahim voices the concern that not only the new curriculum of 2003 has weakened Islamic education and Arabic in madrasas, and therefore compromised the religious dimension of madrasa education, but he also states that this curriculum may eventually remove any significant difference between madrasas and French schools. He further elaborated,

The hours they [ministry of education] gave us per week is 32 hours or 28 hours per week [to teach all subjects]. In my school, my Islamic education is 5 hours. In some places, for some it is 7 hours, and for other 2 hours. However, we told madrasa students [the] only distinction between [madrasa students and French school students] was Islamic education.

Thus, in Khadija's and Ibrahim's views, the acceptance of the new curriculum by madrasas had the negative consequence of neglecting Islamic subjects by reducing their weekly teaching hours. Moreover, students cared less about Islamic subjects because these subjects are not done in the national high school exam. Besides reduced teaching hours and student carelessness, Mohamed added other factors that contributed to the weakening of Islamic education and Arabic in madrasa. He explained,

... the new program that came to Arabic schools [madrasas] they reduced the number of Arabic language classes. They [ministry of education] introduced French courses and other languages such as English. At least, they gave more priority to these subjects than Arabic subjects. That caused even the suppression of some subjects from Arabic schools. Those subjects were very beneficial for reinforcing students, so they can speak proper Arabic...

Participants' previous comments about the new curriculum show that though the new curriculum allows madrasa graduates to pursue their higher education in Malian universities, the curriculum severely reduces madrasas' ability to fulfill their religious mission or maintain a sharp distinction between madrasas and French schools. To put it another way, the participants want a madrasa curriculum that includes the best of both worlds, the best of Islamic education and Arabic and the best of modern subjects and French. This is how I understood participants' preceding comments about the curriculum they would love to see implemented in madrasas in Mali. To verify that I did not misunderstand their comments, I asked them in the follow up interview to explicitly describe to me the perfect madrasa curriculum in their own words. In her response quoted on the next page, Anima stated,

... the curriculum be the same for all madrasa students, so they learn the religion as it should be, and they learn Arabic as it should be learned. At the same time, they learn modern subjects and French, so when you come to the university, you don't face difficulties, so it becomes easy for you to enter fields like engineering, modern technologies, medicine and alike ... madrasa students must learn all worldly knowledge in addition to religion ... in summary, I want a madrasa education that enables you to defend your religion and to defend your worldly life as it is said [in the Quran] "Our lord give us good in this world and give us good in the hereafter". You live a good life because of your education, you benefit the Islamic religion, and you benefit your country.

Above, Amina stated that she wants a curriculum that gives madrasa students a good Islamic education, so they are able to guide those who did not attend the madrasa, and they are also able to study Islamic sciences at the university. She also wants the curriculum to enable students to fluently speak Arabic and pursue university education in Arabic. Additionally, she wants the curriculum to give students a solid foundation in modern subjects and French to enable students to pursue any career they desire. In other words, Amina wants a curriculum that gives sufficient Islamic knowledge to madrasa students to be good Muslims able to guide others while having sufficient worldly knowledge to work in any profession in order to live decently.

The other participants also shared Amina's view. They said that they wanted a curriculum that perfectly covers both religious and worldly knowledge, so if madrasa students wish to study Islamic sciences, they have enough worldly knowledge to

understand the contemporary world, and if they wish to specialized in non-religious fields, they have enough religious knowledge to guide others. Khadija elaborated,

The curriculum I want is that modern subjects and French do not [negatively] impact the religion because the goal we seek in madrasas is that you know your religion better than those who did not attend the madrasa. Also the religion does not [negatively] impact modern subjects, ..., so they go hand in hand so that madrasa students can specialize in all fields of knowledge ... wherever they [madrasa graduates] work or wherever they live when they are asked about a topic in religion, they must be able to explain it [religion] to others because that should be the difference between the madrasa and ekoli.

Khadija's and Amina's comments imply that the participants simply want a madrasa curriculum that provides the best religious and worldly education without specifying how providing such education should come about. However, putting these comments in the context of participants' earlier complaints that the new curriculum does not dedicate enough time to teaching Islamic subjects, that the new curriculum suppressed some subjects and stopped teaching others in Arabic, and that Islamic education was dropped from the national high school exam, I conclude that the participants were saying that for the madrasa curriculum to provide the best religious and worldly education, the two wings of the curriculum (i.e., 1) Islamic subjects and Arabic; and 2) modern subjects and French) must be balanced in all respects. By balance in all respects, I do not mean parity in all respects. I mean fine tuning the curriculum, so the content, teaching time, and teaching methods of each subject lead to students' mastery.

Participants' Perception about Teaching in Madrasas

All the participants agreed that their teachers in the madrasa were competent and dedicated, especially teachers of Arabic and religious subjects. The participants, however, lamented that most madrasa teachers were not well-paid. Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed, who have worked in madrasas, regretted that the implementation of the new curriculum made some madrasa owners pay Arabic and Islamic subject teachers less money than teachers of other subjects, a phenomenon that discourages competent teachers and makes teaching in madrasas less attractive to them.

Four participants believed that some madrasa owners and teachers considered their jobs merely as means to make money, not as means to serve the religion. Therefore, the participants stressed that the success of the madrasa in its religious mission requires that madrasa owners and teachers consider their work as a service to Islam not as simply a job to gain money. Thus, teachers should have reasonable material expectations, and madrasa owners must pay teachers a fair salary. Talking about his teachers, Issa recalled,

You cannot say that it [teachers] was all good 100%, but we are talking based on the majority. Based on the majority, they were qualified teachers. At the same time, do you know that teachers who studied in Mali during the 80s and the 70s in real, real Arabic, at that time, there was no joke in studying [education standards were high]. This is to say that a person who used to do [study in] the ninth grade in Mali at that time [would be competent enough to teach others].

In this quotation, Issa explains that most of the teachers at his madrasa were competent due to the high quality of madrasa education in the 70s and 80s. The quality of madrasa education was high to such extent that a student who graduates from Grade 9

would fluently speak Arabic. Issa's quotation illustrates how the participants spoke about their teachers. Although their teachers were devoted to their jobs, they did not get good salaries, and many madrasa owners continue to pay teachers low salaries. Mohamed said,

Though the time has greatly changed, no big change occurred in the way madrasa owners treat their teachers. You find the same little salary they used to be given from the past. Though a little bit was added to it, it was not much. That demotivates. You see that once one [a teacher] finds a job that is a little bit better abandons madrasa teaching. That is the shortcoming of madrasa owners, but teachers also have some. As I told you, many of them are just doing it [teaching] because they are not doing anything else [not qualified for other jobs].

Mohamed's comment shows that teaching in madrasas is becoming less and less attractive for two main reasons. The first reason is that some teachers take on madrasa teaching jobs only as a last resort, and the second reason is that madrasa owners do not increase teachers' salaries to match changing economic conditions. Ibrahim added that Islamic education teachers are paid less than teachers of other subjects because Islamic education is less relevant in the new curriculum. He made the following criticism,

Well, its [Islamic education] teachers are also not well paid. You find that if teachers of other subjects are paid three hundred, four hundred, ... they pay Islamic education teachers two hundred. However, it is not due to other things than to the bad policy of school owners.

Here, Ibrahim criticizes madrasa owners for not treating Islamic subject teachers on equal footing with other teachers. Ibrahim and Mohamed thought this situation demotivates Islamic subject teachers and further weakens Islamic subjects in madrasas.

Ibrahim also felt that madrasa owners and teachers who only care about money forget about the reward God has reserved for those who serve the religion. He explained,

[Madrasa owners] must also know that their reward is in God's place [hereafter] but not in this world. Whichever day they get that conviction, we will come back to ourselves and work with that. Concerning madrasa teachers, it is an occupation where no big financial gain is found. The gain that is not found in it if you strive and be sincere for Allah, you will gain something from it in the hereafter, and in this world, you will not be ashamed [live with honor].

Here, Ibrahim explains that for madrasa owners to fairly pay their teachers and for teachers to teach with devotion, they both should be reminded that working in madrasas is a service to the religion. Thus, Ibrahim thought that madrasa schooling will not succeed with the profit-making mentality of some madrasa owners and teachers. One may argue that madrasa owners do not pay teachers a high salary on the ground that teaching in the madrasa is serving the religion to get the greater reward of God in the hereafter. However, since paying teachers low salaries inversely increases madrasa owners' profit, I would say that paying teachers low salaries signifies a lack of religious solidarity on the part madrasa owners.

Participants' Accounts of How They Were Taught in Madrasas

Participants' accounts of how they were taught converge when it comes to Arabic and Islamic subjects but diverge greatly when it comes to learning activities. The teaching methods their teachers used depended on the type of subject and the level at which the subject was taught. For example, the Quran was only recited from memory in primary school. In middle and high school, it was both recited and written from memory,

and Quranic exegesis was introduced. Writing the Quran from memory reinforces memorization and gets students accustomed to writing the Quran without mistake. This exercise is important, especially for students who want to study Islamic sciences at the university. When it comes to other religious subjects, the lesson was read from the blackboard or the book, the teacher explained the text in the local language, and students were expected to repeat the same process.

When it comes to Arabic subjects, the participants said that examples were introduced, then the rules were explained based on the examples, and homework was given. This same process was used to teach scientific subjects and French, according to the participants who studied these subjects. Regarding the practice of the religion, Khadija and Ibrahim said they used to do collective afternoon prayer in the madrasa, Mohamed said that teachers used to show them how to perform *wudu* (ablution) and prayers, and Ibrahim and Amina said that they were trained to preach.

From participants' comments, the performance of collective prayer at the madrasa depended on the madrasa schedule, so in madrasas where students attended afternoon classes, collective prayers were performed. These comments also indicate the diversity of teaching and learning standards in madrasas. Madrasas differed greatly regarding school schedules, extracurricular activities, teaching practices, and the teaching of French and modern subjects. The only thing the madrasas the participants attended had in common was the rigorous teaching of Arabic and Islamic subjects. Mohamed described how they were taught the Quran in the madrasa,

... the Quran was done [taught] every day, ..., on Monday a new Quran was taken [new lesson was taught]. Tuesday was given to you [the student] to revise.

Wednesday everybody read it in class to look at it and read it [read the Quran from the book]. Those who were not able to do it were sanctioned. To say it differently, they were beaten. on Friday there was memorization.

Everybody was listened to.

Mohamed's description is significant because it indicates the reason why madrasa students used to excel in Islamic subjects in the past. The description shows that teachers did not take these subjects lightly, so the teaching methods forced each student to revise and rehearse their lessons. It also indicates that the Quran was at the heart of madrasa education, so in primary grades, the teaching of Quran focused on memorization and reading, and in the middle grades, according to Khadija,

...we entered the preparatory [middle school]. [The Quran] teacher also used to come and tell you [students] this is the requirement for the year, ..., but his way of testing. It was written. He writes the Quran. For example, ..., he can start for the 10th verse, and he cuts off the verse, and he says that you [students] complete to this point.

Together, the last two quotations, in addition to the next one, describe how the Quran was taught, in the madrasas the participants attended. In the primary school, the teaching of Quran focused on memorization and reading, and in the middle school, writing from memory was added to memorization, and in high school, besides memorization, students were expected to understand the context of the revelation, explain the meaning of the verses, and clarify how the verses apply in a different context.

Khadija's comment on the next page summarizes how the Quran was taught,

... [in] high school, they [teachers] used to mix it [Quran] with tafsir [exegesis]. For example, if they took the Surah al-Hajj, they could ask [students] to say from verse 5 to 7, and you [students] made its *tafsir* [explained the verses]. They could ask you, what was the benefit of this verse. They could ask you about the reason the verse was revealed.

The teaching method of other religious subjects, however, differs from that of the Quran as Mohamed's comment below shows,

The *fiqh* [jurisprudence], for example, was taught with its meaning. The Arabic language was read, but its meaning was said additionally. For example, if you take the [book of] *muqadimah*, we used to learn that in lower grades. They used to listen to people [students]. For example, if the lesson was taught today, maybe the week after, or the next day in which that course was there, they [teachers] listened to everyone one by one. Not only you [students] read it, but you also read with its meaning so that you know what you were reading not only in Arabic but also in our national languages.

Here, Mohamed says that the teaching of religious subjects like *fiqh* stressed reading the Arabic text and conveying the meaning of the text in Malian national languages. Because, the mastery of religious subjects required students to be competent in Arabic, teachers encouraged students to speak Arabic. According to Ibrahim,

They [teachers] made a little piece of wood and wrote on it *mithal* [symbol] and circulated it inside the class. Its purpose was you [the student] practiced what you learned. The Arabic language that you learned So, the one who did not practice that, it was given to you [*mithal* was handed to students who failed to

Speak Arabic]. If it was given to you [the student], your name was written, and you paid [a fine].

In this comment, Ibrahim describes the method teachers employed to encourage students to speak Arabic in the class. A small rectangular wood (*mithal*) was given to the first student who spoke their native language in the classroom. That student, *mithal* was given to, could then pass it on to the next student who spoke their native language. Thus, the *mithal* was circulated in the classroom to encourage students to speak Arabic.

Participants' preceding comments, about how they were taught and how they practiced what they learned, also reveal why madrasa students in the past excelled in Islamic subjects and Arabic.

As noted earlier, participants' experiences vary in relation to extracurricular activities, including practicing religious rituals in the madrasa. Ibrahim and Khadija related that they performed the afternoon prayer collectively at the madrasa. Ibrahim described his experience in the following terms,

In the afternoon class, you find that we all prayed *lan'sara* [afternoon prayer].

The way of making ablution that you learned in the book, you practiced that. The way of praying *lan'sara* you did that in the group [collective prayer], so some teachers observed you [students] during the prayer, [and they pray later].

Through this afternoon prayer, as Ibrahim describes above, students practiced what they learned about the rituals for performing prayer. In addition to performing collective prayer, Ibrahim and Amina noted that they used to preach while they were in the madrasa. For Amina, besides classroom learning activities, occasional preaching was

the only extracurricular activity they did. When I asked her about the extracurricular activities they did in the madrasa, she answered in surprise,

To say that we used to do other activities at school here! [I don't recall doing extracurricular activities in the madrasa]. The one thing we used to do was when someone's [students or teachers] relative died, students got together. They gave us a topic. We went. We did preach at a young age.

The only extracurricular activity Amina remembered doing in the madrasa was preaching during religious ceremonies such as a funeral, so teachers would prepare a topic for students and delegate them to preach at the funeral ceremony. Taken together, participants' comments under this finding show that madrasas did not have a shared standard for designing the curriculum or teaching. For instance, Amina, Ibrahim, and Issa attended the madrasa between 1980 and 1993, Khadija attended the madrasa between 1992 and 2003, and Mohamed attended the madrasa between 1995 and 2009. The experience of each participant about teaching and curriculum differs except in one regard, Islamic and Arabic subjects. They all felt they had good foundations in these subjects.

In summary, the second finding shows that prior to 2003, madrasas in Mali did not have a unified curriculum or shared teaching standard. The madrasas my participants attended rigorously taught Islamic and Arabic subjects. When it comes to modern subjects and French, some madrasas taught these subjects and others did not. Many madrasa students resisted learning French, for they thought it was the language for *ekoli*. The participants appreciated the 2003 curriculum for reinforcing French and modern subjects, but they complained that this curriculum neglected Islamic and Arabic subjects, and they feared neglecting these subjects would hinder the madrasas' religious mission.

Finding 3: The Madrasa Shaping Participants' Identity

This findings highlights participants' opinions about how the madrasa shaped their perceptions of themselves as individual Muslims, how they were perceived in Malian society as madrasa students, and how their awareness of these two perceptions and the knowledge they acquired at the madrasa influenced their attitudes and behaviors. I discuss this finding under two subcategories: 1) the madrasa built participants' Muslim identity and gained them social respect; and 2) the madrasa caused participants' negative self-image and made them subject to social prejudice.

The Madrasa Built Participants' Muslim Identity and Gained Them Social Respect

The participants used several examples to express how their madrasa education affected them personally and socially. All the participants agreed that the madrasa built their Muslim identity and gained them social respect. They all thought that madrasa education made them knowledgeable about Islamic teachings more than the average Malian Muslim. They also saw that madrasa education developed their religious consciousness and made them more observant and receptive of Islamic teachings. Using the following terms, Issa explained how his madrasa education made him religiously conscious and able to observe Islamic teachings in his business transactions,

As we engage in the thing [business deals]. Once it is presented, my basis is what the Islamic style says [I follow Islamic precepts]. If you drag from within that [if the deal is prohibited in Islam], I abandon the business deal. I abandon everything beyond that. Because I know that as long as you are a Muslim, everything we say here. Everything we do here. There is accountability in the hereafter.

This example shows that Issa's knowledge of the precepts of Islam made him understand business deals that conform with Islamic precepts. Also, because the madrasa made him conscious that God will hold him accountable for all his actions, he rejected all business deals that did not conform to Islamic precepts. Issa's understanding of Islamic teachings and his belief that God will judge him in the hereafter influenced his professional conduct, and in his view, this was due to his madrasa education.

Giving a different example, Ibrahim also explained how his madrasa education made him faithful to God and in divine assistance,

Every situation in life the human being finds himself in is a test in some ways.

But to be able to understand that it is a test, I'm thankful to the religious education for that. Because as a Muslim whatever thing that inflicts you, after accomplishing your human responsibilities, you leave the rest to Allah. Well, I saw that I went through some difficulties, I did not think about suicide. I did not think about anything except sending the matter back to Allah. For that reason, I can say the madrasa education played a great role for me in that regard. No matter what difficulty it was. Difficulties related to work, related to money, and difficulties related to life. Every difficulty that comes my way, you find that I can send it back to Allah.

In this comment, Ibrahim states that his madrasa education made him understand that human life was a series of tests and trials. To succeed in these tests and trials, Muslims must do their due diligence then ask for God's assistance. For every problem Ibrahim was confronted with in life, after doing everything in his human capacity to deal with the problem, he left the rest to God's will, having faith that God will not let him

down. Believing that God assists the courageous and faithful was also echoed by Amina. When I asked her to advise current students on how to succeed, she said,

what I say is that they have to be courageous. Everything in this world depends on courage. When the human being decides to undertake a task and progress in that task, they will progress. The human being plans, and Allah decrees. It is what the human being seeks that Allah will help you with.

As Ibrahim said earlier, Amina's comment also supports that participants' belief in God's assistance does not mean they left life events to chance without planning or acting. All the participants insisted that the believer must be courageous and determined in pursuing their goals in order to expect favorable divine intervention. Even though the direction in which life events evolve can never be predicted or controlled by the believer, God will always positively reward the courage and sincerity of the believer even if the evolution of life events do not go as the believer wishes.

From a different perspective, Khadija said that the madrasa gave her the Islamic knowledge that enabled her to explain the religion to her colleagues at work, so

...they [my colleagues at work] say, "tell me this *malmatou* [teacher] tell me that." You see that they [what they are asking in religion] are simple things. You don't even know that a person will need this or need to search that [need to learn such basic things in religion], so you see that they [those who do not have religious knowledge] get tired after you [the one who has religious knowledge] because of that [basic religious teachings]. They humble themselves in order to have that [basic religious teachings]. For example, the one who just called me. She is after me to go teach her the alphabet, so she can read the Quran.

I see three things in this comment of Khadija. I see that madrasa education gave the participants more Islamic knowledge than average Malian Muslims, like Khadija's colleagues at work. I see that the average Muslim regarded the participants as religious experts, and I see that part-time Islamic education, that Khadija's colleagues might have received, might not be as effective as full-time Islamic education provided at madrasas. Below Mohamed elaborates how madrasa education gives students expertise in Islamic religion above the average Malian Muslim,

The impact it [madrasa education] had on us [madrasa students] was that it allowed us to truly know what Islam is. How we do practice our religion. If you [madrasa student] study up until the university and after university, you can do researches and stuff for yourself. Things in which there is divergence and [religious] scholars differ with each other; you don't have to say this person is right or that person is wrong.

By truly knowing what Islam is, Mohamed is saying that madrasa education gives students sufficient knowledge to understand the rationale of Islamic teachings and understand why Muslim scholars differ with each other in interpreting the teachings of Islam. According to Mohamed, truly knowing what Islam is makes students easily accept the diversity of views within the Islamic scholarly tradition. Also, truly knowing what Islam is fortifies madrasa students intellectually against extreme interpretations of Islam as Ibrahim argued earlier.

In the above quotation, Mohamed also clarifies that his madrasa education gave him the aptitude to be a lifelong learner because even after graduating from the madrasa, he is able to consult scholarly works in Islamic sciences and understand scholarly

debates. Mohamed further elaborates how he and other madrasa students gained a high level of expertise in Islamic teachings in comparison to the average Malian Muslim,

... it [our madrasa education] allowed us to explain the religion to other people maybe those who did not have the chance of going to the madrasa ... Like in our training center [where we teach adults how to read the Quran], ..., we are divided into two main groups. There are francophones among us who strived very well to find the best way of reading the Quran, but whenever there is talk about the *sharia*, these same francophones appeal to us, we who did the madrasas.

The above example shows how the expertise of a madrasa student in Islamic religion may differ from the expertise of a French school student. In the training center where Mohamed taught people how to read the Quran, there were teachers who studied in madrasas and teachers who studied in French schools. According to him, though teachers who studied in French schools were able to teach the Quran, their knowledge of the Islamic legal and moral code was limited in comparison to teachers who studied in madrasas. Thus, teachers from a French school background had to rely on teachers from a madrasa background in religious matters.

Participants' foregoing comments about how their madrasa education influenced them reveal that madrasa education made the participants faithful, conscious of Islamic teachings, and observant of these teachings in their personal and professional life. The participants also gained more expertise in Islamic thought and religion than Malian Muslims who did not attend a full-time Islamic school.

The participants believed that because madrasa students were perceived in Malian society as people of religion, people looked up to them as religious role models and

experts. The participants thus promoted religious observance and teachings in their families and in society. They pointed out that they became distinctive because they were conscious and knowledgeable of Islamic teachings, and because other Malian Muslims expected madrasa students to be highly religious. Amina explained in the following terms how she promoted Islamic observance in her family,

I did not regret my madrasa education because of the education I did [helped me educate my children to be observant Muslims]. My children are in *ekɔli* to the point that my oldest daughter says my idea is different from their idea. Regarding wearing indecent cloths [cloths that expose the body], I don't accept that my children wear it [cloths] and go out. I propose to them the *hijab*. I tell them to be people of *hijab* and to be people of religion.

Amina's assertion conveys that her madrasa education enabled her to promote Islamic values and practice in her family. For example, she said she was able to encourage her children to be religious and to conform to an Islamic dress code. However, Amina's comment about her daughter's view reveals that French school students' attitude about Islamic precepts may differ from madrasa students' attitudes. Though a French school student may be a believing and practicing Muslim, their outlook of Islam might still differ from that of a madrasa student. When I asked Amina if having a different outlook about Islam creates any tension between her and her daughter, she answered,

She used to tell me, "mommy your vision and our vision are not the same." I would tell her that it was because of the French mentality they inculcated in their head at *ekɔli* [she could not see why it was important to learn how to read the Quran], When the teacher [Islamic education teacher I hired] used to come,

..., she used to neglect her courses, but now, [she is in university. She tells me that she regrets that she neglected her Islamic education courses because she wished she could read the Quran herself instead of listening to recordings of Quran recitation]. Our mindsets were different because she thought learning French made her understand the world better, but to me she lacked wisdom [because there was nothing about God or how religion worked in what they taught her at the French school].

This story implies that while Islamic education teachers want children to learn, recite, rehearse, and memorize the knowledge before understanding or applying it, Amina's daughter wanted to first understand the purpose knowledge would serve before making the effort to learn. This may indicate that the pedagogy used to teach Islamic subjects may be different from the pedagogy used at the French school. This also indicates that there is possibly a generational gap between Amina and her daughter. This story also implies that Islamic schooling and French schooling produce different influences on students' thinking and attitude. Another implication of this story is that, in some contexts, part-time private Islamic education cannot substitute for full-time Islamic education provided at the madrasa or the traditional Islamic school. A final implication is that educators must innovate distinct teaching methods for part-time Islamic education courses, for French school students, and for adult learners.

Amina and her daughter looked at each others' schooling background with prejudice. While Amina's daughter thought she understood the world better than her mother because of her French schooling, Amina thought that French schooling did not allow her daughter to understand the wisdom of Islamic teachings, so Amina thought her

madrassa education made her wiser than her daughter. However, her daughter's lack of wisdom could also be due to generational gap, for the tension between Amina and her daughter disappeared as the daughter grew up, and as she socialized with Amina and with others. Through social interactions, the daughter gained a new range of experiences different from what she learned at the French school. The generational gap thus narrowed between Amina and her daughter, so they understood each other better.

The story of Amina's daughter shows that socialization and experience are important in religious education. Through socialization in the family environment and in the wider religious community, children are exposed to religious beliefs, practices, and teachings manifested in parents' and other adults' utterances and conducts. Similarly, through lived experiences, children contemplate the religious teachings they receive during Islamic education courses or social upbringing. Thus, as children mature, they appreciate the religious teachings not only because they are taught that these teachings are right, but also because they comprehend the righteousness of the teachings through experience. My current analysis of the experience of Amina's daughter is also substantiated by Issa's view about the will of God, as I will discuss later.

Issa's story with his siblings also reveals the important of socialization and experience in education. When I asked Issa if his madrassa education caused any tension between him and his siblings, all of whom attended the French school, he responded that,

When I newly came back from [the Arab country], my perspective used to be slightly different from that of my brothers who studied in *ekoli*, but that was due to our professional backgrounds rather than to my madrassa student background ... because I am an architect, we used to have different perspectives on [housing]

projects. ... however, [because my points proved valid on many occasions], they [my brothers] ended up accepting my views and followed my advice. ... [besides that,] everything religious in the family was left to me ... [but socially] our family education made us closely observe [social] hierarchy, so the little brother must respect the big brother. Even if you object to what the big brother says, you have to watch your language. In that regard, ..., things are working very well.

Beyond the impact of schooling on students' thinking and attitude, Issa's and Amina's comments show that the tension between the perspectives of madrasa and French school students is partially due to the preconceptions madrasa and French school students have about each other. This is why when there was a favorable environment for a constructive exchange of ideas and viewpoints between madrasa and French school students, as in Issa's and Amina's stories, their views complemented each other, and each party saw the merit of the other party's viewpoint.

Going back to how Malians perceive madrasa students, Ibrahim's next comment shows that Malians expect madrasa students to be people who closely observe Islamic teachings,

... the biggest impact madrasa education left on me ... was to monitor myself, to see most of the time that the neighborhood was seeing that this was what I was [neighbours saw me as a madrasa student]. Well, if the neighborhood saw you [me] as a madrasa student and a man of religion, it became mandatory upon you [me].... That you [I] do the effort not to do an action which makes people lose confidence in that thing [religion].

According to Ibrahim, his madrasa education influenced him socially in the sense that it made people expect him to be a religious role model. Awareness of this social expectation further reinforced his religiosity, so he always strived to conform to Islamic teachings as people expect a religious role model to do. Striving to be a religious role model brought the participants social respect according to Issa's following example,

Even last night, one of my neighbours had a problem with his wife when I was still at work. When I came [from work], the husband came and told me I went to the woman. What I had to say I said that. She said, "if you talked to me, my problem is over." ..., you know what also caused that [people to respect me]? Is that in the neighborhood, I do not talk about everything. There are things that I will not participate in. ... Well, that is also what Allah said. Whoever accepts His [teachings] and does His [act according to God's teachings], when you talk to people, especially a person who is told His, that person will not reject that [believers will not reject the advice of someone who follows God's teachings].

This story shows that Issa's observance of Islamic teachings made his neighbours perceive him as a religious role model and knowledgeable of God's words. Thus, one of his neighbors reached out to him to resolve a dispute the neighbor had with his wife. The neighbor's wife accepted Issa's advice because Issa reminded her of God's words.

The quotations I selected to exemplify the social effects of madrasa education on the participants reveal that socially, Malians expect madrasa students to be religious. This social expectation further increased participants' religiosity, so they kept a close watch on their sayings and deeds, and they carefully chose the social activities they engaged in. Thus, participants' knowledge of Islamic teachings and observance of these teachings

made people treat them with respect – which in turn enabled the participants to promote Islamic teachings in their families and the wider society.

The Madrasa Caused Participants' Negative Self-Image and Made Them Subject to Social Prejudice

The participants Mohamed and Issa admitted that when they were young, they felt an inferiority complex for not speaking French because in Mali, at that time, speaking French was often considered as being educated. It was believed that only French speakers could occupy influential bureaucratic positions. However, the two participants explained that their inferiority complex faded when they became intellectually mature able to make sober judgement about education, career, and Malian society. Mohamed explained that he felt inferiority complex because,

... in childhood, one liked French ... a little bit, especially in this contemporary time You [I as a madrasa student] would desire it a little bit though we also studied French, but at that time we did not know what the future was reserving for us. ... being in a francophone country, you would desire that [speaking French] a little bit at the time of childhood. In madrasas, the French was not very well reinforced. In addition to that, the examples you [students] used to see such as the conditions of madrasa teachers, and maybe if you compared it [the material condition of madrasa teachers] to the rulers of the country these days to say that they did *tubabukalan* [learning of white people].

Mohamed felt an inferiority complex in childhood for not speaking French because he observed that in Mali, most of the intellectuals, the political elite, and state bureaucrats attended French schools and spoke French. Associating speaking French with

the acquisition of social status and financial gain made Mohamed feel inferior for not speaking French. This inferiority complex was indirectly a negative consequence of French colonization because by establishing French schooling as the largest school network in Mali and by imposing French as the lingua franca of state bureaucracy, the French colonizer imposed the francophone identity on the Malian state. Then, through political and intellectual discourses the state's identity was conflated with the country's identity. Instead of the country, Mali, being an African country where French is used as the official language of the state, the political and intellectual discourses built the perception that Mali was primarily a francophone country.

Another reason for Mohamed's negative feeling for not speaking French fluently was his pessimism about the career prospect of madrasa students, especially when he compared the material condition of French-speaking bureaucrats to the condition of madrasa teachers. Also, his poor mastery of French made him less assertive vis-à-vis French speakers. In Mohamed's view, he had these feelings in childhood because he did not know that madrasa students too could master French do whatever a French school student could do. This view of Mohamed was also echoed by Issa,

... as I told you in the past, before going to [the Arab country], I used to feel that deficiency [inferiority complex for not speaking French]. Since I came back from [the Arab country] that thing [inferiority complex] did not happen to me. The reason why it did not happen to me was because in English thank God. ... French thank God ..., and Arabic thank God [I speak these three languages]. Even with some of my colleagues when we meet, the communication happens as it should. Thank God. Between me and my customers, the communication happens. When

the file comes, in English, I have no problem. In French, I have no problem. In Arabic, I have no problem.

Thus, when, Issa and Mouhamed pursued higher education and learned French and English, they understood that speaking French was not synonymous with being an intellectual and has instrumental value in other aspects of life. They also understood that madrasa students can aspire to any career.

Another negative impact of madrasa education the participants discussed was suffering from the prejudice of some French-speaking intellectuals and bureaucrats. According to Khadija, Amina, Mohamed, and Ibrahim, they encountered some French-speaking intellectuals, and bureaucrats who were deeply prejudiced against anybody who did not speak French fluently. The participants experienced this social prejudice when pursuing higher education in Mali, when seeking employment, or when working. The following is Khadija's experience,

After being transferred [to my new job], My first meeting with the director irritated me a little bit because of the way she received me., but I tried to control my emotion because I have in mind that it [French] is only a language. You [the director] are a citizen of Mali, and I am also a citizen of Mali. The workplace is not owned by anybody. I have that idea in mind from the day I studied Arabic. I like Arabic, and I am proud of it. It never occurred to me not even one day that because I had this difficulty [with French] that I regretted if I had not done Arabic. However, it encouraged me to learn the French more to be up to standard [to increase my fluency in French] ...

