Organizing the organization, educating the educators: An examination of Fethullah Gülen's teaching and the membership of the movement

by
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Introduction

In January 1995, the journalist Nuriye Akman of *Sabah* newspaper asked Gülen: 'Can humility change the reality? Since a group has gathered around your name, don't you automatically become a leader?' Gülen replied:

> I insist on saying "I am not a leader" because I expressed my thoughts for 30 years in the pulpits (of mosques) and people sharing the same feelings and thoughts responded. For example, I said to them: "Establish university preparatory courses. Establish schools." As an expression of their respect for me, they listened to what I said. This might have been a mistake, but they listened and we met at that point. I saw that just as I was saying "schools", I found that a lot of people were saying "schools". They come to ask about other, especially religious, issues as well. Sometimes they even ask about economic matters. I tell them that "such issues require subject-specific expertise," and send them to experts. (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 34)

In spite of this disclaimer it is clear that for many Fethullah Gülen does indeed stand at the head of a huge and transnational movement, one which has achieved and seems likely to continue to achieve considerable and repeated successes in its chosen fields. In seeking to identify the immediate causes of this success I shall first examine Fethullah Gülen's own writings and statements about education which are aimed at the adults who work in and support the work of the organisation rather than at the pupils in the schools. In other words I will consider what he teaches those who teach. I will then briefly summarise three common views of cultural change within organisations, relate these views to the work of the movement and attempt to show how the espoused educational philosophy of Fethullah Gülen is reflected in practice in the activities of the movement.

The purpose of education

It is a belief common to all the monotheistic religions that humans were created in order to worship the One God. To this primary duty Muslim scholars and indeed Muslims in general almost universally add the duty to learn, often arguing that the first command of the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) to the Prophet Mohammed on the occasion of the first Revelation was 'Read!' and that this command was a symbolic but clear indicator of the duty of all humans to educate themselves. Throughout the long period of his public life as a teacher so far, Gülen has continually insisted that learning is an obligation on all humans and has taught this to those around him and to wider society in both word and deed; that is, indirectly by his example as one who studies ceaselessly and directly in his words:

> The main duty and purpose of human life is to seek understanding. The effort of doing so, known as education, is a perfecting process through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of our beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect pattern of creation. (Ibid. p. 305)

Again, when writing about the meaning and value of education, he says:

> Education through learning and a commendable way of life is a sublime duty that manifests the Divine Name *Rabb* (Upbringer and Sustainer). By fulfilling it we attain the rank of true humanity and become a beneficial element of society. (Ibid. p. 308)

So it is clear that Gülen is not only addressing the education of children in his writings but the education of all and it is probably true to say that the all participants in the movement see themselves as learning or attempting to learn all the time and that the dominant theme of the movement is the struggle for self-improvement..

It is may be the clear statement of this belief which laicists in Turkey have found most alarming. The answer to this is that Gülen is not so disingenuous as to pretend that there is such a thing as a value-free or value-neutral education system. All schools and education systems convey a whole range of values overtly and covertly, directly and incidentally, deliberately and inadvertently. It is in fact often the school's view on such things as the basis of social status, acceptable modes of behaviour, suitable social roles and so forth, that is, it is the 'hidden curriculum' of the state or public school system, which leads families to make the financial and sometimes social sacrifices necessary to allow their children to attend a private school. It is often argued that it is precisely the harmony between the values of such schools and their 'feeder' faith communities which leads to the high behavioural and academic standards consistently achieved at such schools, whatever their denomination.

When considering his views on the purpose of life, we see that Gülen's opinions on the necessity and value of education do not apparently differ markedly from the orthodox Muslim view. However, he is seen to place greater emphasis on good deeds carried out collectively, and stress that men and women who cooperate in good works, or meet to discuss the experience and planning of good works are doing a special service (Özdalga 2000).

In this light, as well as being a religious obligation on the individual, education becomes an obligation on the community and a collective activity. The purpose of education and associated work is primarily to fulfil the individual's and the community's duty of submission to the will of God (the goal) and *hizmet* or service to others (the means) but like all such religious duties conscientiously performed, it subsequently has secondary beneficial effects on the individual and on the community in the world. He says simply, concisely and uncontroversially: 'Education is vital for both societies and individuals.' (Ünal and Williams, 2000, p.306) and insists: 'Any people who want to secure their future should apply as much energy to raising their children as they devote to other issues.' (Ibid. p 308)

It must be remembered, however, that his philosophy of education is not utilitarian, nor a social and political activity which can be divorced from the rest of his philosophy or faith, but a firmly integrated and well-developed component of his world view.