This is how Khadija related the experience of her first meeting with her supervisor when she started to work in the Malian public service. She felt that her supervisor did not treat her respectfully because she was not very fluent in French. This experience did not make Khadija feel any inferiority complex because she understood that French was just a language like any other language, so speaking French was not synonymous with being an intellectual, and not speaking French was not a sign of lacking intellectual ability. However, this experience made Khadija aware that she must improve her French language skills to be up to the expected standard in her job.

Khadija's ability to be assertive and feel confident when her supervisor demeaned her for not being fluent in French signifies that intellectual awareness is an effective tool to resist injustice and to fight for one's rights. Khadija was strong in her mind, sure in her heart, and assertive in her speech vis-à-vis the intellectual, psychological, and institutional oppression of francophone intellectuals and bureaucrats because she understood that the citizens of Mali were all equal regardless of their educational backgrounds. Khadija might have gained this understanding and ability to resist from her madrasa education because madrasas teach modern subjects including civic education. The civic education she received from the official curriculum might have been reinforced by the experience she had through the hidden curriculum (i.e., socialization in the madrasa) because in one of her comments, Khadija repeatedly stated that madrasa teachers must incite students to be courageous and self-confident.

Possibly, Khadija's intellectual awareness and ability to resist the injustices of francophone intellectuals and bureaucrats in Mali was also reinforced by her lived experience in the post-1991 democratic environment. Khadija and Mohamed attended the

madrassa between 1992 and 2009, and they both claimed that madrassa students resisted institutional injustice through some forms of political activism. Khadija and her colleagues who studied in Arabic, for instance, lobbied to get state officials to change part of the civil service admission exam into Arabic. Also, Mohamed and his colleagues founded an association to claim their rights from the management of the university.

Another form of injustice resulting from the francophone institutional and intellectual culture in Mali was discrimination in terms of employment against Malians who were not fluent in French. Amina related that some French-speaking bureaucrats discriminated against madrassa students in terms of employment, so,

... if you are educated in the madrassa, there are inconveniences here in Mali. You are not considered at equal footing with *ekɔliden 'u* [French school students]. That is the way the country [Mali] itself treats *madrasaden 'u* [madrassa students]. You will find that there are *madrasaden 'u*. They can do everything in this world [qualified professionals]. But, if you [job seeker] come and stand with your diploma, and it has Arabic on it, they [bureaucrats] minimize you. In their view, you are not an intellectual person, or you are not educated.

In Amina's experience, prejudice against madrassa students in terms of employment is not only due to madrassa students' lack of fluency in French, but also to the institutional culture that dominates Malian bureaucracy and the colonial mindset of some French schooled intellectuals. According to her, some bureaucrats demean madrassa students as soon as they see their diplomas. Thus, for these bureaucrats, holding a diploma issued in Arabic equates with a lack of intellectual ability and professional qualification. The attitude of these types of bureaucrats was summarized by Khadija as

follows, “If you [worker or job seeker] come as someone who studied in Arabic, people see that you don’t deserve anything but the mosque or teaching.” Ibrahim also recalled having experienced employment discrimination.

Mohamed, however, explained that he witnessed a situation which made him conclude that the demeaning attitude of some French-speaking intellectuals toward madrasa students is often due to their ignorance about madrasa education,

Yes, some of these situations made me love madrasa. For example, in the year of our BAC [national high school exam], we used to do BAC with *ekoliden’u* [French school students], Their philosophy was done in French, and ours was done in Arabic. Occasionally, you would find even some French schoolteachers who would come and ask about the exam you [madrasa students] were doing. If you told them philosophy, you could see the astonishment on their faces as if they were saying how could philosophy be done in Arabic. That means the general culture they [French schoolteachers] had was very limited ...

From this incident, Mohamed concluded that the demeaning attitude of some French-speaking intellectuals toward madrasa students is due to these intellectuals’ ignorance that all forms of knowledge can be studied in Arabic exactly as in French. In this example, Mohamed’s awareness of these French schoolteachers’ ignorance that every discipline can be learned in Arabic made him see that the seeming superiority complex of French-speaking bureaucrats vis-à-vis madrasa students is, in fact, due to the limitation of their intellectual horizon. Thus, he was grateful for being a madrasa student.

Nevertheless, Mohamed also related that he and other madrasa graduates were denied scholarships in the university though they were legally entitled to them, and they

had to fight for five years, and even then, they received the scholarship for only one year. The university did not pay any of their past due scholarships for the previous four years. Thus, his colleagues who started the fight and who, by then, had graduated did not receive any of their dues. This story of Mohamed connects my discussion in the literature review chapter of the failure of the Malian education system after 1991. Mohamed and his colleagues spent five years in the university instead of four years because schools were shut down. This is referred to in Mali as *année blanche* (a year without schooling).

The phenomenon of *année blanche* in Mali is related to the failure of the Malian education system after the coup d'état of 1991 when students were the major social force in the protest movements against the regime of President Moussa Traore (1968-1991). After the fall of the regime, the Malian education system failed partially because schooling became highly politicized, corrupt, and unstable. In my view, this situation is mainly due to the fact that politicians who preached democracy to topple the regime of Moussa did not fulfil what they promised in terms of equity, social justice, the rule of law, transparency, and corruption-free state management. Hence, on the one hand, students' and teachers' associations always mobilize their constituencies to pressure the government to respond to their demands, and on the other hand, different political forces, including politicians in power, use students' associations as a political tool.

In summary, the third finding shows that while madrasa education made the participants gain religious knowledge, piety, and social respect, some participants felt low self-esteem in childhood for not fluently speaking French. It also made most participants subject to social prejudice in terms of higher education and employment. This is to say that madrasa education had positive but also negative influences on my participants.

Finding 4: The Madrasa Determining Participants' Education and Career Paths

The fourth finding of this multi-case study is participants' perceptions of how their madrasa education conditioned their dreams and aspirations, and how madrasa education determined their education and career paths. I discuss this finding under three subcategories: 1) the evolution of participants' dreams and aspirations; 2) participants' post-madrasa education experiences; and 3) participants' employment experiences.

The Evolution of Participants' Dreams and Aspirations

As revealed earlier, all the participants declared that their parents sent them to the madrasa mainly for religious purposes, as exemplified in Ibrahim's statement, "if you look at it, the day our parents sent us to the madrasa, they did not show us inside the office [parents did not send us to madrasas to later work in the office]. ... they sent us there [madrasas], so we gain knowledge of the religion." This statement represents the typical answer the participants offered to explain why they were sent to the madrasa. While attending the madrasa, none of the participants knew they would one day earn a university degree or go through the career paths they went through.

Participants' dreams and aspirations evolved over time as their educational and lived experiences changed. Among the five participants, only Khadija said that her dream has not changed much since she was a child. She had always loved teaching, and she became a teacher. According to her, "... everyone has what is beloved to them. Since I was little, what I liked was teaching, that I learn and teach, that I build an institute and be the principal of my own madrasa." If her dream of owning a madrasa has not yet come true, her dream of becoming a teacher fulfilled because she was recruited into the Malian

civil service as a teacher of Arabic. Contrary to Khadija, Amina's dream has evolved as a result of going to the Arab world. She recalled,

My dream was since I entered the madrasa it was in my mind to study in an Arab country, but I did not know which country Allah would let me go to, but Allah realized a goal of mine [the dream of studying in the Arab world], we found ourselves in [the Arab country].

When Amina arrived in the Arab world, she was exposed to a new range of experiences, so her mind changed about madrasa education and career. As previously discussed, in childhood, her grandfather imprinted a belief in her mind that she came from a scholarly family and that she must strive to become like other female scholars of their lineage. However, once in the Arab world, she discovered that with her madrasa education not only could she know her religion but also study and become a journalist and translator, so

... when I went to [the Arab country], I saw [experienced] a different life there.

Personally, I wanted to be a journalist, a translator, but when we were there [in the Arab country], No foreigner would do that [translation]. It was their own women who were taken in the faculty of translation [only female student citizens of that Arab country were accepted in the faculty of translation] [Because of that I went to the faculty of sociology to major in social work].

Besides exposure to new experiences through travel, an event that deeply influenced Amina's thinking about studying came through the media. She recalled,

Well, before my life becomes like this when I was in [the Arab country], I saw a newspaper. A Palestinian woman did medical studies. When they had a problem

with Israel, Israel killed their people. As I said, after seven years of studying, the woman became experienced. That day, she saved more than twenty people. After they were tear gassed, people started losing consciousness. She started applying what she learned at [the medical] school. She would blow the air into their mouths, and she saved people's lives. What brought that to her? Learning.

Amina's aspiration to study sociology was cut short because her grandfather asked her to go back to Mali to get married. She related, "I was obliged to come back, but after I came back, I still could not forget about studying. I spent seven years laying at home sleeping. ..., I then got up to enter the university here in Bamako." The story of Amina shows that her grandfather sent her to the madrasa to study Islamic sciences, but mobility and exposure to novel experiences in the madrasa and the Arab world made her aspire for higher education and work in a non-religious career. Today, she holds a degree in Arabic literature and a degree in teaching, and she works in a foreign embassy.

In case of Issa, he confessed he did not have any specific dream associated with schooling when he was in the madrasa. However, when his friend went to study in the Arab country, Issa also desired to continue his education in the Arab country. He recalled, "... our people [family] do commerce, so I knew to work in commerce was an inescapable career path for me [if I had not continued my study in the Arab world, I would have been a merchant]," but "right after we did DEF [the Grade 9 exam], he [my friend] went to [the Arab country]. When he went, that made it [studying abroad] come to my mind."

Issa attended the madrasa because his father wanted one of his children to acquire religious knowledge and understand Arabic. Issa spent his madrasa years not aspiring to

anything beyond fulfilling his father's aspiration and later working in commerce as the rest of his family members. However, seeing his friend going to the Arab world after passing the Grade 9 exam made Issa aware that madrasa students could aspire for higher education in the Arab world. He told me, "I will not lie to you ..., what [work] I am doing today I did not have that in my mind at that time [before going abroad] in all honesty, but my dream in the matter of madrasa has changed 180 degrees when I left Mali." Once in the Arab country, his opinion changed again about schooling and career.

He continued, "when I arrived [in the Arab country], I was shocked because they [school authorities] said we must do entrance exam," and "I found myself down in the 8th grade That was my fate," but if "Allah is in something, triggering events raise." Issa believed that God predestined him to become an architect that was why, without any planning on his part, he had to go through the events he went through. For example, he desired to go to the Arab world because his friend went, and when he arrived in the Arab world, he studied science only because he did not succeed in his entrance exam. Through these series of unexpected and unplanned events, he ended up studying science.

He studied science in high school. Afterward, he was unexpectedly admitted to the faculty of engineering. He recalled that experience, "[university admission office] said, "no, foreigners were not accepted in engineering." The [Malian] embassy delegated someone to go with us to students' affairs," and because of the support of the Malian embassy, he was accepted in the faculty of engineering, and he graduated as an architect. Again, without the unexpected intervention of the Malian embassy, Issa would have not become an engineer today. Therefore, Issa believed, "It seemed Allah had

written [predestined] that these [me and my Malian high school classmate] would go [to the Arab country] and do engineering.”

The intervention of the Malian embassy to get the university of the Arab country to accept Issa’s admission in the faculty of engineering may suggest that while the Malian government often discriminates against madrasa-educated Malians inside Mali, it supports them outside Mali. This inconsistency in Malian state officials’ position regarding madrasa-educated Malians can be explained in two ways. It is possible that the workers of the Malian embassy acted solely to defend the interest of a Malian citizen in a foreign land. It is also possible, as I discussed in the literature review chapter, that while some state officials in Mali oppose madrasa education, others support it.

Ibrahim is another participant whose dream and fate evolved in unexpected directions. He related that “regarding studying, that you [I] become a great scholar who can teach people. That was the dream at that time [in childhood].” After passing the Grade 9 exam, he desired to study in an oil-rich Arab country because he was attracted by the financial condition of students who went to that county. However, he ended up studying in another Arab country against his wish. Once in that country, his opinion changed about scholarship. In Mali, scholarship in madrasa circles was perceived as speaking classic Arabic and mastering religious sciences, but in the Arab world, he saw that he could specialize in other areas of knowledge, so he studied sociology and specialized in social work. Today, he is the director of studies at a madrasa.

A theme that runs through the stories of Amina, Issa, and Ibrahim is that these participants’ lived experiences in the Arab world proved to them that madrasa education had more value than simply learning Arabic and religion. By witnessing that the Arabs

study all fields of knowledge in Arabic and work in all sorts of occupations using the Arabic language, these participants' minds were freed from the dominate perception in Mali, where madrasa education was mostly associated with the religion. Going to the Arab world also freed these participants' minds from the negative consequence of the colonization on their thinking (i.e., perceiving French as the language of non-religious sciences and state management).

Reflecting on how his fate unexpectedly evolved, Ibrahim told me, "the wisdom and understanding I have I would not have that in [the oil rich Arab country]. ... students of [that country] used to stop only at the high school level." Malian students who went to that oil-rich country could not study beyond high school, so now, Ibrahim sees that going to that country was not in his best interest even though he desired it. Hence, the unfortunate event of not going to the oil-rich Arab country changed Ibrahim's academic and intellectual fate for the better because he earned a university degree in sociology in addition to his understanding of Islamic sciences and the Arabic language.

While Ibrahim's childhood dream was to be fluent in Arabic and gain authoritative knowledge of Islamic canons, Mohamed had a peculiar dream for a madrasa student. He recalled with a laugh, "... dreams of childhood are many. I wanted ... to be a pilot, ..., or a medical doctor I did not go through any of these two pathways. Maybe it was due to the curriculum that was in the madrasa." These dreams remained dreams, but Mohamed attended the vocational school to learn building design while he was doing his Bachelor of Arabic literature. He was later recruited into public service as a building designer. Mohamed's comment shows that when he was a child in the madrasa, his aspiration was not limited to religious education.

The sharp contrast between Mohamed's childhood dreams and other participants' dreams indicates that Mohamed might have been exposed to unique experiences in the madrasa and in society. For instance, he studied in the madrasa between 1995 and 2009, and as noted earlier, he said that he studied in the madrasa and in Arabic the same science curriculum French school students studied. Also, the period when Mohamed attended the madrasa coincided with two major events, the growing social pressure on madrasas to prepare students for careers, and the 2003 curriculum reform.

Finally, the findings discussed in this section indicate that madrasa education enabled the participants to actualize their evolving dreams. Although participants' fates changed in unexpected directions, which they believed was planned by God, the educational component that enabled them to adapt and strive for success was, from their perspectives, the strong foundation their competent teachers gave them in Islamic and Arabic subjects. Thus, participants' dreams evolved from the modest expectations of their parents (knowing the religion and speaking Arabic) to earning university degrees.

Participants' Post-Madrasa Education Experiences

The participants stated that their madrasa education influenced their post-madrasa education. Their post-madrasa education was also largely determined by the context in which they studied, their personal courage, and divine favour. As discussed previously, all the participants agreed that they were well-prepared Islamic and Arabic subjects. However, lack of competences in scientific subjects and French had a negative impact on some participants' post-madrasa education.

For example, when Ibrahim was doing his sociology degree in the Arab country, he had to get help from his colleagues in statistics because he had not studied math in the

madrassa in Mali. Issa also had to take private courses to reinforce his mastery level in scientific subjects. He recalled, "... when I went to [the Arab country], the eighth and ninth grades that I have done, there were straightening study groups. After school, I used to go there. ..., so, I prepared myself to be up to standard [to study science in high school]," so Issa gained the necessary skills to study science in the Arab country by taking private classes. This signifies that the science curriculum of Issa's madrassa in Mali was possibly different from the science curriculum in the Arab country.

While Ibrahim and Issa were challenged by scientific subjects in their post-madrassa education, Amina and Khadija had difficulties with French when they attended the university in Mali. They also had to take private courses to raise their mastery level of French. Amina stated, "... in the university ..., they gave you French here and there [French was taught inconsistently]. There was no mastery in the true sense of the word. Well, when it is said that the subject is done just to pass the exam, that is not serious [studying French just to pass the exam cannot lead to mastery of French]." She continued, "even those who studied French, it was difficult for them. We looked for teachers who lived close to us. I had a teacher. Every evening I used to go see him." This account of Amina points out that possibly their university French courses were poorly designed, so students focussed on passing the exam than mastering the language.

Besides difficulties with scientific subjects and French, some participants faced institutional obstacles in their post-madrassa education. For instance, as mentioned earlier, when Issa graduated from high school in the Arab country, he applied for admission to the faculty of engineering, but his application was rejected on the ground that foreign

nationals were not accepted in engineering. It was not clear to Issa why foreign students were excluded from some faculties, but the Malian embassy helped him to be admitted.

Similar to Issa, when Amina graduated from high school in the Arab country, she was denied admission to the faculty of journalism and translation because no foreign national was accepted then. However, Amina affirmed that this restriction on foreigners' admission was later lifted. Mohamed also said when he and other madrasa students were admitted to the university in Mali, they faced institutional discrimination. Though on rare occasions some French school students also faced discrimination, he insisted that madrasa students were collectively and systematically discriminated against,

The difficulties we had in university is that we were not treated like other students. We [madrasa students] used to ask ourselves if we were Malians or not [the discrimination we were subject to made us feel like foreigners in our own country]. Because the way the university of Mali is, after being oriented after the BAC, you [students] are entitled to financial aid, and you are entitled to a scholarship. We [madrasa students] did not benefit from these privileges. We did fight. We went to see influential people. We went to see some Members of Parliament. We talked to some journalists. We even founded an association to that end. They treated us ... as free candidates despite the fact that we had the BAC like everybody else. ... a free candidate is someone who goes and registers at his own expense [to study in public universities]. ... only in the fifth year. the fight succeeded. By then, the first people [students] who started the fight had graduated [without benefiting the scholarship].

To relate Mohamed's comment back to my analysis of Khadija's story, these participants' ability to resist the injustices of the Malian francophone intellectuals and bureaucrats was possibly due to the intellectual awareness they gained as a result of their madrasa education or possibly due to their mingling with French school students at the university. Also, their lived experiences in the post-1991 democratic atmosphere might have enabled them to use democratic mechanisms of resistance.

The difficulties Mohamed and his colleagues faced while attending the university in Mali might have been due to the discrimination of the university's authorities against madrasa students, institutional dysfunction, and corruption, for the following reasons. When the state admits madrasa students to public universities, normally, all institutional measures must be in place to treat these students like other students – which did not happen in Mohamed's case. When Mohamed and his colleagues appealed to Members of Parliament and journalists, there should have been a formal inquiry, and when their fight succeeded, Mohamed and his colleagues, including those who had graduated, were entitled to all their past dues. However, they did not receive any of their past dues. In a sense, Mohamed and his colleagues won the legal battle, but the decision was never fully enforced. I see this as a sign of discrimination, corruption, and institutional dysfunction.

The participants stated that other factors that helped them succeed in their post-madrasa education include courage, determination, and support from their colleagues and relatives. This was best exemplified in Amina's story,

When we [I] came back here [in Mali] and started the other study [studying Arabic literature at university], we faced many difficulties. The first thing was that you [I] were working, and after finishing work, you go to school. While

doing that [studying], maternity was added to that [studying]. It was not easy. It was not easy at all. Often while being pregnant with its sickness and exhaustion, there was no tolerance in schooling. When the date of the final exam was fixed, it [the exam] was done as fixed. Sometimes, it happened that you [I] had a baby. While my child was four months old, I used to take him to the course in the hand of the nanny. [When I thought to abandon my study], there were some of my colleagues who strongly supported me. I did the suffering until Allah enabled me to have the bachelor and master's degrees.

Thus, according to Amina, her effort, the support of her social network, and divine providence enabled her to face all obstacles and obtain two university degrees. The obstacles Amina and the other participants faced in their post-madrasa education was partially institutional and partially academic. The academic difficulties were due to the madrasa not adequately teaching scientific subjects and French, so participants' post-madrasa education was largely determined by their prior madrasa education.

Participants' Employment Experiences

Based on participants' lived experiences and views, madrasa education can broaden or limit students' career prospects. According to Mohamed, by mastering Arabic, French, Islamic subjects, and modern subjects, madrasa students' career prospect broadens because "whatever economic activity they [French school students] can participate in, ..., madrasa students can participate in all that [economic activity]. On the contrary, madrasa students can adventure in certain things, they are excluded from that [by default, French school students are excluded from careers that require Arabic or religious knowledge]." Here, Mohamed argues that if madrasas adequately teach Islamic

and Arabic subjects besides modern subjects and French, madrasa graduates will gain a competitive edge over French school graduates. Then, all jobs available to French school graduates will be available to madrasa graduates as well. However, French school graduates will be excluded from any job that requires Arabic or Islamic sciences.

In this regard, Issa saw that limiting foreign language learning in Mali to only French was economically disadvantageous in this age of globalization because “the problem of Mali is what. Mali is like a locked country. That is to say..., it is French only. That is why even when foreign investors come, ..., there is a problem.” To support this claim Issa gave the example that,

... the Arabs come here [in Mali] to do some projects [to invest], and often they search for some specializations in Arabic, but they don't find it. ... even I am working on a project for a company, ... they are Arabs. They want to do packaging in Mali. We gave them some of the people [who studied in the Arab country]. They recruited them, and the work is becoming easy because they speak the same language ..., the market is in need of Arab language students.

This example once more shows that these participants were well aware of the broader political and economic contexts of Mali, so they always tried to persuade that religion aside, madrasa education and the Arabic language had political, cultural, historical, and economic importance to the people of Mali and to the Malian state.

The mastery of Arabic and French broadened Mohamed's career prospect as he stated that “after we had the BAC, we encouraged each other to do two [majors] simultaneously to have a greater chance [broader career prospect].” While he was attending the university to major in bilingual Arabic literature, he studied building design

at a vocational school, and with his building design diploma, he was hired in the Malian public service. Mohamed's mastery of French enabled him to study at the public university in Mali and his mastery of Arabic and French enabled him to study at the vocational school. While Mohamed could pursue any study or career that required either French or Arabic, a French school student would have been limited to study and work only in French, so Mohamed's madrasa education gave him a competitive edge in terms of higher education and career.

In the case of Issa, his employment was facilitated because of his engineering diploma, his mastery of English, and his social network. He said,

... the day I came back, there was a friend of my father who was an architect. My father introduced me to him. In the same week I came back, I went to that firm. After reaching about 10 months [working for 10 months], a project came in that firm. It was a project for an Australian company. To give the project to the firm [I was working at], the [Australian] company required that there must be an engineering architect who mastered English.

In addition to his engineering degree, Issa's employment was facilitated due to his social network and his mastery of English. He mastered English because of his education in the Arab world. Thus, Issa's employment prospect was indirectly broadened because of his madrasa education, for without madrasa education, he would not have gone to the Arab world and studied engineering and English.

For Amina, she obtained the jobs she worked in due to her mastery of Arabic, knowledge of computer, and her social network. She recounted, "it was because of education that I found myself doing certain roles [work in certain jobs]. ..., we left the

country of study Allah made it possible that I find a job, the bureau of investment [of the Arabs].” [When the investment bureau was closed], she continued, “I gathered my papers [credentials] to go to the place [workplace] of one of my acquaintance. As soon as he saw my papers, he said that they needed people like this [me], especially women [female applicants with my qualifications were needed at that workplace]. That person helped me,” so her social network was crucial in helping her get employment.

Though Amina’s social network helped her get employment, her earlier madrasa education gave her the foundations to acquire the skills employers were looking for. Her mastery of Arabic enabled her to take computer courses in the Arab country. Her computer skills combined with her fluency in Arabic enabled her to get employment. Reflecting on the difficult path she went through in terms of higher education and career, Amina concluded her comment with these words, “whenever Allah closes one door, he opens another one. As far as I am concerned, the education I have received, I am making a living because of Allah and because of that [education],” so despite the difficulties she faced, she was resilient and hopeful that she would succeed with the will of God.

In the case of Khadija, she secured the jobs she worked in due to her versatility, courage, social network, and the lobbying of madrasa students. She started working when she was a student. She worked as a computer instructor, as a typist, as a secretary, and as an Arabic teacher. After failing the public service admission exam for lack of fluency in the French language, she recalled, “those who studied in Arabic were resisting and telling them to change our questions to Arabic, even if they don’t make it all in Arabic, they make the core in Arabic.” The lobbying of madrasa graduates succeeded, the core

questions of public service admission exam was changed to Arabic. Khadija passed the exam, and she was hired in public service.

If the lobbying of madrasa graduates allowed Khadija and her colleagues to circumvent the French language barrier in their public service admission exam, Ibrahim failed to enter the public service for lack of fluency in French. In his case, madrasa students did not lobby, as Khadija and her colleagues did. Two factors possibly explain the difference between Ibrahim's and Khadija's experiences. It is possible that Khadija and her colleagues, who studied in Malian universities, had an experience using bureaucratic mechanisms to resist. Ibrahim, who studied abroad, probably did not have such an experience or did belong to a group, like Khadija, so he could not resist. It is also possible that because the new curriculum was implemented in madrasas in 2003, the number of university-educated madrasa students during Khadija's time had increased. Hence, their ability to organize themselves and resist as a group had also increased. Going back to Ibrahim's experience of failing to enter the Malian civil service, he stated,

I came [graduated from the Arab country] as a sociologist. Then, the day I came to Mali, there was no university in our country that had a faculty of sociology. ..., we [I] came and found that to enter [work in] the public service, the competitive exam was [done] in French. [I] had the knowledge surely, but the language that was the path for you [me] to enter that [public service] you [I] didn't possess that language [French]. Because of this [lack of fluency in French], you were denied that [work in public service]. Thus, after failing the exam twice, I focused on my madrasa job.

Before concluding this section, I want to point out that all the participants advised that madrasa students must strive to master French to avoid being marginalized in terms of employment, especially in the Malian public service. Ibrahim advised,

... not mastering that [French], I see it is a great obstacle for *arabukalanden'u* [students of Arabic] in this country of ours [Mali] if you decide to go through the path of the government career-wise [work in public service]. [I see] there is no other solution than mastering the language [French] with which the state does the work. Because unless you [madrasa student] master that language [French], you will remain on the margin [mostly excluded from public service].

Participants' stories in these last two sections indicate that the mastery of French was very important in Mali for studying at public universities and working in the public service. However, despite the apparent importance of French, some madrasas did not accept the new curriculum of 2003, fearing this curriculum would jeopardize the religious mission of the madrasa.

Participants' stories in the last two sections also indicate that madrasa education can have positive or negative consequences on students' post-madrasa education and career. The madrasa education positively affected the participants whenever their studies or works required fluency in Arabic or mastery of Islamic sciences. Madrasa education, however, negatively affected the participants whose studies and works required subjects that were not adequately taught in the madrasa they attended (i.e., scientific subjects and French). Participants' stories also revealed that many negative impacts of madrasa education can be overcome through personal courage, social support, and political means (e.g., Malian embassy intervening or madrasa graduates lobbying).

Finding 5: Sustaining the Madrasa by Improving Its Weaknesses

This finding discusses participants' views about the sustainability of the madrasa for future generations in Mali. The participants unanimously agreed that madrasa education must be reassessed to reform its curriculum to satisfactorily teach Islamic education and Arabic alongside modern subjects and French. They believed that reforming the curriculum in this way would preserve the madrasas' religious mission while giving students hope for higher education and careers. They also believed that a real reform of madrasa education must go beyond curriculum reform to change madrasas' organizational culture, madrasa/parents' cooperation, and madrasa/state cooperation. Moreover, they insisted that the education offered at madrasas must be diversified. I discuss this finding under two subcategories: 1) participants' views about the problems of madrasas; and 2) participants' aspirations for the future of the madrasa.

Participants' Views About the Problems of Madrasas

All the participants voiced their concern about the future of madrasas if the new curriculum of 2003 continues as it is now. They stated that what makes madrasa education Islamic and distinctive from other schools is that madrasas teach Islamic and Arabic subjects, so madrasa students have more religious knowledge than the average Malian Muslims, and madrasa students can pursue higher education in Arabic if they choose want. In participants' views, weakening Islamic and Arabic subjects makes madrasas fail to fulfill their religious mission. Ibrahim expressed the following concern,

... the very condition in which it [madrasa education] is now, it has many drawbacks that must be re-examined ..., if you look ..., going forward [in the

future], Islamic education will be killed [dropped] from the matter of madrasa, and if that is killed from it, that will be the loss of its distinguishing feature.

A major drawback of madrasa education in Ibrahim's view was the weakening of Islamic education in the new curriculum of 2003. To him, without a strong Islamic education, there will be no clear distinction between the madrasa and *ekoli* or Franco-Arab. Mohamed agreed with Ibrahim that,

how it is evolving, we are worried if it continues like this in a ten-year time, we doubt if there will be a madrasa anymore. If it continues like this in a ten-year time, what the madrasa used to produce people capable of defending the Arabic language as it should be [understanding Arabic to study Islamic sciences].

Certainly, it is Mali. We need preachers. We need imams, so anybody who is concerned with the promotion of the madrasa must be really worried about this. Because how it is evolving does not bring glad tiding.

According to Mohamed, not only the weakening of Islamic subjects was worrisome but also the weakening of the Arabic language. He and those who cared about the future of madrasa education worry about this situation because Islamic education goes in tandem with the Arabic language. The better students understand Arabic, the easier they can study Islamic sciences. Therefore, in his view, without a strong Arabic curriculum, madrasas will fail to produce future imams, muftis, preachers, and religious scholars. Also, Mali will be disconnected from its intellectual heritage, and an important element of the Malian culture will be lost.

Amina supported Mohamed's argument that without a strong Islamic education and Arabic curriculum, there is no madrasa education. She stated that "the curriculum

they have does not have the part of religion ..., to say the part of Arabic is also weak, once these two are removed from it [madrasa education], what are you going to stand up with?" She is saying that madrasa education stands on two pillars, Islamic and Arabic subjects. Once these pillars are weakened, there is no madrasa education. This view of Amina was also echoed by Issa and Khadija who stated that if the government really wanted to help madrasas, it should have only remedied the shortcoming of the old curriculum without touching Islamic and Arabic subjects. Issa stated, "the old curriculum that existed [before the reform] was very good, but it had shortcoming when it came to language [French]. It was that [weakness of French] that was supposed to be remedied [the old curriculum did not need a full reform. It only needed stronger French]."

Beyond the intentional weakening of Islamic education and Arabic in madrasas by some state officials, the participants believed that all stakeholders share part of the responsibility for madrasas' problems including teachers, students, madrasa owners, parents, and the government. This view was best expressed by Mohamed, "there is a problem everywhere. It is at all layers." As alluded to earlier, the participants found that part of madrasas' problems is that some madrasa owners were more interested in making a profit than serving the religion, and some teachers taught only for money.

According to Khadija, teachers like these demotivate students, and they "show in front of students that they are disparate in life. ... that they regret what they learned [madrasa education]." Also, madrasa owners who are more interested in profit did not fairly pay their teachers. Below, Ibrahim explains why some madrasa owners became more interest in profit than in serving the religious mission of the madrasa,

... the government's 126,000 Franc CFA [i.e., the madrasa owner received this amount for each student oriented by the state] did not leave people quiet [made some madrasa owners forget about the mission of the madrasa]. It became a reason that people forgot about the goal itself [religious mission of the madrasa], so now it became like a shop. We have madrasas like shops. We invest in them to have money and spend it. [If] one of your students is oriented [with the introduction of the new curriculum, the government pays for the tuition of some students in high school], the government gives you [the madrasa owner] 126,000 Fran CFA for each student [if the government places a student at a madrasa, the government pays 126,000 Franc CFA]. Well, if those students become numerous in your [madrasa owner's] possession, you see that you [madrasa owner] make some money.

This comment of Ibrahim shows that although the new curriculum neglected Islamic and Arabic subjects, some madrasa owners also did not care much about the quality of Islamic education and Arabic so long as their madrasas remain profitable. These madrasa owners' lust for profit increased lately because for each student the government places in a madrasa, the owner receives the sum of 126,000 Franc CFA.

Khadija gave this example to substantiate her claim that some madrasa owners cared more about profit than the quality of teaching, "out of lust for money, they [madrasa owners] hire all sorts of people and make them teachers. Because they are not able to pay competent teachers, they hire unsuitable people [teachers] just to pass the time with students...." Amina lamented, "... heads of madrasas do not care [about students' learning] as long as their monthly tuition is paid" This shows that some

madrasa owners consider their madrasas only as a for-profit organization, so to them, the religious mission of the madrasa becomes a matter of secondary concern.

Nevertheless, I must point out here that madrasa owners exempt some students from paying tuition. For example, Amina stated, “I personally did not pay tuition in Grade 1 because the person who registered my name at the madrasa used to teach there, so I only started to pay tuition in the second or third grade when she [the person who registered me] left that madrasa.” Ibrahim added, “orphan children mostly attend madrasas for free. This year, I personally pleaded the case of 9 students to be exempted from paying tuition, and they were exempted [because their parents could not pay tuition].” Issa and Khadija also confirmed that orphan children did not pay tuition. Moreover, Anima and Mohamed said that some Islamic NGOs paid the tuition for some orphan children. Mohamed also added that “the relatives of madrasa owners did not pay tuition.”

These examples show that madrasa owners applied double standards when it comes to redistributing profits within the madrasa school system. While madrasa owners are generous toward their relatives, as Mohamed stated, they are not generous toward their teachers, as the participants complained. This may be why Ibrahim explained that madrasa teachers did not receive a good salary due to the bad policy of madrasa owners. Furthermore, the above examples show that madrasa owners were not necessarily careless about the religious mission of the madrasa because waiving the tuition for poor and orphans is a religious mission. This observation raises the question of how the madrasa funds its generosity to the poor and orphans. The data of this multi-case study

suggests two sources of such funding: Islamic NGOs, and individual donors. The third source of funding is most likely the profit generated from tuition fees.

Going back to the problems of madrasa schooling, the participants saw that another problem of madrasa schooling is that many parents do not inquire about their children's education. They just register children in the madrasa and leave them to their fate. According to Mohamed, "many of them [parents] are in a deep state of unconsciousness. For many of them, it is to get rid of their children at the madrasa," and he added, "I can even say 98% [of parents]. They don't even know that something has changed or that this is what is in the curriculum. ... it is ignorance that dominates in this country of ours [in Mali]." In Mohamed's view, because parents do not to inquire about their children's schooling, madrasa owners do not feel any sense of urgency to do something about the deteriorating quality of Islamic education in madrasas.

In Issa's view, "parents are laying at home saying that our children are going and learning religion, but they don't really know what is there [in the madrasa]," so they entrust their children to the madrasa assuming the madrasa will teach them religion. Amina, however, thought that in Mali, "everybody has resigned. Male parents threw away their responsibility. They gave birth to (i.e., procreated) children and gave them away in the madrasa. The madrasa also sought to escape its responsibility," so for Amina, while the madrasa failed its educational responsibility, parents also failed their parental responsibility because they registered children at the madrasa and left them to their fate.

Regarding current madrasa students, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed insisted that students lack self-confidence, study only to pass the exam, and care only about French

and modern subjects because these subjects are done in the national high school exam. In Khadija's opinion, the "problem that madrasa students have is the lack of self-confidence because it is ingrained in the mind of the madrasa student that he cannot be anything [in terms of occupying important government positions]." This comment echoes what Mohamed and Issa said earlier that they felt low self-esteem in childhood for not being fluent in French. The students in Khadija's comment might have also believed that fluency in French makes them look like intellectuals, guarantees success in national exam, and facilitates recruitment into the Malian public service.

Mohamed's following comment also substantiates that being solely motivated to pass the exam was causing current madrasas students to neglect any subject that is not included in the national high school exam,

... they [students] are not conscious really. The seriousness with which we [people of my generation] used to study that spirit of rivalry is disappearing from among students. There are many madrasa students for whom it is easier to speak and write French than Arabic ... they like French ... because these are the subjects done in the exam.

An additional problem madrasa education faces in Mali, according to all the participants, is that the government is not sincere in maintaining the religious dimension of madrasa education. Rather, government policies seek to diminish Arabic and Islamic subjects in madrasas. Ibrahim saw that "the job [curriculum reform] they [ministry of education] did was not complete because, ..., there are many subjects for instance, Islamic education is not done in BAC [national high school exam], and they did not give

it any coefficient in their curriculum.” Ibrahim’s view was also stressed by Issa, “I told you our government does not care about the improvement of the madrasa.”

In the opinion of all the participants, the seemingly deliberate attempt of the government to undermine the religious mission of madrasas was partially due to the colonial mindset of Malian state officials. Issa affirmed, “because those [the French] who colonized here [Mali], it is they who are influencing here. ... slowly, Arabic is being killed [stifled in madrasas].” For Amina, “... whatever is happening to us, religious and Arabic educated people, it is [caused by] French colonization.” In Mohamed’s view, “... these leaders of ours are led, and that is something very clear. Since colonization entered this country, the first thing that colonization fought was the Arabic language and Islamic culture.” Ibrahim explained, “those whose interest is not served by Arabic learning and the religion have commissioned them [government officials] to do that work [to weaken Islamic education and Arabic in madrasas]. It is nothing but that. It is the French language. They are the French. Nobody else should be picked on.”

For Ibrahim, Malian state officials fail to see that the madrasa serve Malian national interests because these officials do not decide for themselves about the madrasa based on empirical facts. They rather blindly follow the old French colonial policies or enforce the views of the French government,

... whatever westerners tell them [Malian state officials], they believe that ..., it is those madrasas who train the jihadists [this is what the French tell them]. To show them [state officials] that this [the accusation that madrasas train jihadists] is a big lie, our reality is here. We look at our reality. Cities in which the matter of madrasa started. Since it started, did they see a madrasa student from there who

carried a gun or who participated in an attack? [like the 2012-armed militancy in northern Mali] ..., what someone else [the French] tells you [state official] about the thing [madrasas], you should not be a fool, and accept his saying without using your intellect a little bit. You yourself should use your intellect and see [state officials must do their own research]. We have madrasas for these many years. What kind of people are its students? Go and look at their curriculum. What are they doing? ..., in my opinion, when you have the good, you must make plan to help that good [madrasas] so that they can face the bad who are the minority [because only the kind of Islamic teachings provided in madrasas can discredit extremist religious views of armed-militant groups] ...

Ibrahim's quotation is self-explanatory, so I will add no comment of my own.

Instead, I would like to point out that beyond the colonial mindset of Malian state officials about madrasas, the French government was actively working to get the Malian government to maintain the linguistic and cultural influence of France in Mali. For example, I obtained a document from the Malian ministry of education titled, 'LE SECTEUR DE L'EDUCATION ET LA COOPERATION FRANÇAISE AU MALI' (the education sector and French aid agency in Mali). Although this document does not indicate the name of its author, it is clear from its length, content, and structure that this document was produced by a reliable source for educating the employees of the Malian ministry of education about French aid agency's involvement in Malian education based on empirical data. Another reason why I think this document is reliable is that I received it from the ministry of education with several other documents including official policy documents, official decrees, official statistics, and official reports.

The document is about 9 pages long. The first 4 pages give an overview of the Malian education system, list official statistics, and describe the challenges of the education sector. The last 5 pages talk about the interventions of the French aid agency in Malian education. The document highlights French aid agencies' investments in the Malian education system. It also indicates that, despite Mali being a francophone country, only 8.2% of the Malian population actively used French in 2003. Then, it notes that in July 2006, Mali and France signed a partnership framework agreement to promote the French language in Mali, especially in schooling, the cultural sphere (e.g., music and theatre), and the media. Part of this agreement was the creation of French language learning centers and the installation, throughout Mali, of relay stations for the French public radio RFI and French public TV5.

Thus, it is fair to conclude that the Malian government's attempt to promote the French language in madrasas to the detriment of the Arabic language and Islamic subjects might have been partially a result of an active intervention of the French government, and partially a result of Malian state officials' colonial mindset or their ignorance of the merits of madrasa education. The foregoing discussion is significant because it shows that the problem of madrasas is complex and multifaceted.

Participants' Aspirations for the Future of the Madrasa

Despite the multilayered problems of madrasa education, all the participants were optimistic that if supporters of madrasa education strive for the betterment of madrasas, they will succeed. Ibrahim stated that "when serving the cause of Islam, if one strives and makes their intention sincere for Allah, they will do what they must do, and their contribution will stop when they die, and other people will come and continue. Over

time, Allah will most likely realize the goals.” From an Islamic perspective, according to Ibrahim, only through the long-term constructive effort of sincere and determined individuals, God will assist the promoters of madrasa education.

I asked the participants’ to explicitly tell me why they constantly referred to the will of God and how the belief in the will of God is important to them in taking actions to resolve madrasas’ problems. Though all the participants gave similar answers, I select Ibrahim’s following statement as an introduction because it shows that participants’ madrasa education might have enabled them to see a rational connection between the teachings of the Quran, empirical reality, and actions to change that reality. Ibrahim’s and other participants’ statements I will quote soon show that madrasa education influenced participants’ thinking and actions in all spheres of life as Ibrahim stated,

... we have a rule which we believe [as stated in the Quran] that Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. As a human being when you are in a [bad] condition, if you don’t stand up and change it, Allah will not intervene. We saw that there was this problem in it [madrasas], so we see that if we stand up and strive, the help of Allah will come, but we don’t sit and put our hands on our laps leaving the matter for Allah to change it.

Issa elaborated that,

... you know, and I know that our country [Mali] was colonized by France, ... our official language is French, so the administrative system does not encourage the development of Arabic [madrasas]. That is the biggest obstacle. ... that is not an easy fight, but with Allah’s will and help, it will be resolved. ... [we have been working] from the independency, to the 80s and to now, Arabic [madrasas]

greatly improved. ... the solution is not one day, one year or even three years. It will be a long-term solution ... and we are certain that it will be resolved ... what gives us certainty is that today, students of Arabic [madrasas] are in many scientific fields. Some of them are medical doctors, and some are engineers ... in the past, we were not united, but nowadays, there are many associations created by madrasa students ... we are reflecting on how to improve Arabic learning. ... in Mali here, unless you stand up, and sometimes show your muscles, yours [madrasa problems] will never be resolved. ... it will take time, but we are sure and certain that it will move forward. ... now, [two of our madrasa graduates] appear on TV to debate and explain the problems of madrasa curriculum ...

I included these two quotations, so the reader understands why, despite all the problems of madrasas in Mali, these participants still hope that madrasa education will improve in the future. What gives them hope is their belief that God always positively rewards sincere effort over time, as Amina stated that “movement is blessing, so as long as you are moving, success will come from Allah,” and Khadija agreed that “the Quran tells us to follow the means [that lead to our goals], and if you follow the means Allah will make it flourish in your hand,” so Mohamed concluded that “in the same way the farmer cannot stay home with his tools and expect to harvest at the end of farming season because he has faith, we also do not expect results without actions. This is to say, it is an obligation that we do some movements, so Allah will bring success.” At this point, I hope the reader understands how participants’ beliefs in the will of God informs their visions about the future of madrasas in Mali.

The belief in the will of God informs participants' visions, but they do not take such belief to mean putting one's burden on God. In the following Ibrahim gives an example of actions some people were doing to support madrasas,

The former king of [United Arab] Emirates, Sheikh Zayed, donated for students of Arabic [madrasa students]. . . ., he built a place [at the University of Bamako] that they call the Sheikh Zayed building [to host the faculties of] Islamic studies and economics. . . . it was fully equipped with computers, but it was purposefully hindered [some state officials refused to give it to madrasa graduates]. . . . They quarrelled about it, but people [supporters of madrasas] stood up seriously [they fought, so the faculties be opened for madrasas graduates]. In this era of IBK²⁹, it became possible to open it [the faculties] last year.

This comment shows that the supporters of madrasas have been doing what was in their capacity, as Issa stated earlier. It also shows that while some Malian state officials do everything possible to hinder madrasas, other officials do everything possible to support madrasas. Ibrahim stated the name of IBK, the former Malian president, who was elected into office in 2013 with an overt support of Muslim religious leaders, so it is understandable that he did a favor for madrasas. It is significant to point this out because it shows that appealing to the religious sentiment of the Muslims by some politicians and state officials offers madrasas protection against anti-madrasa state officials.

All the participants thought that the easiest way to resolve the problems related to Islamic and Arabic subjects in madrasas is that state officials listen to the plea of heads of madrasas and make a new curriculum reform. If state officials do not favorably respond

²⁹ IBK, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, was the president of Mali from 2013 to August 2020.

to this plea, the participants believed that madrasa owners, teachers, religious leaders, and parents must apply pressure. The participants also said that a lasting solution to madrasas' problems requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, proactiveness, consciousness-raising, and determination of those who want to promote madrasas.

The problems of madrasas described by the participants fall under two categories: problems related to the curriculum; and problems related to stakeholders' attitudes. I see that these two problems overlap, but one cannot be reduced to the other. In the case of the curriculum, resolving the first would need resolving the second. For example, resolving the problems related to the curriculum would need a change in the attitudes of state officials toward madrasa education, so these officials accept to constructively cooperate with madrasas union to design a curriculum that adequately covers Islamic education and Arabic, on the one hand, and modern subjects and French, on the other hand.

However, resolving the curriculum problem will not resolve the problems related to the quality of teaching, madrasa management, parents' lack of cooperation with the madrasa, students' lack of motivation to learn Islamic subjects, or state officials willingness to fairly treat the madrasa and its students. The resolution of these problems requires consciousness raising, so every stakeholder understands and takes actions that will positively improve madrasa education and benefit madrasa students.

In Mohamed's opinion, if the state really wants to help madrasas, "[it must] come to heads of madrasas, so they can sit down and talk. [This way], the problem can be greatly reduced with the will of Allah,". For Mohamed, though the state is not responsible for all the problems of madrasas, if state officials talk to heads of madrasas to understand their real needs regarding the curriculum, that will be a big step in the right

direction. For Ibrahim, the state could also help madrasas by creating “places [schools] for training madrasa teachers . . . , [and by] sitting down and reviewing the [new] curriculum [with heads of madrasa].” Thus, for Mohamed and Ibrahim, the government could best help madrasas by training madrasa teachers and reforming the madrasa curriculum to meet all the educational needs of students. In Ibrahim’s opinion,

The curriculum must be designed in a way so tomorrow we can have the imam, the mufti, the preacher, . . . , there should be a doctor who is a madrasa student, there should be an engineer who is a madrasa student, every occupation in life, and there should be a farmer who is a madrasa student.

Ibrahim’s comment indicates that preserving madrasas in the long term would require diversifying its educational offering, so madrasa students can specialize in all disciplines and work in both religious and non-religious careers. To fulfill the goal of educating madrasa students to study all disciplines, Khadija believed that madrasas must not fully rely on the government for higher education. She suggested that those “who were able to build [madrasa] high schools. Those same people [madrasa owners] can build a university and make its tuition affordable.” In her opinion, if madrasa owners cooperate and create a private Islamic university, they can design a madrasa curriculum that best serve the Islamic religion outside the constraints of the government.

Though all the participants hoped that the government cooperates with madrasas to reform the curriculum to better cover Islamic and Arabic subjects, Mohamed, Khadija, Issa, and Amina stated that Malian state officials do not take polite requests seriously. In Mohamed’s view, to get state officials to listen, one “must take it to the street and scream . . . I think the one who can easily bring change can only be the civil society, those who

have their children in madrasas,” so in his opinion, unless parents join heads of madrasas in pressuring state officials, the government will most likely not feel obliged to reform the curriculum.

Therefore, according to Mohamed, parents must “stand up and put pressure on madrasa owners, and madrasa owners, in turn, will put pressure on the state, so the state changes the curriculum.” However, for that to happen, Mohamed thought parents must “know and be conscious of what is going on currently in the madrasa.” According to Amina, parents must be conscious of their responsibilities in children’s schooling, so she pleaded, “I tell all the children of Mali [citizens of Mali], fathers and mothers that they look after their children. Children are trust Allah will ask about,” so according to her, parents must be aware that overseeing children’s education is a religious duty, and in the hereafter, God will hold parents accountable for failure to accomplish that duty.

Besides persuading parents, Ibrahim suggests here that Malians, in general, must be educated about the purpose of schooling and about the relationship between schooling and career, so they understand that the purpose of schooling is not limited to work in government bureaucracy. In his view, “you can live your life without being an employee [work for the state], . . . , the private sector . . . , the vocational . . . have nothing to do with the government parents need awareness.”

Regarding raising the consciousness of madrasa teachers, Ibrahim said teachers must be aware that working for madrasas was primarily a service to the religion. Therefore, a decent salary was all a teacher should expect because the real reward for serving the religion is in the hereafter. Once teachers truly adhere to this belief, they will teach with devotion. Mohamed and Khadija related that madrasa teachers who have a

sense of religious duty motivate students to be self-confident and show students the merits of madrasa education. As Mohamed noted,

... it is madrasa teachers who should always incite students to be determined. I remember when we were in high school. We had teachers like that. They used to persuade us to be determined. It is to say, they chased away inferiority complex from us. They encouraged us.

Regarding heads of madrasas, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Amina stated that madrasa owners must also be reminded to put the religious mission of the madrasa before the financial gain, so they must fairly pay Arabic and Islamic subject teachers. According to Khadija,

... teachers and heads of schools must be the first to value Arabic because the thing that you [one] have unless you value it, no one else will value it. If you have something to sell and you are saying, "I don't like it," why would I, the buyer, buy something that you the seller did not like?

In Khadija's view, beyond the religious motive, madrasa owners and teachers must understand that promoting Islamic and Arabic subjects in the madrasa is important for purely pragmatic reasons. According to her, without promoting the teaching of these subjects, people will see no value in madrasa education. Therefore, as previously noted, she insisted, madrasa owners must fairly pay teachers, and teachers must teach with sincerity and motivate students to see the merits of Islamic and Arabic subjects. Also, according to Khadija, Ibrahim, and Mohamed, students need to be advised not only about the merits of madrasa education, but also about university education and employment. Thus, students seriously study Arabic and Islamic subjects.

The starting point to implement all the above recommendations, Amina suggested that “everyone who is a madrasa owner here in Mali must be convinced to sit at the table. They should negotiate, they should contemplate, and they should conduct studies to see how the madrasa can progress.” Moreover, Mohamed saw that madrasa owners must be aware of their bargaining power in future negotiations with the government “because nowadays, as we [I] said, madrasas also take a big chunk of government students ... they contribute currently in helping the state to educate the children of the country.”

Finally, all the participants suggested that people interested in promoting Islamic schooling must all work together, including former madrasa students who had the chance of pursuing higher education. According to the participants, former madrasa students must use their intellectual and organizational power to help madrasas in their religious mission. As exemplified in this comment of Issa,

As you know, in this country [Mali] what is said [common knowledge] is unless you [people with grievance] become a big crowd you will not be listened to, or you will not be taken seriously [by state officials]. So, everyone who studied Arabic and organizations should be one block. [Moreover], this matter [of madrasa] concerns all of us. Children are the preparation of the future.

This view of Issa was also echoed by Khadija, “[w]e [former madrasa students] have to create associations. We must stand up and do *dawah*. We do research. We organize training sessions. We raise people’s awareness so that something can be added to it to promote our religion.” Ibrahim concluded,

if people’s mentality slightly changes, and if we [people concerned about madrasas] talk to each other, most likely, Allah will make it so that we understand

each other. If they [people concerned about madrasas] are aware of what the enemies are preparing [those who are against madrasas], the intellect will see the truth of the matter. Most likely if you [people concerned about madrasas] listen to each other, Allah will make it so that many things are fixed.

In this comment, Ibrahim hopes that in the long run, madrasas' problems will be resolved with the will of God. However, he insists that for God to assist the people defending the cause of madrasas, they must do their due diligence and act constructively. According to him, to get people to unite and act collectively, they must be aware that some opponents were planning for the failure of madrasas.

To conclude, in the last two sections, the participants commented that the problems of madrasas were partially curriculum-related and partially people-related. Therefore, they insisted that madrasa owners and teachers must play the biggest role in resolving madrasas' problems because their work directly affects students, and because they deal with parents and the government.

Chapter summary

This chapter reported the findings of this multi-case study that involved five former madrasa students. Using semi-structured interviews, I explored through these five cases the personal, religious, social, educational, and professional outcomes of madrasa education in Mali. I also explored their perspectives about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. I discussed research findings under the following five categories: 1) the madrasa seen as a necessity for preserving Islam in Mali; 2) the diversity of curriculum and teaching of madrasas; 3) the madrasa shaping participants'

identity; 4) the madrasa determining participants' education and career paths; and 5) sustaining the madrasa by improving its weaknesses.

The participants affirmed that madrasa education helped them become observant Muslims, watchful of their deeds, and more knowledgeable of Islam than the average Malian Muslim, so they became resource persons in their families, neighborhoods, and workplaces, and they gained social respect. Moreover, all the participants agreed that they were well-prepared in Islamic and Arabic subjects by competent teachers. However, concerning scientific subjects and French, these subjects were not adequately taught in most madrasas the participants attended. In some instances, these subjects were not taught at all. As to French language, many madrasa students resisted learning French thinking it was the language for the French school not the madrasa.

Therefore, participants' post-madrasa education and careers were negatively affected by their madrasa education to the extent they attempted to pursue an educational course or a career that required scientific subjects or French. Three participants said they missed job opportunities for lack of fluency in French.

Regarding the new curriculum, the participants saw that this curriculum reinforced French and modern subjects at the expense of Arabic and Islamic subjects. They judged this situation as a deliberate attempt from the Malian state to undermine the religious mission of madrasas, especially in high school. Also, another problem that hinders madrasas is that some madrasa owners and teachers care more about money than serving the religion, many parents do not get involved in their children's schooling, and most current students care more about passing the exam than gaining knowledge.

Moreover, the participants thought the madrasa preserves Islam in Mali by instilling into children Islamic knowledge and values, disseminating an Islamic culture, linking Mali to its roots, and preparing religious leaders knowledgeable of the contemporary world. To succeed in this mission, the participants thought, the madrasa curriculum must be reformed to reinforce Islamic and Arabic subjects and to maintain modern subjects and French at a high standard, so madrasa students can be admitted to public universities without hassle.

In addition to a new curriculum reform, the sustainability of the madrasa for future generations, the participants thought, requires consciousness-raising of all stakeholders and stakeholders' cooperation. Parents must get involved in their children's schooling, students must seriously study all subjects including Islamic and Arabic subjects, teachers must encourage students, teachers must be trained, madrasa owners must guarantee better working conditions for teachers, the state must support madrasas, and everybody must know that caring about madrasas serves both the Muslims and the interests of the secular state in Mali.

Chapter 5: Analysis

This chapter presents my analysis of the findings of this multi-case study. The goal of this study was to explore the religious, personal, social, educational, and professional effects of madrasa education on five madrasa graduates, holders of university degrees and workers. By exploring these aspects of madrasa education, I hoped to understand how madrasa education enabled these students to be cognizant, believing, and practicing Muslims, to succeed in higher education and careers, and to engage in Malian society. I also sought the opinions of these students about the curriculum, teaching, role, and future of madrasas in Mali. By seeking their opinions, I hoped to bring to the fore the features of madrasa curriculum and teaching, the impacts of madrasa education in Malian society, and the sustainability of madrasas in Mali for future generations. Thus, educators, academics, parents, students, and policymakers may judge madrasa education based on the effects of educational processes and policies on students.

Guided by three research questions, as previously noted, I achieved the above objectives by conducting three semi-structured interviews with each participant, reviewing the old and new curriculum, and reviewing documents I obtained from the Malian ministry of education. I presented the findings under these headings: 1) the madrasa seen as a necessity for preserving Islam in Mali; 2) the diversity of curriculum and teaching of madrasas; 3) the madrasa shaping participants' identity; 4) the madrasa determining participants' education and career paths; and 5) sustaining the madrasa by improving its weaknesses.

This chapter presents my insights about these findings by considering alternative interpretations, surveying the literature, and looking at how the normative, personal, and contextual intersected in participants' accounts. While each finding in the previous

chapter was divided into subcategories, here, the analysis treats the findings and the subcategories as a whole, to be integrated into a single interpretive narrative. This is to say, I do not align my analysis with the subcategories under which I reported the findings in the previous chapter. I instead use the findings as they fit into my analysis.

While analyzing the findings, I teased out how the religious view, tradition, culture, and socioeconomic factors intertwine. For example, Ibrahim's father said he gave his children Islamic education to avoid divine sanction in the hereafter, Amina's grandfather said their children only attend Islamic schools and that Amina must look up to the educated women of her extended family, and Mohamed said madrasa education was more advantageous than other schooling options, both religiously and career-wise.

In these examples, the same action (i.e., sending children to the madrasa) is justified in the name of the religious ideal by Ibrahim's father, in the name of the religious ideal and family tradition by Amina's grandfather, and in the name of religious ideal and worldly benefit by Mohamed, so in my analysis, I teased out how these factors overlap and produce some of the tensions I see in the findings. For instance, the participants said that the madrasa promotes Islam and an Islamic way of life in Mali, but they also complained that some madrasa owners and teachers only care about money.

In my analysis, I also tried to understand the problems of madrasa education by considering the organizational structure and culture of the madrasa, the mechanisms that enable the madrasa to operate, and the madrasa's relationship with other institutions in Malian society. As I describe the problems of the madrasa or the tensions in participants' accounts, I provide my views about the implications of my research findings for Malian society, Malian education, and the future of madrasa education in Mali. Thus, I hope

madrasas owners, teachers, former students, decision-makers, and parents will strive to resolve madrasas' problems by considering the complexity of these problems.

Analysis of Finding 1: The Madrasa Seen as a Necessity for Preserving Islam in Mali

In the findings chapter, I discussed under this heading why participants' parents sent them to madrasas, how participants perceived schooling children in madrasas, and how they saw the role of madrasas in Mali. The dominant thread that runs through these accounts is that the madrasa was seen as necessary for instilling Islamic values and knowledge into children and for preserving the Islamic character of Malian society, where more than 90% of the population are Muslims and where Islam has existed for over a millennium. The followings are some insights into this finding.

First, the madrasa is a necessary modern Islamic educational establishment in Mali today for reproducing the various cohorts of religious experts who can instill Islamic values and knowledge into Muslims in contemporary society. These religious experts include teachers, imams, preachers, and scholars. I drew this insight from many of participants' comments including the following from Ibrahim,

... [as someone who studied in the madras] when it comes to your religion, you are confident about understanding the religion to the point of being able to guide others [in religious matters]. Also, when it comes to managing livelihood, you can live without depending [financially] on [other] human beings. Well, nowadays in our country besides the madrasa, the institution [school system] able to do that [to combine religious and career-oriented education], I don't see any such institution. Because it is them [madrasas] that can form ... imams who understand the world

and who are able to guide people and orient them toward Allah with things they understand based on the conditions of this age.

From the above comment, I infer that, in participants' views, madrasas are necessary for contemporary Mali because madrasas aim to educate children who have Islamic knowledge above the average Malian while studying modern subjects leading to non-religious careers. Another reason that makes madrasas necessary in Mali is that Arabic is the de facto language of Islamic scholarship, as in Issa's following assertion,

To really have the consciousness of the religion, you must study Arabic [attend the madrasa]. If you master Arabic learning, it creates the consciousness of the religion in the human being. There are things if Allah has created you for salvation, you will not be involved in them. At the same time, when you see others doing what is not good, you can talk about that. ... I want to say Arabic learning [the madrasa] in Mali has a great role to play in [sustaining] the religion.

I see the above quotation saying that the mastery of the Arabic language is necessary for acquiring expertise in Islamic sciences. Because the madrasa teaches Arabic and Islamic subjects, the madrasa has a great role to play in promoting Islam in Mali. By the same logic, I understand Mohamed's argument that learning Arabic is important for restoring the intellectual heritage of Mali, written in Arabic alphabet. This is to say that if it is important to restore this intellectual heritage in Mali, the madrasa is also important for Malians because the madrasa teaches Arabic.

Moreover, participants' stories also revealed that madrasas are necessary for preserving Islamic scholarship within scholarly families and for educating a specific child to become a scholar. This analysis is supported by Amina's grandfather saying that she

had to look up to the female scholars of her extended family. This analysis is also supported by Ibrahim's father saying that Ibrahim's grandfather was a scholar.

Beyond the religious motive, I see in Amina's and Ibrahim's stories that two intertwining factors sustained their families' interests in Islamic scholarship. First, the heads of their families saw their families' identities attached to Islamic scholarship, so they put their children on the path to become scholars. This factor intertwines with the role of these families in their communities as providers of Islamic education or religious service. Hence, beyond the religious motive, as long as these families commit to preserving their families' identities and social roles, they will commit to Islamic scholarship, and Islamic scholarship will prevail in their communities.

In contrast, when these families' views of their identity or social role change, for whatever reason, their views about Islamic scholarship may change, and their commitment to putting their children on the path to Islamic scholarship may change. Hence, they may consider alternative ways to teach their children the religion without pursuing religious scholarship. This change is clear in Amina's and Ibrahim's stories. Ibrahim said that in childhood, he wished to become a scholar who masters Islamic sciences and classic Arabic, but when he went to the Arab country, he understood that he could serve his religion without necessarily becoming a religious scholar, as traditionally understood in Mali.

Amina's story is not very different from that of Ibrahim except that she decided not to send her children to the madrasa because she did not want them to face difficulties in terms of employment. In her case, I see that while she still values Islamic scholarship because she supports madrasa education, she feels that putting her children on the path to

such a scholarship may expose them to economic hardship. Amina's feeling is similar to participants' pleas that madrasa owners must pay madrasa teachers a decent salary to retain good teachers. I conclude that when families and individuals see that dedicating themselves to Islamic scholarship may negatively affect their livelihood, putting their children on the path to such a scholarship becomes less attractive to them.

For a substantial number of people to dedicate themselves to scholarship and teaching, enough resources must be diverted from other productive activities to satisfy the economic needs of these people. In Mali, I see that resources have been mobilized for schooling and scholarship in three main ways: 1) solidarity, in the case of traditional Islamic schools; 2) transaction, in the case of madrasas and other private schools; and 3) the use of the coercive power of the state, in the case of public schools.

Thus, an implication of participants' pleas that madrasa owners must pay their teachers well is as follows. Unless madrasa owners adopt strategies to retain good teachers in the madrasa school system, and unless madrasa owners understand how to mobilize and manage human and financial resources for madrasa schooling, madrasa schooling will continue to face problems and probably fail to play its role in preserving Islam in Mali, as the participants claimed.

Nevertheless, if it is reasonable to conclude from what precedes that the participants saw the madrasa as necessary for preserving Islam in Mali, it is also fair to deduce from participants' stories and views that the madrasa was neither seen as necessary for educating every Muslim child to become religious nor was it seen as the only way for achieving Islamic scholarship. Ibrahim's early comment supports this analysis. He alluded to the superiority of madrasa schooling by pointing to the superior

quality of Islamic education offered at the madrasa in comparison to other forms of Islamic education. He also said that teaching both Islamic and modern subjects at madrasas makes madrasas more advantageous than other forms of schooling.