A historical problem: religious knowledge and the natural sciences

The relationship between Islam and modernity is seen by many commentators of today, from both the Western and the Islamic world, as presenting a problem for Muslim society as a whole and therefore for Muslim educators in particular. Gülen acknowledges that this has been a problem in the past, especially in the area of the teaching and learning of the natural sciences (henceforth I shall refer simply to 'science') but indicates that according to his understanding of Islam, it is an illusory problem; that is, it is the problem itself, the perceived conflict between religious knowledge and science, which is falsely conceived and irrational, not religion or the attitude of Islam towards science:

> (T)here can be no conflict among the Qur'an, the Divine Scripture (coming from God's Attribute of Speech), the universe (coming from His Attributes of Power and Will), and the sciences that examine them. The universe is a mighty Qur'an deriving from God's Attributes of Power and Will. In other words, if the term is proper, the universe is a large,

created Qur'an. In return, being an expression of the universe's laws in a different form, the Qur'an is a universe that has been codified and put on paper. In its true meaning religion does not oppose or limit science or scientific work. (Ibid. pp. 316-17)

The fact that this problem has existed for centuries within Islam or at least within Muslim lands is not in dispute. The remaining debate today tends to be only over claims as to the origin of the problem and the reasons for the continuing and current superiority of the West, particularly the United States, in science and technology. It is clear in modern Muslim literature and the press that this is still a topic which can cause great concern and regret for Muslim thinkers and scientists. As we might expect, different scholars and scientists have laid the blame at different doors. Only recently, Pervez Hoodbhoy, professor of physics at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, asserted that between the 9th and 13th centuries 'all the people doing decent science, philosophy or medicine were Muslims.' He went on, however, to attribute blame for the decline in science and rationality to the 'vice-like grip of orthodoxy' (*New Scientist*, 26 April 2003, p. 27). Referring to events which followed the golden age of Islamic science, Gülen indicates two of the sources of the tremendous strains placed on the Islamic world which led to the development of that orthodoxy so fearful of change and growth, when he says:

> If that concept of science, approved and appropriated by society as if it were a part of the Divine message and then pursued with the zeal of an act of worship, had not been exposed to the destructive Mongol invasion and the pitiless Crusades from Europe, our world would be more enlightened, have a richer intellectual life, a more wholesome technology, and more promising sciences. I say this because Islam's concept of science was embedded in the aspiration for eternity, the ideal of being beneficial to humanity and responsible for earning the pleasure of God. (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 77)

It can be seen then how Gülen's educational philosophy derives from his faith, and he considers the two different types of knowledge to be essential and complementary, as parts of a whole, rather than two distinct bodies competing for the same space.

Possibly, as a consequence of Gülen's positive attitude towards rationality and the natural sciences and his ability to reconcile them with religious knowledge, an attitude widely shared within the movement, science and mathematics within the high schools of the organization are very highly valued, and taught and learned with great enthusiasm. It is a consistent and deliberate feature of the schools that they are very well equipped in terms of computer technology and science laboratories. Many of the schools enter students annually in the International Knowledge Olympiads for mathematics and science with a considerable degree of success, their pupils often carrying away gold, silver and bronze medals. The success of pupils in mathematics and science plays a major role in the publicity and marketing of the schools.

Funding the schools

The business circles of thr movement are the main sponsors of these schools, supporting them financially until they are able to raise their own revenues through school fees. In each country, the community works in co-operation with the local authorities, who often provide logistical assistance and supervise the curriculum :

Some schools are completely built and funded by businessmen and industrialists, while some are joint ventures between the state and the trusts. The state provides the building, electricity, water, etc., and the trusts provide teaching, the teaching staff, and all educational materials and resources.

Some are eventually completely funded by student fees. They work as non-profitable companies or trusts, that is, all the income incurred goes back to the students again as educational investment (new teaching materials and resources such as books, computers, software; and facilities such as labs, gyms, hostels, residence halls, etc).

Every school has its own independent accountants and accountancy system. They are all accountable to the local authorities (the state) and the trust's inspectors, and comply with the state and international law.