The findings also suggest to me that the participants and their parents did not see the madrasa as necessary for giving every Muslim child an Islamic education. What lends support to this analysis is that the parents of Ibrahim and Issa sent some of their children to ekōli, and Amina and Issa sent some of their own children to ekōli.

I thus conclude that the participants saw madrasas as important for preserving Islam and promoting Islamic scholarship in Mali. They did not, however, see that madrasas were the only means toward Islamic scholarship or a necessary means for educating all Muslim children. Though the participants and their parents were primarily attracted to madrasas for religious reasons, their commitment to Islamic scholarship or full-time Islamic education was sustained through socio-cultural and economic factors. Besides, the participants and their parents believed in the importance and necessity of madrasas. They did not, however, oppose to or consider other schools as unimportant. Then, a question that comes to my mind is that, in families open to all schooling options, why and how does a family decide to send a particular child to the madrasa?

How and Why a Given Child Is Sent to the Madrasa?

The findings show that families open to all schooling options send their children to a particular type of school based on factors that are difficult to predict. It is possible, however, to identify the factors that increase the chances that a given child may be sent to the madrasa. It is equally possible to identify factors that increase the chances that a given family may send most or all of its children to the madrasa. For example, believing that

children's acquisition of Islamic knowledge is a religious duty makes a given family commits to Islamic schooling or part-time Islamic courses. The belief that the madrasa is the best option for the acquisition of Islamic knowledge increases the chances that all or most of the children of a given family are sent to the madrasa. When these beliefs are added to family tradition, parents' lived experiences, and parents' expertise about schooling, it becomes very likely that a given family sends their children to the madrasa.

When it comes to deciding which child attends which type of school within a family, the name, gender, and relation of the child to immediate or extended family members makes a given child a likely candidate for attending the madrasa. For instance, because Issa is the namesake of his paternal aunt's husband, his aunt persuaded his father to send him to the madrasa. Issa himself sent his first boy to *ekōli* because the boy is the namesake of Issa's father, who also studied in *ekōli*. He sent his second boy to the madrasa because this boy is the namesake of the Prophet. Issa, however, sent his daughter to the madrasa because he argued that giving women Islamic education enables them to promote an Islamic way of life in their families and that God rewards parents for giving their daughters Islamic education.

Another factor that influences why a particular child is sent to the madrasa is family dynamics. By this I mean the power dynamic between those whose opinions count among family members in decision-making. The influence of family dynamics is evident in the stories of four of the five participants. Nevertheless, the preceding discussions may imply that deciding about children's schooling is complex and does not follow a consistent rationale, but looking at how participants' parents decided to school their children and how the participants decided to school their own children, I see that while

the participants' parents mostly decided about their children's schooling from a duty-oriented paradigm, the participants themselves mostly decided about their children's schooling from a pragmatic paradigm.

A decision made from a duty-oriented paradigm gives more importance to the conformity of the action to Islamic norms (i.e., one must do this because God wants so), but less importance to the religious or worldly advantages of the action in real life (i.e., following God's commands is more advantageous for the believer and the religious community, or doing a given action provides a given worldly advantage). A duty-oriented decision also gives more importance to moral obligation and duty toward the religion and toward the family (or the group) than the benefit of schooling to the individual. In other words, the rationale participants' parents followed for choosing the right school for a child is primarily based on parents' belief in Islamic norms, their perception about their family's identity, and what their religious and family identities require them to do.

For example, when Amina's grandfather said that the madrasa is the way of Islam or when Ibrahim's father said that he sent his children to the madrasa to avoid divine sanction in the hereafter, I see in these justifications that the feeling of moral obligation to fulfill the religious duty is more important than the usefulness of schooling. Also, when Issa's father said that he wanted one of his children to learn the religion and master the Arabic language, when Amina's grandfather said that children of her family must attend the madrasa, or when Ibrahim's father said that his grandfather was a scholar, I see in these justifications that what the children's schooling represents for the family (the group) and identification with family tradition are more important than the benefit of schooling to the child per se.

To depict a good example of someone showing a duty-oriented attitude, I will use Amina's grandfather. This is a paraphrase of how he justified why Amina must attend the madrasa: it is a religious duty that Muslim children receive an Islamic education. Because our family is a scholarly family, it is our duty to preserve our family tradition, and because I'm the patriarch of the family, it is my duty to make sure that our religious and family traditions are respected by sending our children to the madrasa. Hence, in the duty perspective (participants' parents hold), parents' obligation to educate their child is the primary force in decision making, but in the pragmatic perspective (the participants hold) the child's interest or needs are the primary forces in decision making.

Therefore, I conclude that participants' parents decided about their children's schooling from a morally-binding and duty-oriented paradigm. It thus makes sense, as the participants said, that their parents did not send them to the madrasa for career purposes. Later, I address the reasons that might have made participants' parents see schooling from a duty-oriented paradigm. Here, it suffices to say that participants' parents might have had a duty-oriented paradigm about Islamic schooling from to the cultural patterns that dominated the schooling and social contexts in which they studied and lived.

In contrast to their parents, when I look at how the participants decided to school their own children, I conclude that they decided from a pragmatic paradigm. In my view, a pragmatic paradigm about schooling puts the religious and worldly advantages of schooling before the moral obligation of attending school. It justifies Islamic schooling by implying that it is advantageous to fulfil the religious duty of giving one's children an Islamic education because an Islamic education offers tangible and intangible benefits. It also looks for the benefits of schooling for the individual child. In other words, the

rationale for choosing the right school for a child is based on the usefulness of schooling in helping the child practice their religion, the usefulness of schooling in preserving the religious tradition, and the usefulness of schooling in helping the child to get a job and understand the world.

For example, Issa said that he sent his daughter to the madrasa so she knows her religion and educates her children, and Allah will reward him (the father) even after his death for giving his daughter religious education. Khadija also said that she recommends that female parents send their children to the madrasa because the madrasa teaches that Allah will not be pleased with children who are not kind to their mothers. In these two examples, I see that the perceived tangible or intangible benefit of religious schooling is put before the moral obligation of sending one's children to an Islamic school because one is a Muslim or belongs to a given family.

Instead, the pragmatic benefit of Islamic schooling to the child and the parent (i.e., the individual) is pointed out, and the pragmatic benefit of Islamic schooling to the group (e.g., family or community) is also pointed out. This is also evident when Ibrahim and Mohamed said that madrasas are needed in Mali to educate religious leaders and scholars who understand the contemporary world, or when Mohamed said that madrasas are needed to link Mali to its historical, Islamic, and intellectual heritage.

Furthermore, madrasa education is justified not only in terms of its religious importance but also in terms of its worldly importance and perceived tangible and intangible advantages over other forms of schooling. As Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed argued, madrasa education is intellectually and professionally beneficial because it enables the child to master Islamic and modern sciences and speak Arabic and French.

When Amina decided not to send her children to the madrasa, she also justifies her decision from a pragmatic paradigm. For example, she said that she did not send her children to the madrasa because she did not want them to face the same difficulties she faced in terms of career. She, however, hired a private tutor to teach her children religion at home. In my view, she evaluated the perceived consequences of madrasa schooling on her children's career prospect (tangible) and the perceived consequences of French schooling on her children's religiosity (intangible). She then opted for French and Franco-Arab schools for career, and she turned to private tutoring for religion. I call this a pragmatic decision because she decides based on how she perceives the tangible and intangible benefits and consequences of each form of education on her children.

Amina's grandfather, however, who decided from a duty-oriented paradigm, followed a different rationale. He stated that the madrasa is the way of Islam and that their family is a scholarly family, so he made sure that their children attend the madrasa. In this case, the fulfillment of the religious duty and the duty of preserving family tradition come first, and the tangible and intangible benefits or consequences of schooling on children become a secondary concern.

Finally, I must add that I do not want to imply that the duty-oriented paradigm (participants' parents hold) indicates an increased religiosity while the pragmatic paradigm (participants hold) indicates a decreased religiosity. I just want to say that there is a fundamental difference between participants' and their parents' views about Islamic schooling. As I argue later, the madrasa school model partially changes people's views about Islamic schooling from a duty-oriented paradigm to a pragmatic paradigm. Thus, the duty and pragmatic-oriented approaches are distinct in kind, and not by degree.

The Influence of Parents' Lived Experience on Children's Schooling

It seems to me that participants' lived experiences and professional backgrounds may have influenced their views about schooling. For example, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed, who sent or thought about sending all their children to the madrasa have all worked in madrasas, and they are fairly knowledgeable about madrasa curriculum changes, so they saw that it is possible for a child to acquire both religious and career-oriented education in the madrasa. Thus, despite all the problems of the madrasa, these three participants believe madrasa education is still more advantageous for their children.

In contrast, Amina, who did not work in a madrasa or knew much about the new madrasa curriculum, thought madrasa education is disadvantageous in terms of career. Amina's view about the madrasa is possibly influenced by her experience of struggling with French in university and in the job market. Therefore, she sent her children to ekoli and the Franco-Arab school. In the case of Issa, because he was able to master scientific subjects, English, and French through private tutoring, he saw that schooling is not a barrier to the mastery of any area of knowledge. Therefore, he sent his children to both madrasa and ekoli, arguing that he can supplement their education at home.

As the findings of this study revealed, Bouwman (2005) also confirms that many parents send their children to Islamic schools based on Islamic beliefs and family tradition. The studies of Bell (2015) and Sanankoua (1985) also lend support to my findings that many parents who send their children to Islamic schools put the fulfillment of the religious duty before career considerations. While these previous studies confirm the findings of my study, these studies did not pay much attention to the dynamics that

explain why parents' decision-making pattern changes or what processes families follow to decide about schooling a given child.

Because previous studies did not analyze the dynamics that drives parents' decision-making process about children's schooling based on multiple cases, some of the studies give me the impression that there is, in a sense, a correlation between parents' and children's schooling backgrounds. For example, Roy (2012) concludes that in comparison to parents schooled in Islamic schools, parents schooled in *ekōli* mostly send their children to *ekōli*. In my view, drawing a correlation between parents' and children's schooling backgrounds partially explains why some parents sent their children to madrasas. However, stressing the importance of such a correlation in explaining why Malian children are sent to a given type of school gives the impression that a predictably certain connection exists between parents' schooling background and the choices parents make for their children's schooling. Therefore, the correlational approach of Roy (2012) fails to explain why, in the cases of my participants, parents' and children's schooling backgrounds did not always match.

Through this multi-case study, I have analyzed some of the factors that cause parents' and children's schooling background to follow a consistent pattern and some of the factors that disrupt the pattern. For example, the cases of Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed show that parents' and children's educational backgrounds correlated over three generations due to the perceived importance of religious schooling and parents' lived experiences and expertise about schooling. In the cases of Issa and Amina, and Ibrahim's siblings, the pattern is disrupted due to the perceived benefit of schooling, parents' lived experiences, and family dynamics.

Analysis of Finding 2: The Diversity of Curriculum and Teaching of Madrasas

This research findings revealed that while some madrasas use the old curriculum (before 2003), others use the new curriculum (after 2003). In some cases, the new and old curriculum are used side by side. In what follows, I will present my insights about the differences between the design of the old and new madrasa curriculum and explain the possible influences those differences could have on the quality of madrasa education.

The Old Madrasa Curriculum from a Design Standpoint

To me, the mastery of religious subjects is the core objective of the old curriculum. The teaching of Arabic subjects serves this core objective, and modern subjects and French give students additional competences but are not the focus of the curriculum. This is clear in the structure of the curriculum, in the number of subjects in each area of knowledge, and in the differences between the primary, secondary, and high school curricula. From the structure of the curriculum, it is clear to me that the curriculum fulfills the vision of the founding fathers of madrasas. The founding fathers wanted the mastery of the Arabic language to precede the mastery of religious subjects because Arabic is the language of Islamic scholarship (Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1976).

I think this vision is apparent in the old curriculum for the following reasons. Up to 57% of weekly teaching time in Grade 1 is reserved for Arabic subjects. This percentage progressively reduces to make room for Islamic subjects in higher grades, so the percentage of teaching time dedicated to Arabic subjects varies inversely with Islamic subjects from 54% to 34%, 37%, 33% and 27%. Then, in the secondary school, Islamic subjects' share of teaching time is 43%, and in high school, it is 60%. This method of

dividing teaching time shows me that the major goal of the curriculum is Islamic education, and the teaching of Arabic instrumentally serves this goal.

Participants' experiences show that the old curriculum gives students in lower grades the linguistic and intellectual tools (e.g., Arabic and fundamentals of religious subjects) required for deciphering Islamic religious texts in higher grades. After graduation, it also helps students succeed in higher education, as stated by Ibrahim, "even when we went to the Arab country, the level of education we had in these subjects was enough for us." The participants thus suggested that the curriculum reform should have maintained the old Islamic and Arabic subjects' standards while at the same time raised the standards for modern subject and French.

The above suggestion may seem reasonable if one presupposes that those who designed the new curriculum were experts in what they did or truly wanted to help madrasas to adequately balance Islamic and Arabic subjects with French and modern subjects. As I discuss later, my review of the new curriculum document makes me conclude that designers of the new curriculum, knowingly or unknowingly, took away what was best in madrasa education (i.e., strong Islamic and Arabic subjects) and gave back to madrasas what is less than satisfactory in terms of religious and worldly education (i.e., the weakening of Islamic and Arabic subjects makes it hard for students to study Islamic sciences and Arabic at the university, and the absence of scientific paths prevents students from pursuing fields like medicine or engineering).

I believe that the designers of the new curriculum might have not been primarily concerned with balancing religious with worldly education in madrasa. They might have been concerned with manipulating madrasa education to satisfy the interests of the parties

involved in the design of the curriculum at the expense of satisfying the educational needs of madrasa students. As I will soon argue, it is almost impossible for Malian and foreign actors who were involved in the design of the new curriculum to have a shared vision about madrasa schooling (see appendix H).

Similarities and Differences Between Madrasas Curricula in the Past

Even though the stories and views of the participants show that in the past, prior to 2003, madrasas did not have a unified curriculum, all the participants stated, through various iterations, that they were well prepared in Islamic and Arabic subjects. I thus conclude that the lack of a unified curriculum in madrasas in the past might have been a function of the educational orientation of the founder of a given madrasa. By educational orientation, I mean how the founder of a given madrasa conceives the religious role of the madrasa in Malian society.

In this regard, Denon (2014) talks about three educational orientations in madrasa schooling in Mali: 1) educating madrasa students to do everything French school students can do, so while this orientation follows the Maliki doctrine, it stresses the teaching of both religious and modern subjects; 2) preserving the traditional Maliki and Sufi understanding of Islam, so while this orientation may teach modern subjects, it focuses more on the mastery of Arabic and the authoritative books of the Maliki doctrine; and 3) adding a Salafi understanding to the existing Maliki tradition, so while this orientation follows the Maliki doctrine and may teach modern subjects, it is influenced by Salafi views about certain aspect of Islam such as objecting to certain Sufi practices.

I did not come across any study that explores how the differences in madrasas orientation, noted by Denon (2014), affect parents' school choices. However, my findings

indicate that some parents do not consider these differences when schooling their children in the madrasa. For instance, Khadija stated that her family follows a Sufi understanding of Islam, but she attended a Salafi-oriented madrasa.

Also relevant to the discussion at hand is that the 2003 reform unified the madrasa curriculum as follows. The Islamic portion of the curriculum focuses on shared practices and views among Maliki Muslims, and the teaching of modern subjects and French is stressed across all madrasas that accept the new curriculum. Nevertheless, because the teacher mediates the curriculum, the content prescribed in the official curriculum may not be necessarily in line with the information students receive in the classroom.

Also, since this curriculum is centered around topics and contents rather than books (like the old curriculum), in theory, the Islamic portion of the curriculum is unified around shared views among Maliki. However, because teachers have to consult books of their own choice to prepare their lessons, in practice, teachers' views and the views of the writers of the books teachers consult may not be in line with what is prescribed in the curriculum. Thus, diversity of views about Islam can hardly be excluded from madrasas.

Prior to 2003, madrasa curricula differed possibly because larger madrasas are better-off financially (Kavas, 2003), so these madrasas might have enough financial means to hire science and French language teachers. Underfunded madrasas, however, might find it difficult to hire teachers of modern subjects or French. The absence of a dominant cultural pattern in Malian society that let parents pressure madrasa owners to teach modern subjects and French might have also been a reason why some madrasas did not feel any urge to teach these subjects.

The cultural pattern that dominated Malians' perceptions about madrasas, when some of my participants attended madrasas, is that madrasas were for religion and French schools were for office jobs. This view is evident in the following comment of Ibrahim, "if you look at it, the day our parents sent us to the madrasa, they did not show us inside the office [parents did not send us to madrasas to later work in the office]. ... they sent us there [madrasas], so we gain knowledge of the religion."

Hence, the absence of social pressure on madrasas might have caused some madrasas not to feel pressured to teach modern subjects or French. Still another reason that explains the lack of unified standard in madrasa schooling in the past is the lack of competent science teachers fluent in Arabic, as stated by Amina. It was to resolve this shortage of competent science teachers that the Malian state created the teachers' training institute of Timbuktu (Cisse, 2006).

Despite the differences between madrasas prior to 2003, the participants claimed that they all received an excellent quality education in Islamic and Arabic subjects. This may be possibly explained by the fact that the founding fathers of madrasa schooling created the madrasa with the same core vision (i.e., improving Islamic schooling by giving students the linguistic tools to understand the religious text).

I thus conclude that even the new curriculum of 2003 can be reformed around a core vision for all madrasas while leaving room for the diversity of education pathways. However, the question is what should that new vision be? Who should elaborate that new vision? How should that vision reflect on the structure of the curriculum, the repartition of weekly teaching hours, and the number of subjects? Which linguistic and intellectual tools will be needed at different grades and for different pathways? And at which grade

will students acquire a solid linguistic and intellectual ability to safely choose the education pathways they want? These questions bring to my mind how the traditional Islamic school evolved into the madrasa and how the lived experiences of the pioneers of madrasa schooling influenced their vision about the madrasa curriculum.

The traditional Islamic school curriculum, designed in the pre-colonial society, was designed in a context where reading, writing, or speaking Arabic were not necessary skills for most members of the society. Also, in that context, the apprenticeship of most occupations did not need institutional schooling, and most advanced students were educated locally. Therefore, it makes sense that the traditional Islamic school curriculum did not stress reading and writing skills at primary school, so the acquisition of Arabic language skills was delayed until advanced education, and local languages were used as the primary languages of instruction.

However, the founding fathers of the madrasa realized that the traditional Islamic school curriculum could not fully meet the schooling needs of the new context brought by colonization and the needs of students who go to study in the Arab world. Hence, it makes sense this curriculum promotes the early acquisition of Arabic language skills to facilitate the understanding of religious texts – which the founding fathers thought would improve Islamic schooling. Thus, I argue that traditional Islamic schools and madrasas before 2003 succeeded in their missions, possibly, because there was coherence between the purpose of schooling, the context in which schooling took place, the dominant cultural pattern about schooling, and the visions of the founders of these schools.

In contrast, the new curriculum of 2003 is not in line with the religious mission of the madrasa, and there is disagreement between state actors and madrasa actors about this

curriculum. Looking at the stated vision of the new curriculum and its content, it is not clear to me how the content is geared to fulfill the stated vision. I thus argue that the designers of the new curriculum did not consider the impacts of this curriculum on students' learning in the context of Malian society.

Appraising the New Curriculum Based on the Purpose of the Madrasa

As indicated on the first page of the new curriculum (see appendix H), the goal of this curriculum is to prepare madrasa students for the job market, reinforce the French language, and respect the teaching of religious subjects. From this stated goal it is clear that the religious mission of madrasas is a matter of secondary concern because the core goal becomes satisfying the needs of the job market. Given French is the *de jure* language of employment that requires schooling in Mali (e.g., civil service, French schooling, or banking), it is understandable to reinforce French in the new curriculum. Though my participants appreciated that this curriculum opens access to public universities for students, and thus broadens students' future career prospect, the participants did not like that this curriculum neglected Islamic and Arabic subjects.

The participants acknowledged the need for promoting modern subjects and French in madrasa curriculum, but they wanted a curriculum that perfectly balances Islamic education and modern subjects to satisfy both the religious and career needs of students as exemplified in Amina's statement below,

... the curriculum be the same for all madrasa students, so they learn the religion as it should be, and they learn Arabic as it should be learned. At the same time, they learn modern subjects and French, so when you come to the university, you don't face difficulties, so it becomes easy for you to enter fields like engineering,

modern technologies, medicine and alike ... madrasa students must learn all worldly knowledge in addition to religion ... in summary, I want a madrasa education that enables you to defend your religion and to defend your worldly life as it is said [in the Quran] “Our lord give us good in this world and give us good in the hereafter.” You live a good life because of your education, you benefit the Islamic religion, and you benefit your country.

When Amina says in this quotation it is important to learn Arabic as it should be learned, she means that madrasa students must be fluent in Arabic, so they are able to pursue university education in Arabic. When she says to defend your religion or learn it as it should be, she means that madrasa students must study Islamic subjects, so they understand the religion and are able to guide others in religious matters. Lastly, when she says to defend your worldly life, she means that madrasa students must study modern subjects, so they are able to study in all fields of knowledge and work in all skilled jobs.

As I previously inferred from participants’ decisions for schooling their children, not all students need a perfectly balanced religious/worldly curriculum. Some children need a career-oriented curriculum with basic Islamic education (e.g., Amina’s children), and some children need a career-oriented curriculum with strong Arabic and basic Islamic education (e.g., Issa’s first boy), but other children need a curriculum that perfectly balances Islamic and Arabic subjects with modern subjects and French (e.g., the children of Ibrahim, Issa, Khadija, and Mohamed). Thus, understanding parents’ preferences and students’ needs may create an opportunity for state and madrasa actors to find ways to compromise when designing the curriculum. In other words, the curriculum should vary to accommodate parents’ preferences and students’ needs.

Nevertheless, satisfying the interests of state actors and madrasa actors in this way requires approaching the curriculum design from a technical standpoint rather than from a political standpoint. As I previously alluded to, in my view, it is almost impossible to expect the parties who were involved in the design of the new curriculum (i.e., the department of education, madrasas union, representatives of foreign countries and organizations [i.e., technical partners], local unions, and student parents' associations) to agree on a core vision that guarantees both the religious and career needs of madrasa students. Hence, having a vision that the curriculum should vary to accommodate parents' preferences and students' needs may create rooms for a political compromise between these parties. Then, the structuring and content of the curriculum should be left to curriculum designers to do the technical work for the best interest of students.

Looking at the structure of the new curriculum, I see that the designers of this curriculum did not account for the particularities of madrasa schooling. For instance, the ratio of weekly teaching hours (26.5 in primary school) compared to the number of subjects taught in Grades 5 and 6 (26 subjects) is roughly 1:1. In the fifth and sixth grades, 11 subjects are taught for 30 minutes per week, two subjects for 40 minutes, two subjects for 45 minutes, and nine subjects between 1 and 1.5 hours. Only French is taught for 5 hours and math for 2 hours per week. French is also the only subject taught for 1 hour per session. The overall teaching time dedicated to Islamic and Arabic subjects is, however, almost 60% in Grades 1 to 3, 54% in Grades 4 to 6, and 43% in middle school. Though this percentage looks reasonable, my current analysis shows that this curriculum is poorly designed. This analysis may explain why Ibrahim, Mohamed, and Khadija said that many students have difficulties with Islamic and Arabic subjects in high school.

Contrasting the old with the new primary school curriculum based on what preceded, I see that the old curriculum is structured and evolves around its core goal. For instance, teaching time of Arabic subjects inversely decreases in correlation with the teaching time of Islamic subjects, the core goal of the curriculum. In the new curriculum, however, the core goal seems to be satisfying the needs of the job market, the language of which is French. Also, there is a secondary goal, respecting the teaching of religious subjects. Based on my preceding analysis, it is hard to tell how the new curriculum maintains a systemic correlation among the subjects in order to achieve the stated goals of the curriculum.

This leads me to believe that while the designers of the old curriculum seem to be mindful of the goal of madrasa education in light of the socio-cultural context of Mali, where children's native language is not Arabic, the designers of the new curriculum seem not to have a clear focus on the goals of the curriculum in light of the socio-cultural context of Mali. It is fair to argue that more importance is given to French in the new curriculum because French is the *de jure* language of higher education and most employment that requires schooling. It is also fair to say, however, that the goal of schooling goes beyond serving the needs of the job market because schooling also serves socio-cultural and religious needs.

As a result, given that Malian children's native language is not Arabic or French, I think overemphasizing the importance of the French language in the curriculum possibly indicates that the designers of the 2003 curriculum might have been more preoccupied with meeting the political demands of the parties that decided about the curriculum than

they were preoccupied with the systematic structuring of the curriculum to effectively achieve the goals of madrasa education.

The exact cause of the poor design of the new curriculum cannot be reasonably answered in this research because I did not interview all the parties involved in the design of the curriculum to establish whether the poor design of this curriculum resulted from a lack of expertise or willful attempt to undermine madrasa education. It is also possible that a lack of follow-up evaluation research might have been a factor that prevented the state education department and madrasas from readjusting the curriculum.

Regardless of the exact causes of the poor design of the new curriculum, the forgoing discussions call for several questions. Given that most Malian school children's native language is not Arabic or French, and given these two languages are not widely used either in daily life in Mali, is it reasonable to teach madrasa students both these languages in primary school while loading the curriculum with many subjects and expect good outcomes? Does teaching all the subjects included in the new primary school curriculum serve a real purpose in preparing students to be fluent in French and continue to study at Malian universities? How can the curriculum be structured to first give students the linguistic and intellectual tools that help them succeed in higher grades or higher education? At which grade a given subject should be added to the curriculum? Answering these questions may help educators and decision-makers to find the best strategies to systematically design the madrasa curriculum to best serve students' needs.

Analysis of Finding 3: The Madrasa Shaping Participants' Identity

The participants spoke about both positive and negative effects of madrasa education. They said that madrasa education made them knowledgeable about Islam than

most Malians, observant Muslims, and respected in the society. Issa and Mohamed, however, said that in childhood they felt inferior to their peers for not speaking French, but this feeling waned as they grew up. Also, Amina, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed said occasionally some Francophile bureaucrats unfairly treat madrasa students. I introduce the analysis of this finding by appraising the teaching of madrasas based on the effects of madrasa education on the participants.

Appraising the Teaching of Madrasas Based on the Outcomes of Schooling

The participants unanimously agreed that they had a good foundation in Islamic and Arabic subjects. Hence, they were able to teach their family members, colleagues at work, and neighbours the Islamic religion. They were also able to study in Arabic at the university without difficulty. This finding shows that the criticism some Western, and even Muslim, scholars make that the memorization of the Quran used in Islamic schools is “backward, uninteresting, and stultifying to students” (Boyle, 2004, p. 19) must be called into question. Participants’ experiences prove that in madrasas, some learning goals are achieved only through memorization, and memorization is based on the nature of the subject, the grade, and the level at which the subject is taught.

Memorization is extensively used in primary school, and as students progress through middle and high school, recitation and memorization are not as frequent as in primary school. For example, the Quran is memorized in all grades as a means toward praying, reading the Quran as an act of worship, or using it in preaching. In middle and high school, the exegesis enables students to understand the context in which Quranic verses were revealed, the wisdoms in the verses, and the contextual application of the

verses. Khadija's comment below exemplifies how in high school, the learning goal of the Quran expands beyond memorization,

... [in] high school, they [teachers] used to mix it [Quran] with tafsir [exegesis].

For example, if they took the Surah al-Hajj, they could ask [students] to say from verse 5 to 7, and you [students] made its tafsir [explained the verses]. They could ask you, what was the benefit of this verse. They could ask you about the reason the verse was revealed.

Thus, outsiders who criticize the memorization of the Quran in Islamic schools as meritless (Boyle, 2004) are in fact imposing their biased outside views and unfairly ignoring insiders' views. The "Islamic knowledge is embodied knowledge," and embodied knowledge lies in the knower who can use it whenever needed (Ware, 2014, p. 4). My participants embodied the verses and surahs (chapters) of the Quran through memorization. They were able to use these verses in prayer, live by God's words, preach, and remind others of God's words. Ibrahim said that when they were in the madrasa, teachers used to ask them during religious ceremonies to preach. In preaching, they read Quranic verses, religious songs, and hadiths of the Prophet.

To conclude, I would say if the goal of madrasa education is to instill religious values and teachings into students, and if madrasa graduates, like my participants, believe that the madrasa instilled in them those values and teachings, the madrasa has succeeded in its mission regardless of what outside observers think.

How Participants' Muslim Identity Was Shaped by the Madrasa

Other than the acquisition of religious knowledge, the examples the participants gave to explain the positive effects of madrasa education on them include complying with

Islamic guidelines in their social relations, business transactions, dress code, obedience to parents, following the advice of elders, being mindful of their deeds and sayings, and carefully selecting the social activities they engage in. Given Islamic education is also provided through private tutoring, traditional Islamic schools, and some Franco-Arab schools, how can the positive effects of madrasa education, the participants said, can be considered as an outcome of madrasa education or distinctiveness of madrasas students?

To understand why the participants saw that their madrasa education had these influences on them, I consider that the participants often contrasted madrasa students with French school students. For example, Khadija speaks of the benefits of educating one's children in madrasas by contrasting madrasas with French schools (see the findings chapter, p. 89). Parents interviewed by other researchers also explained the benefits of madrasa education as Khadija did (see Brenner, 2001; Kavas, 2003; Roy, 2012).

Hence, I conclude from Khadija's comments referenced above that madrasas instill Islamic values into children through long-term systematic instruction, so long-term exposure to systematic instruction makes the outcomes of schooling long-lasting. Exposure to systematic teaching also strengthens students' religious belief and increases the chances that they comply with religious teachings without being critical of those teachings, which parents like Khadija seem to like.

Moreover, part-time Islamic education may be less effective than full-time Islamic education in developing students' religious belief, religious mindset, and character. Therefore, I would say that part-time Islamic education courses some French school students take at home (Bell, 2015) or at traditional Islamic schools (Tamari, 2016) may have less bearing on their thinking. The secular knowledge these students are

exposed to through long-term systematic instruction at the French school may have more bearing on their thinking and character than the occasional Islamic education courses they take at home or the traditional Islamic school.

Regarding the difference between the outcomes of schooling on traditional Islamic school students and madrasa students, I infer from participants' responses that madrasa students are better equipped intellectually to apply religious teachings in the contemporary world. I also see in the quotation below why madrasa education might have helped shape my participants' Muslim identity and character. Ibrahim explain,

... the biggest impact madrasa education left on me ... was to monitor myself, to see most of the time that the neighborhood was seeing that this was what I was [neighbours saw me as a madrasa student]. Well, if the neighborhood saw you as a madrasa student and a man of religion, it became mandatory upon you....

That you do the effort not to do an action which makes people lose confidence in that thing [religion].

From this quotation, I see that the effects of madrasa education on the participants were reinforced by the image other members of society projected onto madrasa students, so students like my participants felt they should comply with religious norms and also meet social expectations. Thus, if the image society projects onto madrasa students as people of religion has a lasting psychological effect on them, the psychological effect of the image madrasa teachers project onto students in addition to the systematic instruction within the madrasa environment, I would assume, is even greater for enabling students to be morally responsible and keep a watchful eye on their behaviours.

This is to say that not only madrasa students become conscious that God is watching them at all times and will judge them for all their actions, but also they are conscious that people are watching them and judging them for being good or bad Muslims. Issa's following comment lends support to my analysis that the participants are conscious that God is watching them, "I know that as long as you are a Muslim, everything we say here. Everything we do here. There is accountability in the hereafter." Ibrahim comment on the previous pages also shows that the participants were conscious that people are watching them and expecting them to be people of religion.

Nevertheless, given Mali is a Muslim majority country and Malian children receive other forms of Islamic education, I would say that even some French school students may have traits such as religious piety or may have enough religious knowledge to guide others in religious matters, just like madrasa students. What then made the participants think that religious piety or having more religious knowledge than the average Muslim were features of madrasa students. In my view, as my participants compared madrasa and French school students, the reason may be the following.

Exposure to long-term systematic instruction at the madrasa plus the psychological effects of the projected image onto madrasa students as people of religion increase the chances that madrasa students understand and observe Islamic teachings. Then, the high concentration of people who demonstrate traits such as piety among madrasa students makes these traits more visible among these students. Hence, although, Muslim students in all schools share certain features as Muslims, madrasa students stand out when they are seen as a social category and compared to French school students as another category. Thus, the traits signifying religious observance that is possibly

available in some members of both categories becomes a distinguishing feature of madrasa students because it is more visible in them due to the concentration factor.

When it comes to the social outcomes of madrasa education, the participants believed that madrasa education made them respected in society. In participants' families, at their workplaces, and in their neighbourhoods, people sought their assistance for understanding Islam, for conflict resolution, or for leading prayer during the month of Ramadan. By assisting others in these ways, the participants thought they contribute in spreading Islam in society. The findings of this study thus add new insights to Cisse's (2006) finding that madrasas educate religious leaders and, thereby, spread Islam in Malian society. I would add that Islam is promoted in Mali at the macro-level, by imams and scholars, and at the micro-level, by people like my participants.

Religious leaders and scholars mostly promote Islam at the macro-level in mosques and in the media, and madrasa graduates, like my participants, promote Islam at the micro-level inside families, at workplaces, and in neighborhoods. At the micro-level, madrasa graduates have religious influence although they may not have the intellectual and social authority of a religious scholar. Other Muslims expect them to be knowledgeable and religious, so if they are up to expectation, they gain social respect.

French Language and Negative Impacts of the Madrasa on the Participants

The participants talked about two main negative impacts of madrasa education on them, and both are related to the French language and French schooling. The first is feeling inferior for not speaking French, as Issa and Mohamed said. These two participants said that when they were young, they occasionally felt inferior for not speaking French because French is perceived in Mali as the language of the intellectuals,

bureaucrats, and rulers of the country. Because these groups get an intellectual and social status for attending *ekoli*, comparing them to workers in madrasas causes some madrasa students to feel that not speaking French means lower intellectual and social status.

Amina, Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed also said that a negative impact of madrasa education is that some francophone bureaucrats discriminate against madrasa students and show an arrogant attitude toward people who are not fluent in French. According to these participants, in the eye of these bureaucrats, fluency in French is more important than the technical skills job applicants should have. Bell's (2015) following comment also reveals that some francophone bureaucrats in Mali show an arrogant attitude toward Malians who are not fluent in French,

Employees at the local governmental offices in Ouélessébougou all speak Bambara, the interethnic lingua franca in southern Mali, but they are often reluctant to speak it in their offices. Some complained about the air of superiority that issued from governmental offices, saying the staff would refuse to help residents unless they spoke French (p. 59).

Based on the above and the findings of this research, while French schooling in Mali may bring material wellbeing and bureaucratic status, it does not necessarily bring social respect because the demeaning attitude of some bureaucrats makes them resented by many Malians. Comparing this to the situation of madrasa graduates like my participants, I would say that while madrasa education may not bring material wellbeing and bureaucratic status, it may bring social respect because madrasa graduates are perceived as people of religion and willing to serve others with their religious knowledge.

While the findings of this study show how and why my research participants served others with their knowledge, these findings cannot tell why some bureaucrats in their administrative function refuse service to others. However, I think a possible way to explain the difference between how many Malians react to the attitude of my participants and that of the bureaucrats referred to by Bell (2015) is to consider the association of madrasa schooling in Mali with religion, in the sense that it is popularly seen as conducive to religious scholarship and cultivating religiosity. In contrast, French schooling in Mali is associated with bureaucratic, legislative, and judicial power.

Although the power that comes with any form of knowledge can be misused and abused, in the cases of my participants, they used their religious knowledge to serve others. Therefore, they commanded respect in society. In contrast, some francophones, who hold authority, use that authority to legislate and exclude non-French speakers from certain privileges. Some of them also discriminate against and demean Malians who are not fluent in French (Bell, 2015). Hence, I conclude that although being condescending or unfair toward other Malians may not be the typical attitude of all Malian bureaucrats, the prevalence of such an attitude among some bureaucrats has possibly created a popular negative image of the bureaucracy leading to a popular resentment of bureaucrats.

Mohamed, however, believes that some French-schooled Malians ignore that both religious and modern subjects are taught in madrasas and that a madrasa graduate can specialize in any discipline, just like a French school graduate. One way I would interpret Mohamed's comment is that in Mali, the madrasa is perceived as a religious school, most madrasa graduates work the religious or Islamic school sectors, and madrasa students are perceived as people of religion, in the sense of being observant Muslims and having

religious knowledge, so it naturally follows that some Malians, like the French school teachers Modemed described, would imagine that madrasas only offer religious education. Also, only modern subjects are taught in ekoli, so when ekoli is compared to the madrasa, an outsider would imagine that the madrasa only teaches religion.

Analysis of Finding 4: The Madrasa Determining Participants' Education and Career Paths

The fourth finding of this study relates to participants' accounts of how their dreams and aspirations evolved throughout their education and how attending the madrasa influenced their post-madrasa education and careers. Because participants' experiences differ, my following analysis focuses on the events, experiences, and conditions that shaped participants' aspirations and post-madrasa education and careers.

New Experiences and Unexpected Events Changed Participants' Fates

The schooling experiences of the founding fathers of the madrasa made them reorganize the traditional Islamic school into modern-day madrasas (Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1976; Kane, 1997). Similarly, my participants' schooling experiences change their views about the madrasa. This is to say that schooling enables students to do what was not necessarily intended by those who control the school curriculum (Brenner, 2001).

Earlier, I discussed how the participants' education and career experiences affected how they schooled their children. The current discussion is about understanding how participants' aspirations for education and career have evolved over the course of their madrasa and post-madrasa education. The participants said that their parents sent them to madrasas to study Islamic and Arabic subject but not to study modern subjects or

French. However, the madrasa led the participants to specialize in sociology, bilingual and unilingual Arabic literature, building design, and architecture.

According to the participants, unexpected events turned their fates in unexpected directions. In their views, their education went as planned by God. What they became because of schooling is not what their parents intended when they were sent to madrasas. A factor that influenced their aspirations was exposure to new experiences in society, in the madrasa, through travel, and through the media. For instance, Mohamed said that he dreamed to be a pilot or a medical doctor. Given that he attended the madrasa between 1995 and 2009, after the popular demand that madrasas prepare students for careers, and coinciding with the curriculum reform of 2003, I think living in that atmosphere may have caused him to dream to be a pilot or a medical doctor.

What interests me in Mohamed's story is how Mohamed's lived experience caused him to understand that through schooling, not only could he be a scholar of religion but also a medical doctor or a pilot. I also see that the curriculum reform created the conditions for Mohamed to enter the university in Mali and study bilingual Arabic literature, but his aspiration for better employment led him to study building design.

Looking at Mohamed's and other participants' stories against the background of the stories of the founding fathers of the madrasa, I see that through schooling the human intellect is trained to think and reflect on experience. Through the twin process of thinking and reflecting on experience the intellect sees new possibilities and the human being aspires for new horizons and work to fulfill their aspirations whenever they find a good occasion to do so. In other words, schools are invented by adults to educate children to conform to pre-existing orders or to bring about preconceived orders. However,

because schooling awakens the intellectual power within the human being, schooling gives school children the intellectual capacity to eventually change or challenge the order schooling was initially intended to preserve or bring about. My participants' aspirations evolved over the course of their madrasa and post-madrasa education beyond what their parents and madrasa teachers had originally intended.

For Ibrahim, he dreamed to be like the religious scholars of Mali, but in the Arab world, he discovered that schooling is not limited to religious sciences and Arabic. Amina's view also changed about schooling in the Arab world. For Issa, he initially did not hope to study beyond the madrasa, but when his friend went to the Arab world, he also decided to go there. There, he studied science only because he did not succeed in the admission test to study in high school. In the case of Khadija, she always wanted to be a madrasa teacher. In high school, she aspired to study in university, and she eventually became a teacher. In these stories, I see a consistent pattern that participants' success in their madrasa and post-madrasa education created the conditions that made them aspire for better intellectual and professional futures.

I conclude that mobility and progress in the school system increased the range of experiences the participants were exposed to. This affected how participants' post-madrasa education and career evolved. Let me clarify what I mean by this statement using participants' stories. Mohamed, for instance, had the childhood dream of becoming a medical doctor, but the institutional context in which he studied did not allow him to go into that direction. The same holds true for Amina – when she first aspired to study journalism and translation, institutional policies prevented her, and when she finally set on studying sociology, her education was interrupted because she had to get married.

In the case of Issa, his parents only expected him to have an Islamic knowledge and fluently speak Arabic, but exposure to new experiences in the madrasa and through travel played a role in awakening the intellectual power within him to aspire for a new horizon. According to him, through his madrasa education and his travel to the Arab country, God traced the road for him to become an architect.

Participants' Aspirations for Post-Madrasa Education and Career

As discussed above through mobility, progress in the madrasa, and exposure to experiences, the participants aspired to study beyond the madrasa, so they pursued higher education in fields and entered the job market to work in occupations their parent would not have expected when they were sent to the madrasa. In their post-madrasa education, the participants said that they did not have any problem with Islamic and Arabic subjects. It is French and scientific subjects that caused problems for some participants. Some of them also noted that they were subject to institutional barriers and discrimination, as I discussed earlier. Career-wise, participants' stories show that the biggest obstacle to madrasa students' access to Malian civil service is fluency in French.

Looking at the stories of participants' post-madrasa education and careers in the light of the purpose of madrasa education, the reason why participants' parents sent them to the madrasa, and how participants' aspirations took them in new directions, I conclude that the difficulties participants faced in their post-madrasa education is not necessarily a result of a poor design of the old madrasa curriculum. It is rather because the participants aspired to do with their madrasa education what the madrasa education was not intended for when they attended the madrasa.

For instance, the three participants who went to study in the Arab world specialized in fields that are not related to Islamic sciences or the Arabic language, so the challenge some of them faced in terms of scientific subjects is because most madrasas in Mali did not focus on preparing students in scientific subjects. However, in madrasas like Naharu Djoliba, where scientific subjects are rigorously taught, some of their students received scholarships to study medicine and computer science abroad (Roy, 2012).

Studying medicine and computer science was possible for students of this madrasa because, as Denon (2014) said, madrasas like Naharu Djoliba teach modern subjects side by side with Islamic and Arabic subjects to enable students to pursue all fields of knowledge, and eventually integrate the political economy of Mali, just like French school students. Hence, the participants who did not attend madrasas like Naharu Djolib had to make personal efforts to succeed in their post-madrasa studies when these studies required the mastery of modern subjects. Thus, Issa had to take private science classes, and Ibrahim had to get help from his colleagues with his statistics course.

Amina and Khadija had problems with French in the university in Mali because French was not rigorously taught in most madrasas. Plus, Amina and Khadija admitted they did not like French when they attended the madrasa because they thought it was not the language for madrasas. Hence, a second factor that negatively influenced some participants' post-madrasa education and later career, besides the madrasa curriculum, partially resulted from their personal attitude toward the French language.

Nevertheless, the case of Mohamed shows that the compatibility between the purpose of schooling and aspiration of students positively influences their post-madrasa education. Given that Mohamed studied in the madrasa when the new curriculum was

implemented, he did not report any problem with French in the university or when he applied for the public service admission test. Based on my findings and considering the fact that the new curriculum opened only the literature and humanities pathways for madrasa students, I think the madrasa curriculum may be subject to another reform, possibly catalyzed by students' aspirations or criticisms leveled at the new curriculum.

For instance, given that the new curriculum did not include pathways for madrasa students to study in scientific fields such as medicine and engineering, and given that Islamic and Arabic subjects are neglected in the curriculum, one may expect another madrasa curriculum reform, possibly catalyzed by current and future madrasa students' lived experiences and aspirations. This may be possible because, as supported by the cases of my participants, the intended outcomes of schooling (i.e., the *raison d'être* of the school and the reason why parents send their children to school) and the real outcomes of schooling (i.e., the direction in which students' education evolves as the result of their schooling and lived experiences) do not always go in tandem.

The current analysis makes me suggest that for madrasas in Mali to attract students and overcome the drawbacks of the 2003 curriculum, madrasas must proactively contemplate how to enable students to study all disciplines including Islamic sciences, scientific disciplines, languages, literature, and humanities. To design a madrasa curriculum to this end, curriculum designers must find an effective way to structure the curriculum and allocate enough teaching time for each subject. My findings suggest to me that the problem of not allocating enough teaching time for each subject happens in the new curriculum for two possible reasons: 1) providing school instruction in two foreign languages; and 2) loading the curriculum with too many subjects.

Regarding the problem of teaching in madrasas in both Arabic and French, the solution is to simply avoid using French as a language of instruction because being bilingual means speaking two languages not studying in two languages. Given students' native languages are neither Arabic nor French, imposing French as a language of instruction in madrasas makes it difficult to effectively balance Islamic subjects and Arabic with modern subjects and French. What lends support to this claim is that Khadija and Mohamad stated that they studied in Arabic all modern subjects including scientific subjects. Madrasa students do not need to study modern subjects in French. Doing so hinders their mastery of Arabic and thus negatively affects their ability to understand Islamic subjects and thereby undermines madrasas' religious mission. Madrasa students only need to read, write, and speak French fluently to study at francophone universities. Hence, curriculum designers must work hand in hand with teachers of French as a second language to find the best French language program for madrasas in Mali.

As to the problem of cluttering the curriculum with too many subjects, curriculum designers should consider that most Malian madrasa students' native languages are neither Arabic nor French and that Arabic is used in madrasas in tandem with Malian national languages. Hence, a solution to this problem is to design the curriculum to gradually build students' competencies instead of trying to include subjects for all competencies. In primary school, the curriculum may focus on subjects that build students' speaking, reading, and writing skills in Arabic as a language of instruction besides Malian national languages while, at the same time, build students French language skills, as a second language, in addition to math skills and core Islamic subjects.

Another solution is to combine subjects pertaining to the same area of knowledge whenever possible. In primary school, math, geometry, and the metric system can all be reasonably combined into a single subject. Still another solution is to differentiate between subjects required for future academic success, subjects required as life skills, and subjects needed for religious reasons. In high school students studying humanities do not need biology or chemistry for academic reasons because they do not need these subjects in the university. However, high school students studying humanities still need to know about everyday health issues, hygiene, chemical hazards, and chemical products. Therefore, these students may study these as life skills in a single subject. Similarly, Islamic subjects can be taught in two ways, one for students who want to pursue Islamic sciences and the other for students who want to study other disciplines.

Considering participants' post-madrasa education and career experiences, I would say that, to some extent, some participants' madrasa education negatively affected their employment prospect because they were not fluent in French. The participants did not also get certain jobs because, in Mali, French language is, in a sense, a bureaucratic mechanism that restricts non-French speakers' access to certain privileges like the civil service. Khadija's story, however, shows that madrasa graduates were able to overcome the French-language restriction by lobbying. Amina's story also shows that French-language restriction could be overcome through social networking (e.g., relatives or acquaintances help the candidate get the jobs). Issa's story substantiates that French-language restriction may not be a serious problem in the private sector.

I conclude from participants' stories that the importance of French in Mali in terms of employment depends on the sector the person is interested in working in. The

only sector where lack of fluency in French represents a serious restriction is the Malian civil service. Otherwise, the factors that decisively broadened participants' career prospects include the versatility of skills, mastery of languages, personal courage, social network, and academic credentials.

The primacy of the French language in Mali is only asserted through state bureaucracy and French schools. I see that French is popularly perceived as the *lingua franca* of intellectuals and employment for the following reasons. The largest number of Malians who attend school attend French schools, the prerequisite for working in state bureaucracy is school attendance and mastery of French, the largest number of state bureaucrats and intellectuals attended French schools, and the state bureaucracy offers a large percentage of jobs that require school attendance.

For these reasons, the popular perception that the French language is the language of intellectuals and employment overshadows the facts that the overwhelming majority of Malians do not work in the state bureaucracy. There are also many Malian intellectuals who are not fluent in French, and many Malians perform jobs that do require school attendance or fluency in French. As a result, the importance of French in terms of employment mostly depends on the persons' ambition to work in the state bureaucracy, as Ibrahim stated, and the importance of French in terms of schooling depends on the persons' ambition to attend public universities in Mali, as Khadija's teacher told her.

Based on my findings, I want to say that it is not necessary that state officials strategize to turn madrasas into francophone schools in order to make madrasas respond better to the needs of the job market because madrasa students only need to study French as a second language in order to be fluent enough to study at Malian universities. Thus,

what matters is the systematic design of the curriculum by considering the followings. Curriculum designers should consider the socio-cultural, historical, religious, political, and economic realities of Mali. They should consider that Arabic and French have discrete functions that stand outside the majority of everyday life for Malians, they should consider students' aspirations for higher education and careers, and they should be aware that most former madrasa students do not work in the state bureaucracy or in occupations that require fluency in French.

I will conclude this section by saying that all my research participants advised madrasa students to strive to master both Arabic and French, and none of the participants questioned the status of French being the official language in Mali. However, the participants unanimously found that it was unfair that Islamic and Arabic subjects be systematically eliminated from madrasas in favour of promoting the French language. They found it unfair to systematically disconnect Mali from its Islamic history in order to favour the French language, and they found it unacceptable that Malians who want their children to study both religious and worldly knowledge be denied that right by imposing a curriculum that does not lead to mastery of religious and worldly knowledge.

I think the problems of madrasas related to bureaucratic politics (for bureaucratic politicians) would have been much easier if those opposed to madrasas in Mali cared about the above educational needs expressed by the participants. However, it seems that in the minds of the Francophiles of the Malian state bureaucracy and the leaders of France the madrasa stands in the way of imposing the French language and culture in Mali. This mindset has existed since the colonial era (Kavas, 2003). Colonial administrators believed that even if Islamic schools were not challenging French rule in

Mali, these schools enabled a great proportion of children to escape the ideological indoctrination of the French (Kavas, 2003, p. 46). In January 1995, an ex-French minister said it was the duty of French leaders to be there for the Malian Francophones against the growing presence of Islamic schools (Kavas, 2003, p. 188).

Therefore, Malians who want to preserve the teaching of Islamic and Arabic subjects in madrasas, while hoping that madrasa graduates attend state universities for career-oriented education, must understand that such endeavor will be fraught with tension at the level of the Malian state bureaucracy. As the findings of this study show, and as I discussed when reviewing the literature (see Brenner, 2001; Cisse, 2006), a tension exists between state officials who genuinely support madrasas and state officials who oppose to madrasas because possibly their interests lie in supporting the interests of the French government in imposing the francophone culture in Mali.

Hence, maintaining the religious mission of madrasas requires knowing decision-makers in the Malian education department, Malian educational policies, educational legislations, and foreign political and economic influences in Mali. This knowledge enables the promoters of madrasas to devise effective strategies to get the Malian state to adopt and apply policies that consider the particularities of madrasa schooling. Moreover, as Khadija suggested, the promoters of the madrasa in Mali must lessen their dependency on the state for higher education through creating Islamic universities.

Analysis of Finding 5: Sustaining the Madrasa by Improving Its Weaknesses

The participants expressed the concern that if the new curriculum is maintained for a long time, the madrasa will no longer be able to play its religious role in Mali. They

said that the problems of madrasas also include some madrasa owners and teachers care more about the financial gain than Islamic education, some parents do not supervise their children's schooling, the new curriculum discourage students from studying Islamic and Arabic subjects, and government regulations undermine madrasas' religious mission.

To analyze the problems of madrasa education my participants discussed, I will describe the madrasa school model to understand how the organizational structure of the madrasa partially accounts for some of madrasas' problems. I also touch on other school models within the Malian educational landscape in order to put these schools in sharp contrast with the madrasa. My goal is to ground my argument that each school model gives rise to distinct practical problems, institutional culture, and societal culture. Also, each school model owes its existence and sustenance to a distinct arrangement of beliefs, ideas, and human and financial resources. Hence, when these components are fine tuned, a given school achieves its mission effectively. Consequently, understanding madrasas' problems requires looking at the madrasa in the context of its school model within the context of the Malian educational landscape.

To classify schools in Mali into distinct models, I asked the following questions. What makes a school model distinctive given its purpose, how it differs from other schools, how it was first established, how it is sustained, and how it affects people's perception. My answers to these questions led me to classify Malian schools into three distinct models: 1) solidarity-based schools (e.g., traditional Islamic schools); 2) transaction-based schools (e.g., madrasas, Catholic schools, private French schools, or Franco-Arab schools); and 3) state-imposed schools (i.e., public schools). I do not mean by this classification to imply that one form of schooling involves solidarity, transaction,

or power while forms do not involve these features. I rather want to say that the key factor in putting beliefs, ideas, people, and resources together to enable a given school to exist and sustain, if contrasted with other schools, is solidarity, transaction, or power.

For example, I classified public schools as state-imposed schools because the key factor that makes this form of schooling in Mali different from other schools is the use of the various forms of the coercive power of the state. Yet, there is still transaction and solidarity involved in this form of schooling. As I will soon argue, this form of schooling leads to a transactional institutional and societal culture just like transactional schools do.

Moreover, by classifying public schools as state-imposed schooling, I do not want to imply that a state cannot establish solidary-based or transactional schools. Prior to the French conquest, the Muslim kingdom of Macina established a network of Islamic schools based on religious solidarity (Boly, 2013), and Malian sovereigns of the past have sponsored Islamic schools without interfering in the work of educators or forcing the population to attend schools (Saad, 1983). Hence, I claim that, operationally, each school model in Mali has a distinguishing feature that makes it stand out from other school models, but no school model has a unique feature that other models forcibly lack.

Contrasting the Traditional Islamic School Model with the Madrasa

I already discussed the traditional Islamic school in chapter 2 based on the literature. The purpose of my current discussion is for the reader to understand the assumptions upon which I am distinguishing the traditional Islamic school model from the madrasa school model. Based on my description of the distinctive features of traditional Islamic schooling and madrasa schooling, I will suggest that a given Islamic school model gives rise to an organizational culture and a cultural pattern in the society,

which are more or less in line with the overriding ideals of Islam. Therefore, the problems of madrasa education that the participants discussed must be analyzed in the context of the madrasa school model.

Simply described, the traditional Islamic school is founded upon a Muslim scholar declaring that it is their religious duty to teach children and knowledge seekers about Islam. As a result, parents, feeling it is their religious duty to give their children Islamic education, send their children to the school, and the teacher teaches all students for free.

To guarantee their livelihood, teachers may farm or do cattle rearing. In turn, the students help the teacher in farming and household works. Students, however, do not see their labour as an exchange for the education they receive from the teacher. They see it as a means to seek the blessing of the teacher. Teachers may house and feed their students without seeing that as an exchange for the labour students do. To help the teacher to take care of their students, the surrounding community gives alms to the students. Also, feeling it is their religious duty to support those who serve the religion, parents and other community members donate valuable objects to the teacher.

Most children stop attending school after acquiring enough knowledge to practice their religion. Advanced education students study books with the objective of mastering the book not passing an exam. Hence, through teaching children and advanced students, the traditional Islamic school teacher contributes to maintain the Islamic religion in society and in educating the next generation of Muslim scholars. Thus, the teacher gains scholarly authority, social status, and some material wealth.

I argue that the functioning of the traditional Islamic school requires the commitment of individual Muslims to religious duty, the feeling of moral obligation, and

the solidarity of the Muslim community. I thus call this a solidarity-based school model. From a duty-oriented paradigm, teachers, parents, students, and the community surrounding the traditional Islamic school engage in the actions that enable the traditional Islamic school to function. Mostly the rewards teachers, students, and parents receive in this school model is deferred, unspecified, and mostly nonmaterialistic.

Teaching people, educating one's children, or serving one's teacher with the hope of salvation in the hereafter and blessing in this world are all actions done for deferred, unspecified, and nonmaterialistic rewards. Sustaining Islam in society or becoming a scholar are also nonmaterialistic though they are, in a sense, tangible. Gaining social status through scholarship is also nonmaterialistic though it brings an unspecified material wealth in forms of donations.

As a solidarity-based school, the strength of the traditional Islamic school depends on Muslims' commitment to religious duty, the ability of the teacher and the community to divert sufficient resources from productive activities to finance the school, and the teacher's trustworthiness, demonstrated in good quality teaching and equal treatment of all children. In this sense, the traditional Islamic school permeates by training future scholars, who adhere to its institutional culture, and promoting in the wider society a culture of adherence to Islamic teachings and commitment to religious solidarity, so Muslims continue to support the school and educate their children in the school.

As a solidarity-based school, a traditional Islamic school may experience crisis if there is a serious disruption of believers' commitment to religious duty, a disruption of the school's institutional culture, a disruption of societal culture about the school, or a disruption of the flow of resources from productive activities to finance schooling. For

example, if the teacher exploits students to farm their land instead of teaching them religion, the school may undergo crisis. It is by teaching that the teacher gains scholarly authority and expands Islam in society. If the teacher loses trustworthiness, fewer students may come, the expansion of Islam in society may slow, the teacher may lose status, and the flow of donations may halt.

Because the traditional Islamic school only leads to religious careers or teaching, there is less demand for advanced education. There is no standardized test, so students are persuaded that only through effort and mastering books, they can achieve scholarly status and the financial gain that may come along with it. Thus, the institutional structure, the focus of schooling, teaching techniques, and organizational procedures all affect school actors' ability to gear the school toward its mission.

As a solidarity-based school, the traditional Islamic school is more in line with the overarching Islamic ideals of doing good actions to satisfy God and solidarity and compassion among human beings. The traditional Islamic school is in line with these ideals not because there is something Islamic about its organizational structure, but because its organizational structure creates an organizational culture and a cultural pattern in society that is in line with Islamic ideals. Therefore, a given school model may be suited for the realization of Islamic ideals not because there is an Islamic or un-Islamic school model, but because the suited school model positively affects school actors and social actors' attitudes, perceptions, and expectations, so they engage in the actions that support the Islamic mission of the school.

Accordingly, I argue, it is important to analyze how the school's institutional structure, procedures, and teaching methods affect school and social actors' perceptions,

attitudes, expectations, and actions. Analyzing these factors enables educators to innovate the organizational arrangement and teaching methods that best support the religious mission of Islamic schools in a given socio-cultural, economic, or political context. Accounting for these factors is also important for resolving schools' problems.

The Problems of Madrasas in Context: The Madrasa School Model

When contrasted with the traditional Islamic school, I qualify the madrasa as a transaction-based school model, so people mostly look at schooling from a pragmatic paradigm. The madrasa operates based on transactions between several parties bound by some form of contract meant to mostly achieve tangible aims and, to some degree, intangible aims for the involved parties. Although the madrasa and the traditional Islamic school are both established to realize Islamic ideals, the structural and procedural differences between the two school models give rise to two distinct cultural patterns within the school and in the society, which have a bearing on how people understand their roles and contributions in the schooling process.

To understand the problems of madrasas and in order to resolve these problems through innovative solutions, one should understand the systemic interactions between religious ideals, school model, schooling procedures, teaching methods, school organizational culture, and societal culture about schooling. I argue that the madrasa is a transaction-based school model. Accordingly, I interpret my participants' views about madrasas' problems. Hence, I would say that madrasas' problems in Mali are partially due to the madrasa school model, schooling procedures, teaching methods, and the cultural patterns they produce inside the madrasa and in the wider society.

Madrasa schooling starts by a person knowledgeable about Islamic sciences who declares that they can teach children to understand Islamic sciences, Arabic, French, and modern subjects in a period of nine or 12 years in exchange for a specified amount of money. The owner of the madrasa builds classrooms and hires teachers. The owner enters into an agreement with the teachers to pay them a specified amount of money in exchange for teaching the children for a specified number of hours, days, and months.

To fulfill the religious duty of giving their children Islamic education, parents send their children to the madrasa and pay the tuition based on madrasa owner's promise that they teach children Islamic and modern subjects in a specified number of years. The madrasa owner in turn asks the teachers to fulfill their contractual obligations by teaching the children. To fulfill their contractual obligation toward the teachers, who earn their livelihood as teachers, the owner of the madrasa uses part of the money collected from parents to pay the teachers, uses another part to guarantee their own livelihood, and uses the rest to expand or maintain the school infrastructure.

Students are taught specific content in a specific amount of time, and teachers tell students they will be periodically tested for their mastery of the taught content. Based on their results in the tests, students move to the next grade and obtain the diploma that testifies to outsiders that they have achieved the required level of schooling based on the set standard. The diploma also proves to parents that the madrasa owner fulfilled their contractual obligation. Moreover, for the government to acknowledge the diploma delivered by the madrasa and allow madrasa students access to certain privileges or to avoid sanctions, the madrasa agrees to follow governmental regulations.

The reader might have noticed that the institutional arrangement that enables madrasa schooling to take place is transactional, driven by contracts between many parties, managed by the owner of the madrasa and regulated by the government. Although the madrasa (like the traditional Islamic school) is established by Muslims to fulfill their religious duty of collectively educating their children to be Muslims, in theory, only parents may be motivated from a duty-oriented paradigm or await the deferred intangible divine rewards, the deferred intangible reward of instilling Islamic values into their children, and the deferred tangible reward of seeing their children get employment. The other parties involved in the transactions that enable madrasa schooling to occur are primarily motivated by the immediate specific rewards of making a living (for madrasa owners and teachers), exerting political authority (for state officials), or obtaining a diploma (for students).

Nonetheless, as individuals, teachers, madrasa owners, state officials, and students might be pious people, have a sense of solidarity, committed to religious duty, and conscious of the religious mission of the madrasa. However, I see that the language, procedures, and organization used in madrasa schooling are not duty oriented, solidarity based, or primarily justified in the name of God, as in traditional Islamic schooling. This is not to suggest that the structure of madrasa schooling is un-Islamic or that no transaction exists in the traditional Islamic school.

Rather, I want to suggest that, by default, the transactional culture madrasa schooling creates within and without the madrasa mostly puts the individual Muslim and his/her interests before every other consideration. Though it is not inherently irreligious for individuals to pursue their personal interests, Islam teaches believers to better

themselves and take care of themselves in order to be in the service of God and the creation of God awaiting the reward of God. In a transactional culture this process is reversed. The Muslim community's religious needs become a means toward securing the livelihood of individuals or toward maximizing their profit. Then, the individual may or may not manifest solidarity and give back to the community.

Hence, I would say, unless a sense of religious duty and solidarity are brought into the consciousness of madrasa actors through some form of creative intervention, the organizational culture that madrasa schooling produces, by default, encourages individual Muslims to pursue immediate, tangible, and personal interests. Therefore, I see that the institutional arrangement of the madrasa makes people act from a pragmatic paradigm, so the value individuals get from a given transaction to serve their personal immediate or deferred interests comes before any other consideration.

In my view, an important factor that makes it difficult for madrasas to promote a duty-oriented and solidarity-based culture is because schooling must be financed by the surplus of some productive activity. Unlike traditional Islamic school teachers, who can claim to primarily teach for the sake of Allah because their livelihood mainly depends on other productive activities such as farming or cattle rearing, madrasa owners and teachers make a living by satisfying people's Islamic education needs.