Qualities of good schools

Revealingly, when writing about the qualities of a good school Gülen blends metaphors of science and spirituality and reminds us of the afterlife, the ultimate goal:

> A school may be considered a laboratory that offers an elixir that can prevent or heal the ills of life. Those who have the knowledge and wisdom to prepare and administer it are the teachers. . . . A school is a place of learning about everything related to this life and the next. (Ibid. p. 312)

While he constantly impresses on others the importance of education and its purpose, Gülen offers few prescriptions on the detailed content and only very broad guidelines on the methodology or methodologies to be used:

> A community's survival depends on idealism and good morals, as well as on reaching the necessary level in scientific and technological progress. For this reason, trades and crafts should be taught beginning at least in the elementary level. A good school is not a building where only theoretical information is given but an institution or a laboratory where students are prepared for life. (Ibid. p. 312)

In fact the schools in Turkey and elsewhere invariably follow the national curriculum, even in countries where private schools may be exempt from such a requirement. In addition to being unusually well equipped for the teaching of science, as mentioned above, they tend to have very good English language departments and small classes. These three factors are seen as key to the ultimate educational and professional success of the pupils and are vital factors in the marketing of the schools to the growing educated middle class in Turkey, Central Asia and other non-English speaking countries.

At a managerial level the constant in-service training of teachers and support staff is seen as vital to establishing and maintaining high standards and schools often join together, in greater or smaller numbers, depending on the need and the circumstances, to provide weekend and holiday skills training for teaching staff. A variety of training methods are used within the schools, including mentoring of new recruits, peer training through workshops and observations, and 'bought-in' expertise, that is, university lecturers and professional teacher trainers giving seminars or workshop sessions. In addition teachers are funded to attend conferences about teaching wherever possible, though these tend to be available only on English teaching. This training is obligatory and means that teachers have only four weeks holiday per year and for much of the academic year they work six days a week. The professional demands placed on these teachers are therefore in sharp contrast to the demands placed on those in the state or public school system in Turkey whose teachers are paid about the same as in these private schools but state school teachers have the advantage of working for only half a day or half a week so that they are often able to hold down another job too.

In the same periods, when teachers are meeting for training, school managers also meet, exchange views and experiences, and discuss good practice and innovations. While other private schools in Turkey also provide training and send teachers to conference and training days, no other group rivals this movement in sheer numbers and therefore training resources.

Staff and pupils are encouraged to work in teams and compete. Pupils' success in examinations and Olympiads, as well as staff training and qualifications give the movement a measurable superiority over the competition of which those working within the movement are very aware and very proud.

For Gülen himself service to humanity and competition with other institutions are not mutually exclusive and triumph may be evidence of the validity of one's message:

> The mass acceptance of the educational institutions that spread all over the world, despite the great financial difficulties they have faced, and their competing with and frequently surpassing their Western peers in a very short period of time, should be proof that what we have said cannot be denied. (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 318-19)

As mentioned earlier the schools in Turkey benefit from the harmony of values between schools and communities, though naturally particular families, teachers and students will vary in their degree of commitment to those values: no doubt some families have a firm faith, some are waverers and some place their children in the schools just for the high academic standards and the potential material gains available through education; some staff teach because they love children, some because they love God and some because they need to make a living. Naturally, a clear majority support the stated values of the movement, otherwise the nature of the movement would change very rapidly but those with less commitment are not excluded. This is probably the case in all faith movements and many faith schools throughout the world.

Notwithstanding this variation in commitment, private schools with a clear philosophy, whether faith schools or otherwise, will tend to attract those who are broadly in sympathy with their aims, leading to a more honest, less conflicted relationship between communities, families and schools. Such schools may also significantly reduce intergenerational conflict; pupils cannot use the values of the school to oppose parental authority; neither can they use the parents' values against authority within the school. Such competing values place terrible strain on students, particularly teenagers and young adults at a very difficult stage of their development and the schools and communities gain enormously from avoiding this undesirable situation. The initial loyalty of the community to the school no doubt derives from these shared values but it is reinforced by the immediate benefits accruing to pupils and families in terms of improved familial and social relationships and high academic standards.