As I said earlier, madrasa owners, teachers, and students may be well aware of the religious mission of the madrasa and committed to it, but such commitment may be encouraged or discouraged by those who have the power to decide about standardized testing, schooling procedures, teaching methods, teachers' salary, and state regulations, and whether or not parents are interested in schooling their children in the madrasa.

Hence, I argue that even though the madrasa is a transaction-based school model, through conscious intervention and creativity, solidarity and commitment to religious duty can still be encouraged in madrasa schooling.

I think analyzing school models is a good way to uncover how people, ideas, and resources come together to enable schooling to exist and sustain through the twin process of reproducing the school's institutional culture and reproducing a societal culture that makes people support the school. Hence, by understanding this process, one is able to analyze the problems related to schooling from a systemic point of view.

I think looking at schooling from systemic standpoint is important for educators, decision-makers, and researchers because each school model is a distinct system that requires fine-tuning its components in line with the mission of the school. Educators, decision-makers, and researchers should understand that the quality of education and the fulfillment of the mission of a given school is not only a matter of good teaching but also the fine-tuning of the components that enable that school models to function. When applied to madrasas, the success and failure of a given madrasa will depend on the skills of its manager to effectively fine-tune the functioning of that madrasa.

As I said in contemporary Mali, there are three school models, the solidarity-based school model (e.g., the traditional Islamic school), the transaction-based school model (e.g., madrasas, Franco-Arab schools, private French schools, and Catholic schools), and state-imposed schooling (i.e., public schools). Going into details of these examples is beyond the scope of my current analysis, but I will explain what I mean by a state-imposed school to put the madrasa sharper contrast with other school models.

I call the public-school system in Mali state-imposed schooling because the most crucial element that enables this form of schooling to take place and permeate is the violence the state uses. For instance, after the French conquered what is modern-day Mali, they levied taxes from Malians by force, they established French schools, and took Malian children to these schools by force. To guarantee the hegemony of the newly established French schools, the French persecuted owners of traditional Islamic schools, and, through legislation, they restricted or shut down madrasas. After the independence of Mali, colonial schools became public schools. Then, public schools and private schools that use a state-approved curriculum became the main gate to higher education, career, and power in the political economy brought by French conquest.

Although I call the Malian public school a state-imposed schooling, this school model also leads to a transactional, pragmatic, self-centred, and interest-centered institutional culture. This school model also produces a transactional culture in the wider society. The relationship between public school actors, including principals, teachers, the state education department, and the rulers of the country, creates a transactional organizational culture. The Malian public-school system is embedded into a transactional state apparatus which, I argue, mostly encourages people to have no real commitment to anything but to the advantages they get from a given transaction to serve their interests.

The Malian state apparatus creates an institutional culture that stimulates institutional actors to have a pragmatic, interest-oriented, and self-centered perception, attitude, and behaviour. The Malian state apparatus promotes a transactional culture because it was created by the French to serve their imperialist interests. Once they occupied the land and subjugated its people, they established a colonial administration

and school system. The local population they recruited to work in these institutions worked for their salaries and the possible social status they gain from such work.

The independent Malian state renamed the colonial administration as the Malian state bureaucracy and renamed the colonial school as the Malian public school, but the arrangement that sustains the administration and the school remains the same. The institutional culture and the societal culture resulting from this arrangement also continues. Hence, I argue, without a thoughtful and creative intervention from Malian state officials to cultivate a sense of moral obligation and commitment to duty, the Malian bureaucracy and public-school system re-produce mostly a transactional culture. People as individuals, however, may have a sense of moral obligation and commitment to duty. My current discussions may seem off topic, but I will later interpret participants' views about the future of madrasa education in Mali based on these discussions.

Now, I want to use Althusser's (1970) concept of the ideological state apparatus in conjunction with my forgoing discussion as a framework to explain the tension that exists between supporters and opponents of madrasas among Malian state officials. I also explain my participants' assertion that madrasas' problems are partially due to the colonial mindset of some state officials and partially due to the influence of the French government over some state officials. Althusser (1970) argues that schooling is part of the ideological apparatus used by the group controlling the state to diffuse their ideology in the society to maintain their domination over the population.

In Mali, French schooling was established by the French to diffuse the French language and ideology. However, because the French, the dominant group, were alien to the land of Mali, because French schooling never had a monopoly over the education

sector, and because French schooling produces a transactional culture, Malians educated in French schools to serve in the civil service did not become part of the dominant group, and many of these Malians did not adhere to the ideology of the dominant group.

Thus, as I discussed in chapter 1, Modibo Keita (1960-1968) reformed Malian education system based on pan-Africanist ideals. However, after him, as French government's economic and political influence grew in Mali, French ideological influence grew in schooling. Hence, the promotion of the French language in madrasas to the point of using it as a language of instruction while weakening Islamic education and Arabic is an expansion French ideological influence over an area of the Malian education sector that was, hitherto, outside such influence.

I argue that the tension that exists within the Malian state bureaucracy about madrasas is in fact a tension between state officials whose ideology and interests align with the ideology and interests of the French government, on the one hand, and state officials who adhere to certain religious, nationalistic, or pan-Africanist ideals opposed to that ideology, on the other hand. I expect this tension to continue because none of these parties have a complete monopoly over the state apparatus or the education sector. Thus, to better analyze the problems surrounding madrasa schooling in Mali, one should account for the ideological tension within the state bureaucracy. One should also account for the tension within madrasas between the transactional culture produced by the madrasa school model and the solidarity-based culture Islamic teachings promote.

Because each school model results in distinct practical problems, understanding madrasa schooling in Mali based on the models I presented thus far permits educators,

decision-makers and researchers to systematically research and analyze problems surrounding schooling in order to improve the quality of education in Mali.

The Problems of Madrasas in Context: Parents and Students' Attitudes

My participants said that many parents did not inquire about their children's schooling, so madrasas do not feel pressured to do anything about the problems related to the new curriculum. Amina argued that Malians have collectively resigned from the responsibility of educating their children (see the findings chapter, p. 163). Thus, Mohamed thinks, one of the solutions to madrasas curriculum problem is that parents must "stand up and put pressure on madrasa owners, and madrasa owners, in turn, will put pressure on the state, so the state changes the curriculum" to adequately cover Islamic subjects and Arabic with modern subjects and French.

These complaints about parents' attitudes might be reasonable, but parents' attitudes might be understandable when one considers that many parents are not literate, as Mohamed said. Another factor that must not be overlooked in explaining parents' attitudes is that, to a great extent, the madrasa is a modernized version of the traditional Islamic school. In the traditional Islamic school, people look at schooling from a duty-oriented paradigm, so they entrust their children to the teacher (Tamari, 2016), and they never get involved in the business of schooling. Therefore, I believe, because parents still see the madrasa primarily as a religious institution, where madrasa owners and teachers fulfill their duties for the sake of Allah without external pressure, unless parents are really convinced that a given madrasa owner cares only about money, parents will hardly get involved in madrasa schooling.

Even if parents are convinced that some madrasa owners indeed care more about money than serving the religion, the absence of an alternative to the madrasa forces parents to send their children to the madrasa. Because the madrasa is a transaction-based school model, unless one of the parties insists that the other party improves the quality or increases the value of what is being offered, the other party may hardly make such improvement or increase voluntarily. I see that the tension between parents' and madrasa owners' attitudes is possibly a result of parents acting from a duty-oriented perspective while madrasa owners are acting from a pragmatic perspective.

Besides ignorance and acting from a duty-oriented perspective, parents' attitudes of not interfering in madrasa schooling may also be explained in that many of them may not have the cultural and intellectual awareness to recognize the importance of parents' involvement in their children's schooling (Tangara, 2017). As the participants claimed, unless those interested in the improvement of madrasa education undertake an intensive consciousness-raising campaign to educate parents, parents may not likely pressure madrasa owners to improve the teaching of Islamic and Arabic subjects in madrasas.

Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed also said that the new curriculum causes students to neglect Islamic subjects because these subjects are not tested in national exams. In the views of these three participants, teachers and heads of madrasas must advise students of the importance of Islamic and Arabic subjects. These participants also thought that unless madrasas insist that the government include Islamic subjects in national exams, many students may have no incentive to seriously study these subjects.

Students' negligence of Islamic and Arabic subjects is possibly due to two factors. The first is that madrasas are controlled through bureaucratic regulations including

standardized tests, so people of authority can make bureaucratic decisions that improve or degrade the quality of madrasa education. Mohamed said that in the first few years of the implementation of the 2003 curriculum, a special arrangement existed to test madrasa students in Islamic subjects in high school exam. Later, state officials terminated that arrangement, arguing that madrasa students must be treated like students of other schools.

The second factor that may cause students to neglect Islamic subjects is that standardized tests are external motivators in the sense that obtaining the diploma comes through passing the test rather than mastering the content. Therefore, there is little incentive for students to focus on subjects that will not help them obtain the diploma. Sidibe (2015) found that besides the neglect of Islamic education by many students, those who repeat the year in high school stop attending Islamic education classes altogether.

Nonetheless, even though deciding which subjects are included in the national exam is a political rather than a pedagogical decision and standardized tests are an external motivator, this research findings suggest that heads of madrasas and teachers may still be able to devise strategies that encourage students to master Islamic subjects. For example, Mohamed and Ibrahim said that their teachers insisted that they master Islamic and Arabic subjects irrespective of the exams. Their teachers used to listen to every student in subjects like the Quran and fiqh.

However, for the French course which was not emphasized like Islamic subjects or Arabic, Amina, Ibrahim, Issa, and Khadija stated that many madrasa students did not care about French. Some students even walked out of the class as soon as the French language teacher walked in because there were no repercussions for refusing to study French. This was so because succeeding in the exams was based on the total grade the

student received in all subjects, so students could neglect French and still succeed, as Khadija noted. Hence, this suggests that the quality of education in a school regulated by bureaucratic decisions partially depends on the good intention of the person making the political decision and partially on the creativity of the teacher.

As a result, although the removal of Islamic subjects from national high school exam was a political decision (probably intended to undermine the religious mission of madrasas), educators can still contemplate creative methods to get students to master Islamic subjects and the Arabic language, as in the examples provided by Ibrahim and Mohamed. Also, as suggested by Ibrahim, Mohamed, and Khadija, teachers must discover strategies that make students self-confident and internally motivated by persuading them of the importance of Islamic and Arabic subjects.

The foregoing analysis provides insights into some of the conditions that help madrasas succeed in their religious mission, including friendly state regulations, well-informed and supportive parents, motivated and self-confident students, committed heads of madrasas and teachers, and creative teaching methods, and good management.

The findings of this research indicate that Malian madrasas did not try to overcome the shortcomings of the new curriculum through finding creative teaching methods or innovative strategies to motivate students to learn Islamic and Arabic subjects. Madrasas were also not able to effectively press state officials for strengthening Islamic subjects in the curriculum or including these subjects in the national high school exam. Instead, madrasas reacted to the new curriculum in three ways, accepting the new curriculum as is, using both the old and new curriculum, and rejecting the new curriculum.

Some madrasas' refusal to implement the new curriculum signifies that these madrasas do not want to compromise madrasas' religious mission for any other consideration. It also signifies that there is still a substantial number of parents and students who are more interested in the religious dimension than the career dimension of madrasa schooling.

The Problems of Madrasas in Context: School Owners and Teachers'

Attitudes

Khadija, Ibrahim, and Mohamed asserted that some madrasa owners used their madrasas primarily to make profit. In their opinions, these madrasa owners hinder the religious mission of madrasas in Mali. Boyle (2014) also concludes that many madrasa owners talk about their school as a business enterprise. To support their claim, the three participants said that madrasa owners did not give their teachers a good salary. They also said that madrasa owners were not making enough effort to pressure the government to reform the curriculum to improve the quality of Islamic education or to include Islamic subjects in the national high school exam.

However, this criticism must be understood in context because the government provides subsidies only for high school students. Also, tuition fees vary greatly across madrasas, and tuitions are fairly low in poor neighborhoods (Roy, 2012, p. 105), so the dearth of financial resources is a factor that prevents madrasa owners' from paying teachers a good salary (Kavas, 2003; Sangare, 2014). Indeed, some small madrasas do not guarantee a good income even for their owners (Roy, 2012). Another factor that might impact teachers' salaries is that school fees are less in lower grades than in higher grades (Kavas, 2003; Roy, 2012). Nevertheless, madrasas that are well-off financially are

able to pay teachers relatively better salaries (Kavas, 2003), and teachers who hold university degrees are better paid than those who do not (Boyle, 2014).

It must also be noted that some madrasa owners' inclination for financial gain should not obscure the fact that orphans are exempted from paying tuition in madrasas as confirmed by all the participants. Roy (2012) also confirms that she visited a madrasa where orphans studied for free. Thus, madrasa owners' generosity toward orphans indicates a commitment to religious mission, but not paying teachers good salaries, in a sense, shows that madrasa owners lack religious solidarity toward their teachers.

Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed also said that some madrasa teachers are more interested in earning a salary than in serving the religion. However, beyond the outward attitudes of madrasa owners and teachers judged by outsiders, how can understanding the madrasa school model shed light on this tension? By tension, I mean the tension between seeking one's self-interest and committing to religious duty.

Earlier, I contrasted the traditional Islamic school model with the madrasa school model to argue that the former is a solidarity-based school while the latter is a transaction-based school. I also argued that because the religion encourages solidarity, the traditional Islamic school model is more in line with Islamic ideals than the madrasa school model.

Considering these arguments, I see that traditional Islamic school teachers can primarily teach people for the sake of Allah because their livelihood is guaranteed through another activity like farming, and because also teachers and the community jointly support the student population. In contrast to the madrasa, even though madrasa owners and teachers serve the religion through schooling, the madrasa represents almost

their only source of income. I thus argue that their views about schooling may be influenced by the practical considerations of making a living and managing a transaction-based school than serving the religious mission of the madrasa.

A madrasa teacher whose salary barely covers his living expenses may be more preoccupied with improving his living conditions than serving the religious mission of the madrasa. This teacher may abandon teaching when he finds a well-paid job, even if he is truly committed to madrasa's religious mission. This is an example of tension between commitment to religious duty and self-interest. As Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed said, the working conditions in many madrasas are discouraging for teachers. I would say that it is madrasa owners' duty to serve the religious mission of the madrasa to the best of their ability by improving the working conditions of madrasa teachers.

To link this analysis back to my classification of school models in Mali into state-imposed, transaction-based, and solidarity-based, I say that the state has and can use force to levy taxes to finance public schools. The state can also legislate to persuade people or force them to attend public schools. Islamic schools, however, have no other means than to attract the hearts and minds of Muslims. This is done in the case of the madrasa by reinforcing religiosity in society and offering good quality education that satisfies the worldly and otherworldly needs of believers, so believers continue to send their children to Islamic schools, work in Islamic schools, and invest money and time in these schools.

Unless madrasas attract competent teachers in all subject areas and offer them attractive working conditions, madrasas cannot offer good quality education that will satisfy the worldly and otherworldly needs of believers who represent the customer base of madrasas. This means that madrasas have to cooperate to consolidate their efforts and

resources and to contemplate strategies for mobilising adequate financial resources from the Malian Muslim community to improve madrasa schooling.

The Problems of Madrasas in Context: The Malian State and Its Technical Partners

Though the participants appreciated that the new curriculum of 2003 enabled madrasa students to easily admit to public universities, they believed this curriculum may eventually destroy Islamic subjects and Arabic in madrasas. Khadija said,

It [the curriculum reform] was good, for it gave chance to our youths to go and study in all universities. However, it greatly affected our religious subjects because there is no time to teach religious subjects. You find that per week, they [ministry of education designated] one or two hours to teach all religious subjects in that timeframe, ..., that is a catastrophe. That is at the level of high school. If we continue that way, religious subjects will be destroyed.

Amina concurred with this view that “the curriculum they have does not have the part of religion ..., to say the part of Arabic is also weak, once these two are removed from it [madrasa education], what are you going to stand up with?” Here she is arguing that madrasa education stands on two pillars, Islamic education, and Arabic. Once these pillars are weakened, there would be no madrasa education. The weakening of Islamic and Arabic subjects in the new curriculum is further exacerbated by the elimination of Islamic subjects from the national high school exam which becomes a factor for demotivating students from seriously studying Islamic subjects. According to Ibrahim, “the job [curriculum reform] they [ministry of education] did was not complete because,

..., there are many subjects for instance, Islamic education is not done in BAC [national high school exam], and they did not give it any coefficient in their curriculum.”

In participants’ views, the Malian state is intentionally destroying Islamic education and Arabic in madrasas to serve the imperialist interests of the French government (a technical partner of the Malian state that provides money and expertise, especially for the education sector, as discussed in the findings chapter). For Ibrahim, “those whose interest is not served by Arabic learning and the religion have commissioned them [government officials] to do that work [to weaken Islamic education and Arabic in madrasas]. It is nothing but that. It is the French language. They are the French. Nobody else should be picked on.”

The above quotations show how the participants considered state regulations and the attitudes of some state officials as major factors that contribute to the problems of madrasas in Mali. Also, Brenner (2001), Cisse (2006), and Kavas (2003) all confirm that within the Malian state bureaucracy there are pro and anti-madrasa bureaucrats. Thus, I qualify some state officials’ opposition to madrasas as a matter of institutional politics rather than institutional policy. By institutional policy, I mean the official policy that must be legally enforced, and by institutional politics, I mean how state officials choose to interpret and implement state policies according to their views and interests.

It is important that the reader understand that bureaucratic regulations or politics represent one dimension of madrasas’ problems in Mali because my third research question is to understand participants’ views about sustaining madrasas for future generations. The quotations included earlier show how the participants interpret state regulations regarding madrasas and the impacts of the new curriculum on the religious

mission of madrasas. However, I want to bring to the fore that the transactional nature of madrasa schooling and of the Malian state bureaucracy make it difficult for the Malian state to produce a madrasa curriculum that perfectly balances Islamic and Arabic subjects with modern subjects and French, as Khadija hopes in the following comment,

The curriculum I want is that modern subjects and French do not [negatively] impact the religion because the goal we seek in madrasas is that you know your religion better than those who did not attend the madrasa. Also the religion does not [negatively] impact modern subjects, ..., so they go hand in hand so that madrasa students can specialize in all fields of knowledge ... wherever they [madrasa graduates] work or wherever they live when they are asked about a topic in religion, they must be able to explain it [religion] to other because that should be the difference between the madrasa and ekoli.

In my view, it is difficult for the Malian state to design a perfectly balanced curriculum as Khadija hopes because beyond the colonial tie between some state officials and the French government, foreign countries and organizations influence state officials' attitudes toward madrasas through their financial and technical assistance to the Malian state (Brenner, 2001; Gandolfi, 2003; Villalón et al., 2012). As I noted earlier, it is stated in the new curriculum document (see appendix H) that the technical partners of Mali (i.e., representatives of foreign countries and organizations) participated in the workshop carried out to design the new curriculum.

Viewing the madrasa as a transaction-based school, I say that madrasas that accepted the new curriculum entered into a form of transaction with the government (i.e., compliance with state regulations and acceptance of the new curriculum in exchange for

government's subsidy and students' admission to public universities). The Malian government in turn entered into a transaction with its technical partner (i.e., financial and technical assistance in exchange for foreign political, economic, and ideological agenda). Hence, I see that the madrasa became embedded into a nested network of transactions involving parties having diverse interests and probably irreconcilable goals with the religious mission of the madrasa. Therefore, some Malian state officials' attitudes toward madrasas is not necessarily due to hostility but an attempt to fulfill their contractual obligation toward their technical partners.

My participants argued that if parents, religious leaders, and heads of madrasas joined together to pressure the government, the government may not have a choice but to reform madrasa curriculum to adequately cover Islamic and Arabic subjects as well as modern subjects and French. However, my above analysis makes me conclude that the government may concede to pressure and make a new curriculum reform, but it may be difficult to get the government to design a madrasa curriculum that perfectly balances religious and worldly education as madrasas wish.

Nevertheless, as suggested by Mohamed, heads of madrasas must be aware of their bargaining power "because nowadays, as we [I] said, madrasas also take a big chunk of government students ... they contribute currently in helping the state to educate the children of the country." Being aware of this bargaining power might help heads of madrasas to get state officials to make important concessions in favor of Islamic education and the Arabic language in madrasas. Also, as suggested by Khadija, those "who were able to build [madrasa] high schools. Those same people [madrasa owners] can build a university and make its tuition affordable." What I hear Khadija saying is that

because the madrasa prepares many of its students for university education, and thereby follow the university's admission requirement, the existence of an Islamic university will greatly do away with the problem of sacrificing the religious mission of the madrasa in order to follow the admission requirement of Malian secular francophone universities. Hence, madrasas will have the latitude to design a curriculum that effectively balances Islamic subjects and Arabic with modern subjects and French.

Contemplating the Future of the Madrasa in Context

... the very condition in which it [madrasa education] is now, it has many drawbacks that must be re-examined ..., if you look ..., going forward [in the future], Islamic education will be killed [dropped] from the matter of madrasa, and if that is killed from it, that will be the loss of its distinguishing feature.

With these words, Ibrahim introduced his response when I asked him about the future of madrasas in Mali. Ibrahim's answer exemplifies the typical answer the participants gave about the future of madrasas in Mali. Looking at this answer in light of other participants' views, I see a tension between anxiety and hope, a tension between the feeling of helplessness and the certainty that something can be done and will be done, and a tension between consternation about the present conditions of madrasas and certainty that madrasas will continue to play their religious and worldly role into the future.

I see evidence of these tensions in Ibrahim's comment, in other participants' answers, and in the decision of four participants to send their children to the madrasa. Khadija, Ibrahim, Issa, and Mohamed said they have schooled and will school their children in the madrasa despite the many criticisms these participants made of madrasa education. They chose to send their children to the madrasa because they felt certain that

the problems of the madrasa may be resolved despite their worries that if the present conditions of madrasa schooling persists, madrasas will no longer be able to provide high quality Islamic and worldly education as they wish.

I will soon argue that what gives my participants a feeling of certainty about the future of madrasas in Mali is their belief that the supporters of madrasa education can do something to improve the quality of madrasa education and that God will reward their collective action with success in the long run. When I asked the participants to explain how the resolution of madrasas' problems with the will of God is different from the effort they must do, Issa provided the following answer,

... you know, and I know that our country [Mali] was colonized by France, ... our official language is French, so the administrative system does not encourage the development of Arabic [madrasas]. That is the biggest obstacle. ... that is not an easy fight, but with Allah's will and help, it will be resolved. ... [we have been working] from the independency, to the 80s and to now, Arabic [madrasas] greatly improved. ... the solution is not one day, one year or even three years. It will be a long-term solution ... and we are certain that it will be resolved ... what gives us certainty is that today, students of Arabic [madrasas] are in many scientific fields. Some of them are medical doctors, and some are engineers ... in the past, we were not united, but nowadays, there are many associations created by madrasa students ... we are reflecting on how to improve Arabic learning. ... in Mali here, unless you stand up, and sometimes show your muscles, yours [madrasa problems] will never be resolved. ... it will take time, but we are sure

and certain that it will move forward. ... now, [two of our madrasa graduates] appear on TV to debate and explain the problems of madrasa curriculum ...

This comment shows that participants' religious views inform their views about the improvement of madrasa education. I argue, based on my findings, that the goal of improving and sustaining madrasas in Mali may be achieved in the long run because the supporters of madrasas, like my participants, are intrinsically motivated to take the actions required to achieve such goal. These supporters know how to act within the Malian social and political contexts. Also, the madrasa school model has permeated itself within the social, economic, and political contexts of Mali.

My first argument is that madrasas may be sustained in Mali because people like my participants are intrinsically motivated to improve madrasas against all odds. When the participants talked about their schooling and work experiences and when they suggested solutions for madrasas' problems by saying that they believe in the will of God, I conclude that this belief is a powerful intrinsic motivator that makes them convinced that God always positively rewards sincere effort even under the worst circumstances. Evidence of this conclusion is in the following examples. Amina stated, "whenever Allah closes one door, he opens another one," Issa said that "if Allah is in something, triggering events raise," Mohamed concurred that "it is an obligation that we do some movements, so Allah will bring success," and Ibrahim insisted that "when serving the cause of Islam, if one strives and makes their intention sincere for Allah, they will do what they must do, and their contribution will stop when they die, and other people will come and continue. Over time, Allah will most likely realize the goals."

Aside from participants' religious views, my second argument is that the madrasa may be sustained in Mali because people like my participants understand what actions to take within the social and political contexts of Mali to improve and sustain madrasas. Indeed, madrasa graduates like these participants are already acting to create the conditions that may save the madrasa from its current problems. Also, those who are working to improve madrasas today consider their actions to be the continuity of the improvement of Islamic schooling initiated by the founding fathers of the madrasa in Mali, as evidenced in Issa's earlier comment.

When I look at Issa's comment in light of Khadija's and Mohamed's earlier comments about how they and their colleagues organized themselves to fight for their rights, I see that the education these participants received possibly made them understand the political context of Mali, so they became skillful in taking political action in that context and skillful in taking advantage of the media. Thus, the participants are hopeful that madrasas will sustain with the will of God, as Issa said. What reinforces participants' belief in the will of God is reflecting on how madrasas in Mali started from a humble beginning to become a large school network despite all obstacles. Hence, the participants become confident that if they strive as the founding fathers did, surely positive divine intervention will follow, and madrasas will sustain for future generations.

An insight I get from the above discussion is that the education these participants received gave them an increased intellectual awareness and an increased religious awareness (another dimension of intellectual awareness) resulting in an increased capacity to act, an increased certainty about God's will, and an increased determination to

overcome obstacles. Thus, the participants are hopeful for the future of madrasas though the present conditions of madrasas cause consternation and dismay.

These participants are hopeful because they have engaged in transforming madrasas “by means of praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1993). However, because of their increased religious awareness, these participants’ praxis connects the objective reality with the metaphysical reality (i.e., divine will), so they gain extra confidence that transformative actions always bring long-term success even if the immediate expectations are not met.

I conclude that not only people like my participants are doing what they can to find solutions to madrasas’ problems, but they are also aware of the range of actions that must be taken within the social and political context of Mali. The following comments lend support to this conclusion. Ibrahim introduced: “if people’s mentality slightly changes, and if we [people concerned about madrasas] talk to each other, most likely, Allah will make it so that we understand each other,” Khadija added, “[w]e must stand up and do *dawah*. We raise people’s awareness so that something can be added to it to promote our religion.”

Amina continued, “everyone who is a madrasa owner here in Mali must be convinced to sit at the table. They should negotiate, they should contemplate, and they should conduct studies to see how the madrasa can progress.” Mohamed recommended that “it is madrasa teachers who should always incite students to be determined,” and Issa concluded that, “in this country [Mali] what is said [common knowledge] is unless you [people with grievance] become a big crowd you will not be listened to, or you will not be taken seriously [by state officials].”

In my view, the solutions suggested by the participants in the preceding comments fall in the category of public relations or consciousness-raising. These comments tell me that those who are interested in the future of the madrasa in Mali must be aware of the importance of unity, must be aware of the problems that exist in the madrasa, must be aware of the importance of scientific research, must be aware of how to apply political pressure in Mali, and everyone must play their role with devotion.

After the consciousness-raising or public relations step, the next step I infer from participants' opinions is activism for the cause of madrasas. This step includes persuading state officials of the importance of madrasa schooling in the country, as argued by Ibrahim, "if they want to fight the terrorists or fight that instability, they should value the matter of madrasa so that people are educated," and by Khadija that "all substantial aid that came from abroad to this country, Mali, came from Arab countries. The aid came to help the religion. None of it came because they [the Arabs] simply liked Mali. They brought it [the aid] because, they saw religious education here," and by Mohamed that the Arabic language connected Mali to its historical and intellectual heritage because "the manuscripts, even if they were in our local languages, were all written with the Arabic alphabet."

Participants' views that the promotion of madrasa education serves Malian national interests is also substantiated by Brenner (2001) who concludes that one of the reasons that motivated the Malian state in the 1980s to include madrasas in the public education system was to attract aid from Arab countries and to boost the official school enrollment statistics. Cisse (2006) also concludes that madrasa graduates who work in

Malian diplomacy help improve Mali's relation with the Arab world and that the mass spreading of Islamic values brings stability in a multiethnic country like Mali.

Going back to the actions suggested by the participants to sustain madrasas in Mali, Issa suggested that if Malian state officials could not be convinced through persuasion and calm negotiation, supporters of madrasa education must collectively mobilize to pressure state officials because, most often, the Malian state does not listen to the grievances of the population unless the latter applies political pressure. Issa's view shows me that Malian state officials' attitude of not taking Malians' grievances seriously, indirectly persuades Malians to build their political mobilization capacity and be politically engaged in order to get their rights.

It must be said here that participants' grievance with state officials regarding madrasas is about some state officials' deliberate attempt to undermine religion and Arabic in madrasas, especially at the high school level. Otherwise, all the participants appreciated the new curriculum of 2003 because it gives madrasa students the chance to study at public universities, as indicated by Khadija, "It [the curriculum reform] was good, for it gave chance to our youths to go and study in all universities. However, it greatly affected our religious subjects."

The last step in the solutions suggested by the participants is organizational improvement and pedagogical innovation through guaranteeing decent living conditions for teachers (as suggested by Ibrahim, Khadija, and Mohamed), teacher training (as proposed by Amina, Ibrahim, and Khadija), intra-madrasa cooperation (as suggested by all the participants), diversifying the educational offering of madrasas (as suggested by Ibrahim, Issa, and Mohamed), applied research (as suggested by Amina, Khadija, and

Mohamed), and creating affordable Islamic universities (as suggested by Khadija). I did not quote from the data to evidence these suggestions because I think the quotations included in my analysis thus far sufficiently touched on each of these points.

My last argument is that the madrasa may be sustained in Mali because the madrasa school model has permeated itself in the social, political, and economic context of Mali. The first evidence of this claim is that many parents (like Ibrahim, Issa, Khadija, and Mohamed) are still convinced of the merits of madrasas to the point of sending their children to the madrasa despite the problems of madrasas. The second evidence is what Ibrahim noted that the Malian state “was not able to educate its children [citizens]. It was not able to educate them even in western education.” Not only is the state not able to educate the population, but it is also advised by its western funders, like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to privatize the education sector and reduce public spending on education (Villalón et al., 2012).

Moreover, irrespective of the true reason why some Malian state officials want to undermine Islamic education and the Arabic language in the madrasa, the Malian state is not in a strong position to shut down madrasas or to refuse to grant their students access to public universities. I believe this because there is still a strong social demand for madrasa education in Mali, and there has been a growing social pressure for the state to treat madrasa students on equal footing with French school students as indicated by Mohamed that “the union of madrasas and heads of madrasas [fought] so madrasa students could be admitted to the university.”

Another reason why madrasas may be sustained is that they have permeated themselves into the Malian economic context because they became creators of jobs and

sources of income for many Malians (Brenner, 200; Kavas 2003), so the madrassa performs an important function in Malian society that other institutions cannot perform if the madrassas are suddenly closed.

A final reason that makes madrasas sustainable is that the madrasa has important practical and even symbolic value as an Islamic institution in Mali, which has permeated the religious and political culture there, and Malians recognize this and would object to its removal. For instance, Ibrahim said that the opening of the faculties of “Islamic studies and economics [built by the former king of the Emirates³⁰]. ... was purposefully hindered [by state officials who opposed madrasa education]. [until the] era of IBK.” IBK, Ibrahim Boubacr Keita, was supported by religious leaders in the 2013 presidential campaign, so it is understandable that he supported madrasas. Indeed, considering the religious sentiment of the Muslims has always been a reality in Malian politics (Soares, 2005), whether under the military regime of Moussa Traore, 1968-1991, (Cisse, 2006), under the socialist regime of Modibo Keita (1960-1968), or under French colonization (Brenner, 2001; Kaba, 1974; Peterson, 2011). The democratization of 1991 has also increased the public influence of Islam in Mali (Villalón et al., 2012; Schulz, 2012).

Now, I will conclude by considering the possible scenarios for the future of madrasas in Mali. The first scenario is the madrasa education as known today (i.e., teaching Islamic and Arabic subjects alongside modern subjects and French) disappears if the madrasa’s problems are not resolved, chiefly the curriculum problem, as lamented by Mohamed that “we are worried if it continues like this in a ten-year time, we doubt if there will be a madrasa anymore.” Mohamed’s worry is also echoed by Ibrahim that “the

³⁰ Emirates refer to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

system that existed when I started teaching people, if you look at that system, going forward, Islamic education will be killed from the matter of madrasa.” This scenario, in my view, is less likely given my findings and the analysis I made so far.

The second scenario is that the current problems of the madrasa continue, so Islamic and Arabic subjects wither away from madrasa schooling, turning madrasas into a sort of Franco-Arab school, which only teaches rudimentary Islamic education and Arabic. Based on the findings of this study and Villalón et al., (2012), it seems like some Malian state officials are pushing for this scenario. However, this scenario may fuel continuous tension between the state and madrasas because people like these research participants are willing to take every action in their capacity to preserve the madrasa’s religious mission. This scenario may also create the conditions for more madrasas to refuse cooperation with the state or to devise alternative strategies outside the official curriculum as some madrasas are already doing.

The third scenario, I suggest madrasa schooling should evolve in that direction, is the diversification of the educational offering of madrasas by designing a curriculum that branches to distinct educational pathways. When I look at how the participants schooled their children and how they justified the importance of madrasas in Mali, I see that madrasas can potentially serve four distinct educational purposes: 1) to educate students with worldly knowledge and basic Islamic education; 2) to educate students with worldly knowledge and advanced Islamic knowledge; 3) to educate students with worldly knowledge, have basic Islamic knowledge, and master Arabic; and 4) to educate future religious scholars who have worldly knowledge.

Resolving madrasa curriculum problem based on this scenario will make madrasas appealing to the educational preferences of more parents and students, and it will create better conditions for state officials and madrasas to coordinate and cooperate. It will also make madrasa education respond better to the religious and worldly needs of students, the religious needs of the Muslim community, and the social, political, and economic needs of Mali. Therefore, structuring the madrasa curriculum to satisfy various educational needs based on this scenario is possibly the best way to move forward and to put an end to the current madrasa curriculum problem.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed my insights about the findings of this multi-case study in which I interviewed five participants to understand how madrasa education influenced them, and how they saw madrasa schooling, its curriculum, its role, its problems, and its future in Mali. When talking about the role of madrasas in Mali, the participants showed the importance of madrasas in three ways: 1) helping the individual Muslim acquire religious knowledge and values; 2) educating religious experts and spreading Islamic values and knowledge in the society; and 3) serving Mali's national interests by helping the state educate the population, attracting Arab aid, creating a religious consciousness that prevents militant extremism, and linking Mali to its intellectual heritage.

Comparing how participants' parents schooled their children and how the participants schooled their own children, I saw that Muslims' perceptions about madrasa education have evolved. While participants' parents looked at schooling from a duty-oriented paradigm, cared about religious knowledge, religious duty, and conformed to

cultural norms, the participants looked at schooling from a pragmatic paradigm and wanted both religious and worldly knowledge for tangible and intangible benefits.

My analysis of the old madrasa curriculum showed that this curriculum starts with a strong foundation in the Arabic language to prepare students to understand religious texts. In this regard, the participants appreciated the old curriculum. The teaching of modern subjects and French, however, varied largely from madrasa to madrasa, possibly due to financial constraints, lack of qualified teachers, director's view about Islamic schooling, and the popular perception that the aim of the madrasa is to prepare for religious life while the aim of the French school is to prepare for the world of work.

Regarding the new curriculum, the participants appreciated that this curriculum reinforces French and modern subjects in madrasa, which guarantees madrasa graduates unconditional access to Malian public universities. However, the participants were concerned about the status of Islamic and Arabic subjects in the new curriculum, especially in high school. I attributed the poor design of this curriculum to the fact that many parties with conflicting views about madrasa schooling were involved in the design of the curriculum, including the Malian state education department, madrasas union, students' parent association, and representatives of foreign organizations.

When it comes to the teaching provided at the madrasa and the effects of madrasa education on students, all the participants were grateful that their teachers prepared them to be knowledgeable about Islam, to be religious, and to diffuse religious knowledge in their social milieu. I concluded that what my participants described as distinctive features of madrasa education is partially due to the concentration of these features in madrasa students in contrast with French school students. Moreover, the madrasa school

environment, the systematic instruction provided in the madrasa, and the popular perception that madrasa students are religious all increase the chances that religiosity and religious knowledge be more prevalent among madrasas students.

Regarding the negative effects of madrasa education, two participants noted feeling an inferiority complex for not being fluent in French in childhood, and four participants stated that they, as madrasa graduates, experienced unfair or demeaning treatment at university or when looking for employment. I argued that feeling inferior for not speaking French in Mali is because most intellectuals and state bureaucrats attend French schools and are fluent in French, so in popular imagination, French is the language of power and scholarship, so not speaking French may make some people feel less important in comparison to those who speak French.

The unfair treatment some participants experienced in terms of higher education and employment is due, on the one hand, to regulations that make fluency in French a requirement to access higher education and state bureaucracy in Mali, and on the other hand, this unfair treatment is caused by a deliberate attempt of some state officials to silence and exploit their fellow Malians.

When it came to the pedagogy used in madrasas, madrasa teaching emphasizes memorization and recitation at first. Then, it gradually moves toward understanding and contextual application of knowledge. I see that these teaching methods are used in madrasas because Islamic scholarly tradition and religious observance require that knowledge remains in the hearts and minds of the believers.

In terms of the effects of madrasa education on the participants' post-madrasa education and career, I concluded that the difficulties some participants faced in terms of

scientific subjects and French happened because their ambitions went beyond what their madrasa education prepared them for, Islamic and Arabic subjects. That is why these participants had to rely on their personal effort to succeed in their post-madrasa studies.

Finally, the participants found that to sustain the madrasa for future generations in Mali, students, parents, teachers, and heads of madrasas must have their consciousness raised about their roles and the actions they should take to help the madrasa succeed. The participants also said that state officials must be persuaded or even pressured to balance Islamic and Arabic subjects with modern subjects and French. My analysis of the findings conclude that the madrasa will most likely be sustained in Mali for future generation because people, like my participant, are already taking actions and are determined to do what they can to preserve the madrasa school system.

Chapter 6: Implications and Recommendations

Here, I consider some implications of my study for the future of education in Mali including madrasa education, Islamic education courses for French school students, and curriculum design. It is common knowledge in Mali that the state partially relies on foreign expertise and financial assistance to fund and plan national education. As many madrasas now come under the direct control of the Malian state, madrasas are also subject to foreign expertise and influence.

In my view, foreign experts might provide valuable expertise on how to make the Malian education system, including the madrasa, better serve the needs of the global economy and prepare students for careers within the dominant economic model. Foreign experts, however, may not have sufficient expertise or even the disposition to care about the local realities of Mali including the religious, cultural, social, economic, and political needs of the Malian population and the Malian state. Therefore, creating a solid national education system in Mali, including the madrasa, requires locally produced researches conducted by Malian researchers, who care about the local realities of Mali in relation to the global context, in order to make Mali a strong nation within the global order without blindly following foreign economic or political models and without losing the religious and socio-cultural distinctiveness of the Malian people.

Malian students, including madrasa students, should have the knowledge and skills that enable them to be creative and productive citizens within the modern economy. At the same time, it is important that students have the knowledge that connects them to their religion, culture, society, history, and country because there is more to life than simply working and having money to spend. To live in this world as Muslims, we must

be creative, productive, and capable of resolving the practical problems we face in life, but what gives substance and meaning to our life, as Muslims, is our ability to live the way of life that is meaningful to us, to connect to our Creator, to connect to other human beings, and to realize what we dearly believe in, including our religious beliefs.

Therefore, reducing the purpose of the Malian education system to serving the needs of the job market and state bureaucracy is reducing the worth of the people of Mali to a one-dimensional level, to be the servants of those who control the job market and state bureaucracy. Hence, a curriculum that balances the various needs of Malian students, based on their local realities in relation to the global context, is the curriculum that makes economic prosperity serve the way of life of the Malian people. This brings me to the issue of languages in the Malian education system.

The findings of this study suggest to me that some Malian state officials want to promote the French language in madrasas at the expense of the Arabic language. However, such a narrow-minded attitude does not serve the economic or political interests of Mali in this age of globalization, it does not serve the local needs of the Malian population, and it limits the career prospects of Malian students. While the religious, political, and economic realities of Mali impose the teaching of foreign languages, especially Arabic, French, and English, the promotion of Malian national languages connects Malian students to their local cultures and society. Therefore, using schooling to serve the various needs of the Malian population and Malian state, in this age of globalization, involves taking an inclusive approach to the issue of language.

Another implication of this study is that madrasa education and French school education have different influences on students' thinking. The views of madrasa and

French school students may differ on religious matters, as the story of Amina's daughter indicates. I find that because French school does not teach students about the Islamic religion, French school students, especially when they are young, have difficulties comprehending the wisdom behind religious teachings or the importance of compliance with these teachings. However, because French school students are mostly exposed to religious teachings through family upbringing, preaching, and socialization, they may gradually comprehend and embrace these teachings.

Thinking about the material world and its practical problems is different from thinking about religious teachings, as in my following analogy about fruits. When learning to think about the material world and its practical problems, students are taught how to evaluate fruit like mango and orange based on the merits of each fruit and to decide whether mango or orange is the best choice for a given purpose in a given context. Whereas, the teaching of religious beliefs and norms wants students to appreciate mango, to understand the merits of mango, to accept the rationale that no other fruit can substitute for mango, and to finally accept that mango is the best fruit for them when compared to all other fruits. In other words, while the former teaches how to deal with practical problems and manipulate material objects to serve people's aims, the latter teaches the wisdom that makes one appreciate and accept to live a given way of life.

To relate this to my personal experience in the madrasa, madrasa students are, first, taught religious teachings without explaining the rationale for those teachings. Then, through stories contained in the different subjects, students slowly see the wisdom behind the teachings, the benefit of following the teachings, and the consequences of defying the

teachings. Then, in advanced grades, the rationale of the teachings and their contextual application is explained to students.

An implication of my current discussion for families and Islamic education teachers is that there should be a creatively designed Islamic education curriculum for French school students. Students should learn Islamic teachings in tandem with the wisdom behind the teachings through stories and real-life experiences. Students should also learn the difference between thinking about the material world and its practical problems and thinking about the precepts of Islam.

Malian educators, parents, and decision-makers must understand that the Malian people might not have a control over the forces that drive global economic and political order. Forces like scientific and technological innovations, military funding, and financial capitalism may all be beyond the control of the Malian people. The leaders and people of Mali, however, can choose how to adapt to these forces through a well-planned national educational system, well-managed school infrastructures, pedagogical innovation, creatively-designed curricula, applied research, intellectual production, information technology, and wise educational policies that account for the particularities and needs of Malian society in relation to the global order.

Finally, this study implies that some of the difficulties associated with curriculum design are possibly a result of bureaucratization, uniformization, diversification of stakeholders, or utilization of education mainly as a means to preserve an existing order or create a new order. This is to say that curriculum design problems may be considerably reduced when schooling is less bureaucratized, less standardized, fewer stakeholders are involved in decision-making, and education is seen less as a means to fulfil the vision of

the decision-maker but more as a means to prepare the student who has various educational needs to live in a world different from the world the decision-maker lived in or the world the decision-maker envisions.

For example, before the madrasa became part of the Malian national education system, the madrasa curriculum design – though not perfect – was much less contentious. This was so because the madrasa was less bureaucratized and standardized, and fewer stakeholders participated in designing madrasa curriculum. From a different respect, although my participants appreciated that their parents sent them to the madrasa, when they became intellectually mature, they did not have the same vision about education as their parents. Also, although the participants appreciated that the government accepted madrasa students in the francophone university system, they did not appreciate that the government neglected Islamic subjects and Arabic in madrasas.

This tells curriculum designers and decision-makers that the needs of students should be the core around which the curriculum is designed. The needs of students should be looked at in a balanced way, in the sense that students are members of a socio-cultural, linguistic, and religious group, students are citizens of a country with certain economic, political, and developmental features, students live in an interconnected global order, and students will live in a world that may not be the same as the world in which the curriculum designer lived or envisioned. Therefore, the task madrasa curriculum designers in Mali must perform is to consider these needs of madrasa students and find an optimal way to satisfy these needs through madrasa curriculum.

Recommendations for Researchers

Given this is a multi-case study and its findings are bound to the participants and contexts in which they studied, lived, and worked, and given the findings of this study uncovered some problems of madrasa education, I recommend that the following be considered:

- 1) Conduct a case study supplemented by surveys to explore the research questions of this dissertation with a larger sample of former madrasa students from various educational, social, economic, geographical, and professional backgrounds across Mali. The participants of that study should include former madrasa students who stopped their education before grade nine, students who stopped their education after grade nine, students who stopped their education after high school, students who are university graduates but whose educational and professional experiences differ from that of my participants, and students who studied in the madrasa only after the implementation of the 2003 curriculum. That study may provide broader insights into the outcomes of madrasa education and views of former madrasa students. The findings of that study would uncover other possibilities for improving madrasa schooling and its curriculum.
- 2) Study how current madrasa students' aspirations and views about schooling and career reflect on their learning behaviors. This would enable madrasas to educate students about schooling, higher education, work, society, and life.
- 3) Investigate the opinions of parents from different educational, professional, geographical, and socioeconomic backgrounds to understand what prevents

parents from supervising their children's schooling or sending their children to the madrasa. This may enable madrasas to understand how to meet parents' expectations, foster cooperation between parents and madrasas, and inform parents how to help their children succeed in the madrasa.

- 4) Conduct a study to understand why some madrasa owners do not provide good working condition for teachers, how to foster intra-madrasa cooperation, and how to effectively mobilize financial and human resources to sustain the madrasa.

Recommendations for State Officials

As this research findings showed, Malian state officials must understand that beyond serving the educational needs of Malian Muslims, the madrasa also serves Malian national interests because it connects Mali to its history and intellectual heritage, the Arabic language is needed in Malian diplomacy, there are many professions that require fluency in Arabic, and religious leaders as well as people with good understanding of Islam like my participants play an important role to appease social tensions and reinforce national unity by appealing to shared religious values. Also, providing a well balanced religious and worldly education at the madrasa develops students' religious and national consciousness, which is a good way to intellectually equip Malian youths against the political discourses of militant groups that appeal to Islamic sentiment.

However, the government's attempt to weaken Islamic education and Arabic language in madrasas will give Muslims, who hold onto madrasa schooling, sufficient reasons to resist state authority and find solutions outside state regulations. In contrast, helping madrasas to adequately balance Islamic subjects and Arabic with modern

subjects and French may encourage madrasas to fruitfully cooperate with the state and reinforce the authority of the state. Therefore, I recommend the followings:

- 1) State officials should formulate policies related to the madrasa based on the particularities of the madrasa school system and considering madrasas' religious mission, so madrasa students should be assessed in all subjects in national exams including Islamic subjects.
- 2) The state should consult experts within the madrasa school system to reform the madrasa curriculum to balance Islamic education subjects and Arabic with modern subjects and French.
- 3) The state should treat madrasa students on an equal footing with French school students when it comes to studying at public universities, so to avoid discrimination against madrasa students, they should be educated about university policies and how to seek justice when they are discriminated against.
- 4) For equity among the citizen of Mali, Malians who are not fluent in French should be permitted to take their public service admission test in the language in which they studied, including Arabic.

Recommendations for Heads of Madrasas

Based on the findings of this research and given that heads of madrasas are the key players in madrasa schooling because they manage madrasas and they deal with teachers, parents, and state officials, I recommend that heads of madrasas:

- 1) Foster cooperation between madrasas and cooperation between madrasas and Islamic organizations, former madrasa students, and Muslim religious leaders, so the Muslim community collectively finds solutions to madrasas' problems.

- 2) Create a teaching and learning resource center for research on teaching and learning, writing teaching manuals and textbooks, and organizing training sessions for teachers and principals.
- 3) Organize a consciousness-raising campaign to educate state officials about the merits of madrasa schooling in Mali and the needs of madrasas.
- 4) Organize a consciousness-raising campaign to inform parents about the problems of madrasas, how to support madrasas, and how to help their children succeed in the madrasa.
- 5) Advise madrasa students about the importance of Islamic subjects and the importance of languages especially our national languages, Arabic, English, and French. Also, educate students on how to succeed in their post-madrasa education, career, and life.
- 6) Provide better working conditions for madrasa teachers and treat teachers of all subjects on an equal footing.
- 7) Require students to get the passing mark in all subjects to move to the next grade. This would motivate students to study all subjects seriously including Islamic subjects and Arabic.

Recommendations for Curriculum Designers

Madrasa curriculum designers must keep in mind that though Arabic is one of Mali's national languages because some Malians are Arabs, the bulk majority of the Malian population rarely use Arabic outside Islamic schools, religious services, and partially in the media. In the same way, although French is the official language of Mali, French is hardly used outside state bureaucracy, schools, and partially the media. While

the religious side of madrasa schooling requires mastery of Arabic and fluency in national languages, the worldly side of madrasa schooling requires mastery of French. Because Arabic is not used at public universities, the chance for madrasa students to master Arabic is mainly within the madrasa. Therefore, I recommend, based on the findings of this research, that:

- 1) The language of instruction in madrasas be the Arabic language used in tandem with Malian national languages.
- 2) Curriculum designers should work with language specialists to design a special French, as a second language, program for madrasa students to enable them to read, write, and fluently speak French before they enter the university.
- 3) The number of subjects in the curriculum should be limited to the minimum possible by eliminating any subject that does not serve an immediate schooling need, or future academic, religious, or career needs.
- 4) Islamic subjects and Arabic should be balanced with modern subjects and French, so madrasa students can specialize in all fields of knowledge.

Recommendations for Madrasa Teachers

Based on the findings of this research, I recommend that madrasa teachers:

- 1) Find teaching methods that encourage students to demonstrate mastery of all competences and subjects in the classroom. This may help students learn Islamic subjects and Arabic even if these subjects are not included in national exams.
- 2) Motivate students to excel in all subjects, to be self-confident, and to see the importance of madrasa education for students' future educational and professional

life, for the individual Muslim, for preserving an Islamic way of life in Malian society, for the history of Mali, and for the national interests of Mali.

Final Reflections

Undertaking this study brought precision and richness to my thinking about Islamic schooling and the importance of research, it allowed me to reassess my assumptions regarding Islamic schools and the effects of schooling on students, and it enabled me to understand that lived experiences and expert opinions could not be substituted by assiduous research. While conducting this study, I assumed that to study Islamic education, one must account for Muslims' beliefs, and the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors because religious schooling is grounded in the religious worldview held by the believers. To realize that worldview, many factors are involved including religious ideals, needs, desires, fears, approaches to interpretation, and the experiences of the believers as well as the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts surrounding the believers.

Now I see that while it is important to understand the religious ideals, personal, and contextual factors in studying Islamic education, it is also important to understand how the organizational structure of the school influences school actors and social actors' perceptions, attitudes, and actions, and their ability to gear the school toward realizing the religious ideals. Thus, using schools to realize Islamic ideals in society requires the religious commitment of believers, but the success of religious schooling also depends on believers' ability to innovate organizational structures in line with the religious ideals and suited for the broader context in which schooling takes place.

Because people's perception and the context in which they live change constantly, innovating organizational structures and teaching methods for Islamic schools is a practical problem best dealt with through applied research rather than experts' opinion, people's lived experiences, or normative views. While expertise, lived experience, and norms offer useful insights into an educational problem, through applied research, the researcher is able to put together all these insights and have a deeper understanding of the educational problem and thus explore a broader range of solutions. Also, applied research sheds light on the evolution of educational problems over time and finds solutions that can be adapted to new contexts and situations.

Before conducting this study, I assumed that two major goals or practical consequences of schooling are to shape students socially, religiously, culturally, intellectually, emotionally, or any dimension of the human person judge as important in the socio-cultural context in which schooling takes place. I also assumed that another goal or practical consequence of schooling is to educate students with the range of skills that fall within the mission of the school.

Now, after completing this study, I see that the practical consequence of schooling on students is not limited to the effects of the formal education provided at school, but also extends to how students use the knowledge acquired at school to aspire to higher education, career, social status, and privileges, to promote the causes they believe in, and to be critical of the society and the school itself. In these regards, students' abilities to use the knowledge acquired at school is more a product of their ingenuity and the range of experiences they are exposed to at school and in society rather than a necessary consequence of the systematic instruction provided at school.

As a result, to secure the future of madrasa education for future generations in Mali, Muslims who care about this form of schooling must not limit themselves to the actions in their immediate capacity, and they must not be intimidated by the seeming restrictions of the political, economic, and social context. Instead, they must tirelessly strive to increase their capacity to deal with the practical problems of schooling and to surmount contextual restrictions through innovation and applied research.

They must continuously yearn to innovate teaching techniques and organizational structures, to mobilize human and financial resources, and to educate Muslims' about the merits of madrasa education and its importance in preserving Islam in Mali. Through resilience and sincerity, they will succeed over time to bring about an Islamic school system that prepares students to live according to the universal teachings of the Islamic religion while aspiring for careers, status, and privileges in the constantly changing socio-cultural, political, and economic context of the cotemporary world.

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Appendices

Appendix A: First Interview Guiding Questions

1. Tell me how did your story with the madrasa begin?
2. Do you think it was a good idea that your parents sent you to a madrasa as opposed to other schooling options? Why or why not?
3. If you have children, what schooling options have you chosen for them, and how was that decision informed by your madrasa experience?
4. Can you describe the teaching strategies, learning activities, extracurricular activities, and the learning environment of the madrasa you attended? Do you think these strategies and activities helped you receive a good education?
5. Reflecting on your post-madrasa experience, can you describe with examples how adequately the curriculum of the madrasa you attended has covered Islamic and secular subjects?
6. Can you describe with examples how the madrasa education has informed your knowledge and practice of Islam, how you related to your friends and family, and how you engage in the larger Malian society?
7. Reflecting on how your madrasa education influenced your engagement in Malian society, higher education and career, what parts of that education would you change (and why) and what parts would you maintain (and why)?
8. Reflecting back on your social involvement, education and career trajectory what are the important events that shaped your view of madrasa education and its role in Malian society, its problems and their possible solutions, and the best way to make it a sustainable school project for the next generation?

Appendix B: Second Interview Guiding Questions (Including Participant-Specific Questions)

1. When did you attend the madrasa? Where is that madrasa located?
2. Do you remember an important political event (such as a coup d'état) that took place during your madrasa education years in Mali? What was the impact of that event on your madrasa?
3. Did you ever find yourself in a situation that made you thankful for your parents to have sent you to the madrasa? What event caused you to feel that way?
4. Did you ever find yourself in a situation that made regret why your parents sent you to the madrasa? What event caused you to feel that way?
5. What was your dream when you were in the madrasa? What did you want to become? What event caused you to have that dream? Do you think that your madrasa education helped you achieve that dream?
6. Can you tell me about your post-madrasa education? How did you continue your education? What did you specialize in and why that specialization? Did the madrasa curriculum help you in that regard?
7. Can you tell me about your career? Did you get the job you wanted or not? How would you relate that to your madrasa education?
8. What advice will you give current madrasa students, so they do not experience the same difficulties that you experienced in your education and career?
9. Given the government curriculum implemented in madrasas today does not cover Islamic education and Arabic language subjects adequately, if you were to give an

advice to current madrasa students so they fulfill their dreams in specializing in the area of knowledge they like (Islamic or modern), what would you say?

10. Why do you think the government insists on imposing a curriculum on madrasas that is weakening the Islamic education and the Arabic language?
11. Given that Mali is a secular nation state that may not be favorable to religious schooling, what can you tell government officials, so they can see the importance of the madrasa in Malian society?
12. What kind of support the government should provide so the madrasa can teach both modern and Islamic subjects effectively?
13. What advice will you give teachers and madrasa owners to improve madrasa education and make sure the curriculum covers both Islamic and modern subjects despite the curriculum imposed by the government?
14. What should be the role of parents in supporting the madrasa, so it can effectively teach both Islamic education and modern subjects?

Appendix C: Follow up Interview Guiding Questions (Including Participant-Specific Questions)

1. In your answers to previous interview questions, you repeatedly talked about the will of God, God made this or that possible for you, or with the will of God madrasas problems will be resolved if people sincerely strive, so I would like to ask you the following questions about what you meant by the will of God:
 - a. Were you saying that Allah made you succeed, and things will happen with the will of God because this is how Muslims talk or because you truly believe that this is how success comes about?
 - b. If madrasas problems will be resolved with the will of God, why people must strive to resolve them?
 - c. If madrasas problems will be resolved with the will of God, what will be the role of madrasa graduates like yourself?
 - d. How your responsibility of acting to resolve madrasas problems is different from the will of God that you said brings success?
 - e. Do you think the belief in the will of God motivates you to act to resolve madrasas problems in your capacity, or it demotivates you from acting leaving the matter to the will of God?
2. You stated in the previous interviews that some of your siblings (or children) attended ekōli, do you think your views about life, religion, family matters and schooling are different from the views of your siblings (or children) who attended ekōli? Do you think such differences of views in your family create tension in your family when you are collectively deciding family matter, or talking about

religion or schooling? Can you give some examples to clarify your answers? (note: this question only applies to three participants)

3. I concluded from your answers to previous interview questions that you wanted a madrasa curriculum that perfectly balanced between Islamic education and Arabic, on the one hand, and modern subjects and French, on the other hand, so by the time madrasa students finish high school whether or not they will specialize in religious fields in university, they have sufficient knowledge of Arabic and Islam to be able to guide others in their families, workplaces and neighborhood like you were able to. Is this what you meant? Or did you mean to say something else?
4. When I was attending the madrasa, I remember some students did not use to pay tuition. Are you aware if there are students who attend the madrasa today without paying tuition? What are the backgrounds of those students? Why madrasa owners exempt them from paying tuition?

Appendix D: Participant Consent Form

Department of Curriculum and Instruction Participant Consent Form
 University of Victoria
 MacLaurin Building A541

Integrating Secular with Islamic Education in Mali's Madrasas Curriculum: Insights from Eight Former Students' Life Stories

You are invited to participate in a study entitled "Integrating Secular with Islamic Education in Mali's Madrasas Curriculum: Insights from Eight Former Students' Life Stories" that is being conducted by Abdrahamane Traore.

Abdrahamane Traore is a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria, in Canada, and you may contact him if you have further questions.

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). It is being conducted under the supervision of Kathy Sanford. You may contact my supervisor.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of my research is to investigate, based on your lived experience and from your perspectives, the impacts (positive or negative) of the curriculum and instructional methods of the madrasa on the formation of students' Islamic identity, on students' participation the larger Malian society, on students' pursuit of higher education in Islamic or career-oriented fields, and on students' career prospects under the socioeconomic and political conditions of Mali. You will express your views on making the madrasa a sustainable school project for future generations. I hope that in the process of discovering your lived experience to present the madrasa curriculum and instructional strategies, its learning environment, its importance for Muslims, and the educational role it plays in Mali.

My research seeks to answer the following questions: 1) based on the lived experiences and perspectives of former madrasa students, what are the impacts (positive or negative) of the madrasa education, and its curriculum and instructional strategies on the development of students' Islamic identity, on their engagement in the larger Malian society, on their preparedness for higher education in Islamic or career-oriented fields, and on their preparedness for careers within the socioeconomic and political contexts of Mali? 2) In the views of former students, what supports are needed for sustaining the madrasa, so it can continue to play its role in Mali for future generations? 3) What can one learn from the lived experiences and views of former students about the curriculum and instructional strategies of Malian madrasas, and how effectively the madrasa integrates secular with Islamic education?

Importance of this Research

Research of this type is important because it will provide valuable insights into the utility and drawbacks of Malian madrasa curriculum when judged based on former students' life, educational and career experiences. It will be of paramount importance to madrasa curriculum reform initiatives in Mali, and it will help former students make their voices

heard in madrasa curriculum reform debate, share their stories, and learn from their academic and career paths in retrospect.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an adult with the following characteristics: man or woman, older than 18 years of age, a former madrasa student, and a working or retired professional, or self-employed.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include: 1) an initial 1.5 hour audio recorded interview, and a review of your available madrasa diplomas, transcripts, textbooks and notebooks, 2) a 1 hour meeting to amend and approve the transcript of the initial interview, 3) a 1.5 hour follow up audio recorded interview, 4) and a 1 hour meeting to amend and approve the transcript of the follow up interview. You will decide the time and place of the all the meetings.

Be advised that the researcher will take additional written notes during the interviews and meetings.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including 7.5 hours of anticipated total time of participation in all meetings.

Risks

There are no known or anticipated serious risks to you by participating in this research. However, as former madrasa students in Mali who attended the same madrasa know each other's story fairly well, some of your former schoolmates may be able to identify you from your story.

To prevent that some of your former schoolmates may identify you from your story, your identity, age, exact residence, job title and workplace, and the name of the madrasa you attended will all be concealed.

Benefits

The potential benefits of your participation in this research includes making your voice heard in madrasa curriculum reform debates in Mali, sharing your story with others, and learning about yourself by rediscovering your past; the research will also benefit society because it makes the valuable experiences of former madrasa students available to people interested in madrasa curriculum reform in Mali; and it benefits the state of knowledge because it provides insights from the lived experiences of former students into the impacts of madrasa education in building the Islamic identity and shaping the academic and career paths of madrasa students in Mali.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be destroyed, and it will not be used by the researcher.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants

The researcher may have a relationship with you as acquaintance or former schoolmate. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate, if you do not feel comfortable telling the researcher of your desire to withdraw, you can inform him in writing or through a third party, or you can simply fail to appear in any of the meetings without notifying the researcher. Your withdrawal from the research will not affect your relationship with the research.

On-going Consent

To obtain your ongoing consent to participate in this research, the present form is the only document you will sign. By signing the present document, you consent to ongoing participation in all meetings. However, the researcher will verbally reiterate on each meeting the content of this consent form and remind you of your right to withdraw.

Anonymity

To protect your anonymity, you will be assigned a pseudonym, so there is no way to link your real identity to the data. Because former madrasa students in Mali who attended the same madrasa know each other's story fairly well, to prevent that your former schoolmates identify you, your identity, job title, workplace, exact residence, and the name of the madrasa you attended will all be concealed.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by keeping the audio recordings in a locked cabinet, data will be transcribed on the researcher's password protected laptop, and printed transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet. Collected data will only be accessible by the researcher. While travelling to Canada, all collected data and the laptop will be kept inside a locked suitcase that will be with the researcher at all times. After the completion of the research, all the data will be destroyed by deleting electronic files and shredding the papers.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: dissertation, presentations at scholarly meetings, a published article, chapter or book, the internet, and you will receive a copy of the final dissertation.

Disposal of Data

Data from this study will be disposed of by deleting all digital audio recordings and computer files, and by shredding all papers.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the researcher and his supervisor. See their contact information on top of the present document.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix E: Consent Form in Arabic

قسم المناهج وطرق التدريس
جامعة فيكتوريا (في كندا)
عمارة ماكلورن A541

استمارة موافقة المشارك

دعوة للمشاركة في بحث بعنوان "دمج التربية الإسلامية مع المدنية في مناهج المدارس الإسلامية في مالي: نظرات في قصة حياة ثمانية طلاب سابقين"

أنت مدعو للمشاركة في بحث بعنوان "دمج التربية الإسلامية مع المدنية في مناهج المدارس الإسلامية في مالي: نظرات في قصة حياة ثمانية طلاب سابقين" الذي سيقوم به عبد الرحمن تراوري.

عبد الرحمن تراوري طالب في الدراسات العليا في قسم المناهج وطرق التدريس في جامعة فيكتوريا في كندا، ويمكنك التواصل معه.

بصفتي طالب في الدراسات العليا يلزمني القيام ببحث كجزء من متطلبات الحصول على شهادة الدكتوراه. البحث يتم تحت إشراف كاثيري سانفورد. يمكنك الاتصال بمشرفتي.

غاية البحث وأهدافه

غاية بحثي هي دراسة آثار (إيجابية أو سلبية) مناهج وطرق تدريس المدارس الإسلامية على تكوين الهوية الإسلامية للطلاب وذلك بناء على الخبرة المعيشة وآراء الطلاب، وآثارها على تفاعل الطلاب مع المجتمع المالي الأوسع وعلى تمكين الطلاب من مواصلة دراستهم الجامعية في التخصصات الإسلامية والمهنية، وآثارها على فرص الطلاب المهنية في ظل الظروف الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية في مالي. كمشارك ستعبر عن آرائك حول سبل جعل المدارس الإسلامية مشروع تربوي مستدام للأجيال القادمة. أرجو من خلال استكشاف خبرتك المعيشة أن أقدم مناهج وطرق تدريس المدارس الإسلامية وبيئتها التعليمية وأهميتها للمسلمين ودورها التربوي في مالي.

بحثي يحاول الإجابة عن الأسئلة التالية: (1) بناء على الخبرات المعيشة وآراء الطلاب السابقين ما هي آثار (سلبية أو إيجابية) تربية المدارس الإسلامية ومناهجها وطرق تدريسها على تكوين الهوية الإسلامية للطلاب وعلى تفاعل الطلاب مع المجتمع المالي الأوسع وعلى أعدادهم للدراسة الجامعية في التخصصات الإسلامية والمهنية، وما هي آثارها على أعداد الطلاب للمهن المختلفة في ظل الظروف الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والسياسية في مالي؟ (2) في رأي الطلاب السابقين ما هي الدعم اللازم للحفاظ على المدارس الإسلامية لكي تستمر في أداء دورها التربوي للأجيال القادمة في مالي؟ (3) ما هي الدروس المستفادة من الخبرات المعيشة وآراء الطلاب السابقين عن المناهج وطرق التدريس في المدارس الإسلامية المالية، وما مدى قدرة المدارس الإسلامية على تدريس مواد التربية الإسلامية مع مواد التربية المدنية (كل مادة عدا المواد الإسلامية والعربية) بشكل فعال؟

أهمية هذا البحث

مثل هذه الأبحاث مهمة لأنها تلقي الضوء على إيجابيات وسلبيات مناهج المدارس الإسلامية المالية لو حكمنا عليها من منظور الخبرات المدرسية والجامعية والمهنية للطلاب السابقين. هذا البحث سيكون له أهمية قصوى للمهتمين بتطوير مناهج المدارس الإسلامية في مالي، وسيساعد على مشاركة الطلاب السابقين في الحوار حول تطوير مناهج المدارس الإسلامية، وسيتمكن الطلاب السابقين من إخبار الآخرين بقصصهم وسيتمكنهم من تدبر وإعادة استكشاف سيرتهم الدراسية والمهنية.

اختيار المشاركين

أود مشاركتك في هذا البحث لأنك بالغ بالمواصفات التالية: رجل أو امرأة، أكبر من 18 سنة، طالب سابق بمدرسة إسلامية، وحالياً تعمل أو متقاعد أو تعمل لحسابك الخاص.

دورك كمشارك

لو وافقت على المشاركة بمحض إرادتك في هذا البحث، مشاركتك سيشمل الآتي: (1) ساعة ونصف من الحوار المسجل، ومراجعة شهادتك وكشف درجاتك وكتبك وكراريسك المدرسية المتاحة؛ (2) ساعة مقابلة لمراجعة والموافقة على ما تم كتابته من الحوار الأول المسجل؛ (3) ساعة ونصف من الحوار المسجل للتعقيب على بعض نقاط الحوار الأول؛ (4) ساعة مقابلة لمراجعة والموافقة على ما تم كتابته من الحوار الثاني. ستقوم بتحديد مكان وزمان كل اللقاءات.

اعلم أن الباحث سيكتب المزيد من الملاحظات خلال الحوارات واللقاءات.

المضايقات التي قد تترتب على المشاركة

المشاركة في هذا البحث ربما سيسبب لك بعض المضايقات حيث مجموع وقت المشاركة في جميع اللقاءات سيأخذ من وقتك سبع ساعات ونصف.

المخاطر

لا توجد أية مخاطر معروفة أو متوقعة يمكن أن تتعرض لها بمشاركتك في هذا البحث. ولكن ربما سيتعرف عليك بعض زملائك القدامى من خلال قصتك وذلك لأن طلاب المدارس الإسلامية السابقين الذين تعلموا في نفس المدرسة يعرفون بعضهم البعض بشكل جيد. ولتفادي أن يتعرف عليك بعض زملائك القدامى من خلال قصتك سيتم إخفاء كل المعلومات التالية من البحث: هويتك واسمك وعمرك ومكان إقامتك ورتبتك في العمل واسم مكان عملك واسم المدرسة التي تعلمت فيها.

الفوائد

فوائد مشاركتك في هذا البحث يتضمن إبداء رأيك في الحوار حول تطوير مناهج المدارس الإسلامية، إخبار الآخرين بقصة دراستك في المدرسة، وإعادة استكشاف

وتدبر سيرتك؛ هذا البحث سيفيد المجتمع لأنه سيجعل الخبرات الثمينة للطلاب السابقين متاحة للناس المهتمين بتطوير مناهج المدارس الإسلامية في مالي؛ وسيساهم هذا البحث في إثراء العلوم التربوية لأنه بناء على الخبرات المعاشية للطلاب السابقين سيقدم فهما أعمق لآثار التعليم المدرسي في تكوين الهوية الإسلامية وفي تحديد مسار التعليم الجامعي والسيرة المهنية لطلاب المدارس الإسلامية في مالي.

الحرية في المشاركة

مشاركتك في هذا البحث يجب أن تكون بكامل إرادتك. لو قررت المشاركة، يمكنك الانسحاب من البحث متى شئت دون أية تبعات أو تفسيرات. لو انسحبت من البحث سيتم طمس البيانات والمعلومات التي قدمتها ولن تستخدم من قبل الباحث.

علاقة الباحث بالمشاركين

ربما يكون الباحث من معارفك أو من زملائك القدامى. لكيلا تؤثر هذه العلاقة في قرارك للمشاركة لو شعرت بالحرج في اخبار الباحث بعدم رغبتك في المشاركة أو الانسحاب من البحث في أي وقت يمكنك اخبار الباحث عن شخص آخر أو ببساطة يمكنك التوقف عن حضور اللقاءات دون ذكر سبب. انسحابك من البحث لن يؤثر في علاقتك بالباحث.

استمرارية الموافقة على المشاركة

للحصول على موافقتك في الاستمرار في البحث إلى نهايته ستوقع على هذه الوثيقة فقط. فبتوقيعك هذه الوثيقة توافق على المشاركة في كل اللقاءات. ولكن الباحث سيذكرك في كل لقاء بمحتوى هذه الوثيقة وبحقك في الانسحاب.

إخفاء الهوية

لإخفاء هويتك ستسمى باسم مستعار بحيث لا يمكن الربط بين معلومات البحث وهويتك. ولأن طلاب المدارس الإسلامية السابقين الذين تعلموا في نفس المدرسة يعرفون بعضهم البعض بشكل جيد فلتقادي أن يتعرف عليك بعض زملائك القدامى من خلال قصتك سيتم إخفاء كل المعلومات التالية من البحث: هويتك واسمك وعمرك ومكان إقامتك ورتبتك في العمل واسم مكان عملك واسم المدرسة التي تعلمت فيها.

السرية

سيتم كتمان أسرارك وحماية سرية المعلومات عن طريق الإبقاء على التسجيلات الصوتية في دولااب مقفول وسيتم كتابة الحوارات المسجلة على كمبيوتر الباحث المحمي بكلمة سر وسيتم حفظ المعلومات المطبوعة في دولااب مقفول. سيكون بإمكان الباحث فقط الوصول إلى المعلومات التي سيتم جمعها. عند سفر الباحث إلى كندا كل المعلومات المجمعة وكمبيوتر الباحث سيكون في داخل حقيبة مقفولة وسيحملها الباحث معه طول

الوقت. بعد استكمال البحث سيتم طمس كل المعلومات التي جمعت بحذف كل التسجيلات الصوتية وتمزيق كل الأوراق.

نشر البحث

من المتوقع أن يتم تقاسم نتيجة هذا البحث مع الآخرين بالطرق التالية: رسالة علمية أو العرض في اللقاءات العلمية أو نشر مقالات أو فصول أو كتب أو النشر على الانترنت، وستحصل على نسخة من الرسالة العلمية النهائية.

التخلص من البيانات والمعلومات

البيانات والمعلومات المجمعة خلال هذا البحث سيتم التخلص منها عن طريق حذف كل التسجيلات الصوتية وتمزيق كل الأوراق.

جهات التواصل

الأشخاص الذين يمكن الاتصال بهم حول هذا البحث يشمل الباحث ومشرفته. معلومات التواصل معهم مكتوبة في بداية هذه الوثيقة.

بالإضافة إلى ذلك يمكنك التأكد من أن هذا البحث تم الموافقة عليه لتوافر أخلاقيات البحث العلمي فيه ويمكنك القيام بأي استفسار عن طريق الاتصال بمكتب أخلاقيات البحوث المتعلقة بالإنسان بجامعة فيكتوريا (250-472-4545 أو ethics@uvic.ca).

توقيعك في أسفل الوثيقة يدل على أنك تفهم الشروط المذكورة أعلاه للمشاركة في هذا البحث وأنت أوتيت الفرصة لإجابة على كل أسئلتك من قبل الباحث وأنت وافقت على المشاركة في هذا البحث بكامل إرادتك.

التاريخ

التوقيع

اسم المشارك

ستحصل على نسخة من هذه الاستمارة وسيأخذ الباحث نسخة.

Appendix F: Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval



University
of Victoria

Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board
Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada
T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	Kathy Sanford (Supervisor)	ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER	18-1045
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT	Abdrahamane Traore PhD student	Board member review - delegated	
UVIC DEPARTMENT	Curriculum & Instruction	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE	2018 Oct 15
		APPROVED ON	2018 Oct 15
		APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE	2019 Oct 14

PROJECT TITLE Integrating Secular with Islamic Education in Mali's Madrasas Curriculum: Insights from Eight Former Students' Life Stories

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS None

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING None

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL
 Abdraman - Interview Guiding Questions (October 14, 2018 Version 2).docx - October 14, 2018
 Abdraman - Data Collection Sheet.docx - October 14, 2018
 Abdraman - Recruitment Script (October 14, 2018 Version 2).doc - October 14, 2018
 Abdraman - Participant Consent Form (October 14, 2018 Version 2).doc - October 14, 2018

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.


Modifications
 To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified protocol.

Renewals
 Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures
 When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion" form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.



 Dr. Rachael Scarth
 Associate VP Research Operations

Certificate Issued On: 2018 Oct 15

Appendix G: Excerpts from Old (pre-2003) Curriculum

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1

معهد أنبي بن صالح الإسلامي

باجالان 2/بماليكو

المنهج الدراسي للمرحلة الابتدائية

م	المادة الدراسية	أولي	ثانوية	ثالثية	رابعة	خامسة	سادسة
1.	القرآن الكريم	3	3	3	3	3	3
2.	الحديث الشريف	-	-	2	2	2	2
3.	التوحيد	1	2	2	2	2	2
4.	الفقه	2	2	2	2	2	2
5.	السيرة	-	-	3	2	2	1
6.	الفتاوى والطاعة	5	5	2	2	2	2
7.	الإنشاء	-	-	-	3	3	2
8.	النحو والصرف	-	-	-	2	1	1
9.	الإصلاء وقواعده	5	5	1	1	1	1
10.	الحفظوات	3	3	3	1	1	1
11.	الخط العربي	-	-	2	3	3	3
12.	اللغة الفرنسية	2	2	3	3	3	1
13.	التاريخ القومي	-	-	-	1	1	1
14.	الجغرافيا	-	-	-	1	1	1
15.	الرسم	-	-	1	-	-	-
16.	السيرياء	-	-	-	-	-	1
17.	العلوم	-	-	-	1	1	2
18.	الرياضيات	2	2	3	3	3	3
19.	المجموع	23	24	29	30	30	30



 INSTITUT ISLAMIQUE AMAS BEN MALIK
 B.P. 1067 T.E. 222764 BAMDALAN
 11 BAMAKO MALI

معهد أنس بن مالك الإسلامي

بجبالن الثاني - بـمـاكـو

جمهورية مالي

المنهج الدراسي للمرحلة الإعدادية



المنهج الدراسي للمرحلة الإعدادية

معهد أنس بن مالك الإسلامي

م	المادة الدراسية	الصف الأول	الصف الثاني	الصف الثالث
١	القرآن الكريم	٢	٢	٢
٢	التجويد	٢	٢	١
٣	التفسير	٢	٢	٢
٤	الحديث	٢	٢	٢
٥	التوحيد	٢	٢	٢
٦	الفقه	٢	٢	٢
٧	السيرة	١	١	-
٨	النحو والصرف	٣	٣	٣
٩	الأدب والنصوص	١	١	١
١٠	المطالعة	١	١	١
١١	التعبير	٢	٢	١
١٢	الإملاء	١	١	١
١٣	الفرنسية	٣	٣	٣
١٤	التاريخ القومي	-	-	١
١٥	الجغرافية	١	١	٢
١٦	العلوم والأحياء	١	١	٢
١٧	الكيمياء	١	١	١
١٨	الرياضيات	٢	٢	٢
١٩	الفيزياء	١	١	١
		٣٠	٣٠	٣٠

معهد أنس بن مالك الإسلامي

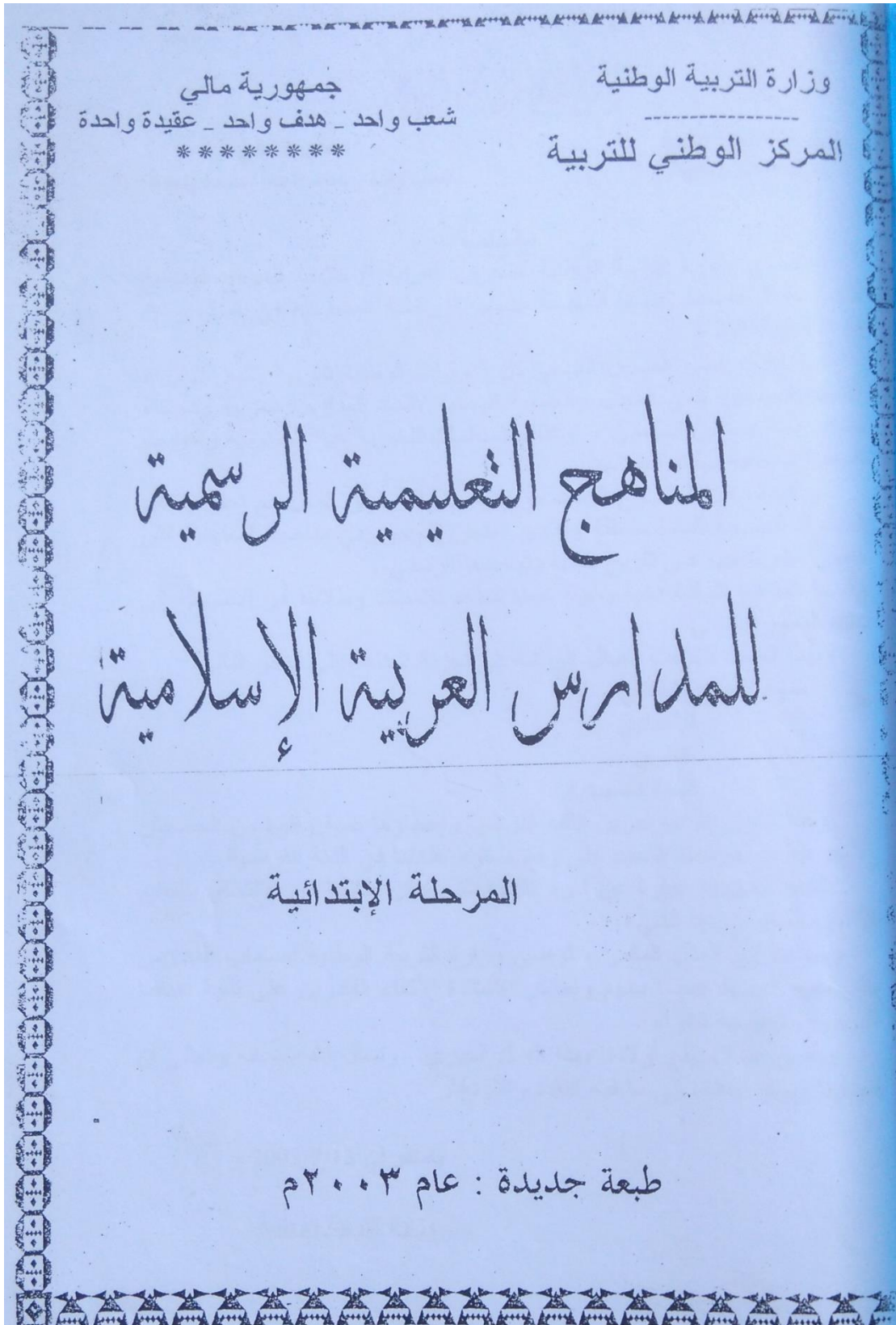
بجانب الثاني - بجاكو

جمهورية مالي

المنهج الدراسي للمرحلة الثانوية

م	المواد الدراسية	الصف الأول	الصف الثاني	الصف الثالث
١	تقرآن الكريم	٢	٢	٢
٢	تلاوة	١	١	١
٣	تفسير	٢	٢	٢
٤	صور التفسير	١	١	١
٥	حديث	٢	٢	٢
٦	مصطلح الحديث	١	١	١
٧	توحيد	٢	٢	٢
٨	فقه	٢	٢	٢
٩	صور الفقه	١	١	١
١٠	تفريغ	٢	٢	٢
١١	تاريخ والتاريخ	٢	٢	٢
١٢	أبجد والفرق	١	١	١
١٣	أبجد والصرف	٢	٢	٢
١٤	تلاوة	٢	٢	٢
١٥	أبجد والنصوص	١	١	١
١٦	تفريغ	٢	٢	٢
١٧	إحصائية	١	١	١
١٨	تجديفيا	١	١	١
١٩	تعبير	١	١	١
٢٠	تربويات	١	١	١
	عموم	٣٠	٣٠	٣٠

Appendix H: Excerpts from the Government Curriculum of 2003



وزارة التربية الوطنية
الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية

جمهورية مالي
شعب واحد - هدف واحد - عقيدة واحدة

وزارة التربية الوطنية
المركز الوطني للتربية

مقدمة

تهدى وزارة التربية الوطنية للمدارس العربية الإسلامية المناهج التعليمية الحديثة المعتمدة اعتمادا فنيا عقب الورشة المنعقدة في باماكو من 2003/6/12 م .

وشارك في العمل الفني كل الإدارات الوطنية للتربية وكبار الخبراء الاختصاصيين في المجال والجمعية الوطنية لاتحاد المدارس العربية وشركاء جمهورية مالي الفنيون ، وكذلك المنظمات الخيرية غير الحكومية والنقابات المحلية وجمعية أولياء الطلاب .

و الهدف من المشروع الجديد هو تلبية حاجيات سوق العمل مع احترام تعليم الموارد الدينية كمادة مستقلة وتفادي النقص الموجود في مناهجنا التعليمية التي مضى عشر سنين على تاريخ بنائها وتوحيدها الرسمي .
وأما المناهج الحالية فإنها وسيلة جيدة تساعد تلامذتنا وطلابنا في الانتساب إلى سلك التعليم النظامي

وبهذا الصدد تطرقت أعمال الورشة إلى تجزئة المناهج إلى النحو التالي:-

- منهج التعليم الابتدائي .
- " " الإعدادي .
- " " الثانوي .
- " " السنة التمهيدية .

وهذا الأخير تم فيه تعزيز اللغة الفرنسية وإعطائها كمية وافرة من الحصص الأسبوعية مع حرصنا الشديد على رفع مستوى طلابنا في اللغة الفرنسية .
السنة التمهيدية عبارة عن فترة انتقالية التي تمكن طلابنا من الالتحاق بالتعليم الثانوي الحكومي بعد الشيء .

وسعيا إلى العمل المثمر ، توصي وزارة التربية الوطنية أصحاب المدارس بالتعاون الجاد فيما بينهم واختيار الأساتذة الأكفاء القادرين على تلبية أهدافنا التربوية والتعليمية الغراء .
وعسى الله أن ينفع أولادنا بهذا العمل الخيري . ونسأل الله سبحانه وتعالى أن ينصرنا ويسدد خطانا إلى ما فيه التقدم والازدهار .

باماكو في 2003/9/12 م

وزارة التربية الوطنية

تقدير الحصص الأسبوعية للسنتين الأولى والثانية

Le Nombre de Cours Hebdomadaires pour la

1ere et 2eme Annee

N	MATIERE	Nbre Cours	Duree	Nbre Horaire	المسواد	ر
1	St Coran	5	30 mns	2 h 30 mns	القرآن الكريم	١
2	Tawhid (Theologie)	2	30 mns	1h	التوحيد	٢
3	Fiqh (Jurisprudence)	2	30 mns	1 h	الفقه	٣
4	Hadith et Morale	3	30 mns	1 h 30 mns	الحديث والأخلاق	٤
5	Lecture	8	30 mns	4 h	القراءة	٥
6	Ecriture	4	30 mns	2 h	الخط	٦
7	Dictée	3	30 mns	1 h 30 mns	الإملاء	٧
8	Langage	8	30 mns	4h	المحادثة	٨
9	Recitation et Chant	2	15 mns	30 mns	المحفوظات	٩
10	Calcul	11	30 mns	5 h 30 mns	الحساب	١٠
11	Exercices Sensoriels	1	30 mns	30 mns	التمارين الحسية	١١
12	Travaux Manuels	1	30 mns	30 mns	الأشغال اليدوية	١٢
13	Dessin	2	30 mns	1 h	الرسم	١٣
14	Education Physique	2	20 mns	40 mns	التربية البدنية	١٤
15	E. C. M	1	20 mns	20 mns	التربية المدنية	١٥

26H30

تقدير الحصص الأسبوعية للسنة الثالثة الابتدائية

Le nombre de cours hebdomadaires
pour la 3^{eme} Année des Medersas

MATIERES	عدد الحصص Nombre de Cours	مدة الحصّة Durée	تقدير الزمن Nombre d'horaire	المواد المقررة	٢
Le Saint Coran	5	30 M	2 ^H 30 M	القرآن الكريم	.1
Théologie	2	30 M	1 ^H	التوحيد	.2
Jurisprudence	3	30 M	1 ^H 30 M	الفقه	.3
Al Hadith et Moral	2	30 M	1 ^H	الحديث والتهديب	.4
Histoire du Prophète	1	35 M	35 M	السيرة	.5
Lecture	5	30 M	2 ^H 30 M	القراءة	.6
Langage	2	30 M	1 ^H	التعبير	.7
Construction de Phrase	1	40 M	40 ^H	تركيب الجمال	.8
Ecriture	2	30 M	1 ^H	الكتابة والخط	.9
Grammaire	2	40 M	1 ^H 20 M	النحو	.10
Conjugaison	1	40 M	40 M	الصرف	.11
Dictée	3	30 M	1 ^H 30 M	الإملاء	.12
Récitation et Chant	1	30 M	30 M	الأنشيد والمحفوظات	.13
Français	5	60 M	5 ^H	اللغة الفرنسية	.14
Calcul	2	45 M	1 ^H 30	الحساب	.15
Géométrie	1	45 M	45 M	الهندسة	.16
Système Métrique	1	45 M	45 M	النظام المتري	.17
Problème Pratique	1	45 M	45 M	المسائل التطبيقية	.18
Dessin	1	30 M	30 M	الرسم	.19
Travail Manuel	1	30 M	30 M	الأشغال اليدوية	.20
Education physique	2	20 M	40 M	التربية البدنية	.21
Educ. Civique et Morale	1	20 M	20 M	التربية المدنية والأخلاقية	.22
TOTAL			26 H 30 M	المجموع	

تقدير الحصص الأسبوعية للسنة الرابعة الابتدائية

**Le nombre de cours hebdomadaires
pour la 4^{ème} Année des Medersas**

N°	MATIERES	عدد الحصص Nombre de Cours	مدة الحصص Durée	تقدير الزمن Nombre d'heure	المواد المقررة
1.	Le saint Coran	4	30 M	2 H	القرآن الكريم
2.	Théologie	2	30 M	1 H	التوحيد
3.	Jurisprudence	2	30 M	1 H	الفقه
4.	Ah Hadith et Moral	2	20 M	40 M	الحديث والأخلاق
5.	Histoire du Prophète	1	30 M	30 M	السيرة
6.	Histoire	1	30 M	30 M	التاريخ
7.	Géographie	1	35 M	35 M	الجغرافيا
8.	Educ. Civique et Morale	1	30 M	30 M	التربية المدنية
9.	Lecture	3	30 M	1 H 30 M	القراءة والمطالعة
10.	Langage	2	30 M	1 H 00	التعبير
11.	Construction de Phrase	1	30 M	30 M	تركيب الجمل
12.	Ecriture	1	30 M	30 M	الكتابة والخط
13.	Dictée	3	30 M	1 H 30	الإملاء
14.	Récitation	1	30 M	30 M	الأنشيد والمحفوظات
15.	Grammaire	2	30 M	1 H	النحو
16.	Conjugaison	1	40 M	40 M	الصرف
17.	Français	5	60 M	5 H	اللغة الفرنسية
18.	Calcul	5	30 M	2 H 30 M	الحساب
19.	Géométrie	2	30 M	1 H	الهندسة
20.	Système Métrique	2	30 M	1 H	النظام المتري
21.	Problème Pratique	1	45 M	45 M	المسائل التطبيقية
22.	Dessin	1	30 M	30 M	الرسم
23.	Travail Manuel	1	30 M	30 M	الأشغال اليدوية
24.	Education physique	2	20 M	40 M	التربية البدنية
25.	Sciences Naturelles	1	40 M	40 M	العلوم الطبيعية
TOTAL				26 H 30 M	المجموع

تقدير الحصص الأسبوعية للسنتين الخامسة والسادسة الابتدائية

Le nombre de cours hebdomadaires
pour la 5^{eme} et 6^{eme} Année des Medersas

MATIERES	عدد الحصص Nombre de Cours	مدة الحصص Durée	تقدير الزمن Nombre d'heures	المواد المقررة	٢
Le saint Coran	2	40 M	1 H 20 M	القرآن الكريم	.1
Théologie	2	30 M	1 H 00	التوحيد	.2
Jurisprudence	2	40 M	1 H 20 M	الفقه	.3
Al Hadith et Moral	2	30 M	1 H 00	الحديث والتهديب	.4
Histoire du Prophète	1	30 M	30 M	السيرة	.5
Histoire	1	30 M	30 M	التاريخ	.6
Géographie	1	30 M	30 M	الجغرافيا	.7
Educ. Civique et Morale	1	30 M	30 M	التربية المدنية	.8
Lecture	3	30 M	1 H 30 M	القراءة والمطالعة	.9
Rédaction	1	30 M	30 M	الإنشاء	.10
Ecriture	1	30 M	30 M	الكتابة والخط	.11
Dictée	2	30 M	1 H 00	الإملاء	.12
Récitation	1	30 M	30 M	المحفوظات	.13
Grammaire	2	45 M	1 H 30 M	النحو	.14
Conjugaison	1	45 M	45 M	الصرف	.15
Français	5	60 M	5 H	اللغة الفرنسية	.16
Calcul	4	30 M	2 H	الحساب	.17
Géométrie	2	30 M	1 H 00	الهندسة	.18
Système Métrique	3	30 M	1 H 30 M	النظام المتري	.19
Problème Pratique	1	45 M	45 M	المسائل التطبيقية	.20
Dessin	1	40 M	40 M	الرسم	.21
Travail Manuel	1	30 M	30 M	الأشغال اليدوية	.22
Education physique	2	20 M	40 M	التربية البدنية	.23
Sciences Naturelles	1	30 M	30 M	العلوم الطبيعية	.24
Agriculture	1	30 M	30 M	الزراعة والفلاحة	.25
Sciences Physiques	1	30 M	30 M	الفيزياء	.26
TOTAL			26 H 30 M	المجموع	

جمهورية مالي
شعب واحد - هدف واحد - عقيدة واحدة

وزارة التربية الوطنية

المركز الوطني للتربية

المناهج التعليمية الرسمية للمدارس العربية الإسلامية

المرحلة الإعدادية (المتوسطة)

طبعة جديدة : عام ٢٠٠٣م

المرحلة الإعدادية

الفصل			المواد
الصف التاسع	الصف الثامن	الصف السابع	
٢س	٢س	٢س	١- القرآن: حفظا و تفسيرا
١س	١س	١س	٢- الحديث و الأخلاق
٣س	٣س	٣س	٣- التوحيد و الفقه
١س	١س	١س	٤- التاريخ الإسلامي
٣س	٣س	٣س	٥- القواعد: نحو و صرف
٢س	٢س	٢س	٦- القراءة- المطالعة
١س	١س	١س	٧- الإنشاء
١س	١س	١س	٨- الإملاء و قواعد
٣س	٣س	٣س	٩- الفرنسية
١س	١س	١س	١٠- الإنجليزية
٦س	٥س	٥س	١١- الرياضيات
٣س	٢س	٢س	١٢- الفيزياء و الكيمياء
٢س	٢س	٢س	١٣- الأحياء
٢س	٢س	٢س	١٤- التاريخ و الجغرافيا
١س	١س	١س	١٥- الرسم و الموسيقى
١س	١س	١س	١٦- التربية المدنية (الإقتصاد المنزلي)
١س	١س	١س	١٧- التربية البدنية
٣٤ ساعة	٣٢ ساعة	٣٢ ساعة	مجموع الساعات

جمهورية مالي
شعب واحد - هدف واحد - عقيدة واحدة

وزارة التربية الوطنية
المركز الوطني للتربية

المناهج التعليمية الرسمية للمدارس العربية الإسلامية

المرحلة الثانوية

طبعة جديدة : عام ٢٠٠٣ م

توزيع الساعات في المرحلة الثانوية

L.L.T./ S.H.T/ الأدبية وعلوم إنسانية

الثالث	الثاني	الأول	المستوفى
عدد الساعات	عدد الساعات	عدد الساعات	السواء المقررة
4 س	-	-	نفسه
3	-	-	سحل إلى علم اللغات
-	3	-	لغة الفرنسية
4	7	5	الإنب و اللغة
6	6	3	لغة الحية الأولى
5	5	4	لغة الحية الثانية
2	3	4	تاريخ والجغرافيا
2	2	2	رياضيات
-	-	2	فزياء
-	-	2	لأحياء (علوم طبيعية)
1	1	1	لمادة الاختيارية
2	2	2	تربية البدنية
5	5	5	تربية الإسلامية والمدنية
34	34	34	المجموع