From the perspective of organizational theory we can say that these shared values confer legitimacy on the power or authority exerted locally by formal and informal leaders at the grassroots level in the eyes of staff, parents and pupils or students. The mode of influence most often used is overt or covert moral persuasion, suggestion or argument. Hales (1993), in writing about different responses to power and influence, claims: 'The use of normative power resources to influence through the provision of meanings, affects and moral persuasion is invariably seen by those subject to it as legitimate and evokes a response which takes the form of moral commitment.' He points out that the uses of economic or knowledge resources may be seen as either legitimate or non-legitimate and do not produce anything more than calculative and contingent responses. Gülen's constant emphasis on the use of convincing argument rather than force or financial reward or other external obligation demonstrates his profound understanding of this aspect of human interaction and it is clear that this understanding is shared by many of those working in the movement. Staff, pupils, and parents who are less committed to the values of the organization are not subjected to domineering, moralistic or punitive approaches. Özdalga quotes one of her interviewees, a middle-aged mathematics teacher, as saying:

> The parents of our students are not asking for a particular (religious) worldview. What they want for their children I know very well from my personal experience, because I am not just a teacher, I am also the mother of a pupil. What I want for my child is first of all good quality education. Then I want my child to learn good manners, good judgment of

right and wrong, how to behave toward older people, the importance of doing things that are good for society. This is what I expect, and I do not think that other parents think very differently. I also think that to bring up the question of religion with children of that age (14-17 years old) is too early. There is no intention of imprinting such ideas on the minds of children at an early age, because that often results in a backlash. The best thing is just to set a good example. If I behave as a teacher in a decent way, and if this means that the students gain respect for me and think that they want to be like me, then that is all right. But to impose my own religious outlook on the children, ... no, I would not want to do that. Religion is a different kind of experience, about which the individual has to decide on her/his own. So, with respect to that question, we do not have anything to give as teachers. (Özdalga, 2003)

Other independent observers confirm that the form of *dawa* practised in the movement and the schools is, to use Özdalga's term, 'transconfessional', emphasising universal values; indirect, witnessing by example rather than words; and principled, in that the mode of influence appears to differ little no matter the location of the school. Thomas Michel, of the Society of Jesus, says of his visit to a school in the Philippines:

Aware that these schools are a manifestation of a religious commitment of Muslims, I had expected to find a more explicitly Islamic content to the curriculum and the physical environment, but this was not the case. When I asked about the surprising absence of what to me would have been an understandable part of a religiously-inspired educational project, I was told that because of the pluralist nature of the student bodies - Christian and Muslim in Zamboanga, and Buddhist and Hindu as well in Kyrghyzstan - that what they sought to communicate were universal Islamic values such as honesty, hard work, harmony, and conscientious service rather than any confessional instruction. In the Sebat International School in Bishkek, students from U.S.A., Korea, and Turkey appeared to be studying comfortably with those coming from Afghanistan and Iran. (Michel, T (S.J)

Gülen has called repeatedly for tolerance throughout society and between nations. By way of illustration of tolerance and reconciliation put into practice within one of the schools, the journalist Neval Sevindi, writing in *Yeni Yuzyil*, tells a story about the outcome of this in the Kurdish area of Turkey, where the movement initially met with hostility and suspicion:

Speaking Kurdish, (the general director of the school) established a close relationship with (two new students) and listened to their problems. He gave them something to eat and drink and a place to sleep . . . However, for fifteen days these two boys became very unruly. They broke windows and destroyed furniture. Later on, it came out that their purpose was to make the principal angry and after being beaten or thrown out, they would say: "Turks treat us like this." However, being treated in such a loving way finally caused them to admit: "They told us so many negative things that we hated you. We came to burn the school but we couldn't." (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 332)

Most notably for the external observer, there is no direct teaching of Islam in implementation of the curriculum in the schools in Turkey or Central Asia beyond what is formally required within the national curriculum. This may reflect a very conscious choice not to use available sources of power and influence in ways that could conceivably be perceived as imposed and therefore lacking legitimacy.

Qualities of good teachers

It is to be expected that a man who has dedicated his life to teaching and learning should hold teachers in high esteem. In fact, seen through the lens of Islam, being an educator is in some respects a universal calling, an essential aspect of our humanity:

We are only truly human if we learn, teach, and inspire others. It is difficult to regard those who are ignorant and without desire to learn as truly human. It is also questionable whether learned people who do not renew and reform themselves in order to set an example for others are truly human. (Ibid. p. 309)

With reference to children, in common with educationists the world over, Gülen reminds us that the parents are the first and most essential teachers of the child and returns to his theme of the social effects of a good education and its lack:

> The first school in which we receive the necessary education to be perfected is the home. The home is vital to the raising of a healthy generation and ensuring a healthy social structure. . . . Children can receive a good education at home only if there is a healthy family life. . . . A dysfunctional family life increasingly reflects upon the child's spirit, and therefore upon society. (Ibid. pp. 310-11)

Gülen differentiates between the performance of the more superficial, technical aspects of the work, which he calls teaching, and the deeper, more meaningful and holistic activity, which he calls education: 'Education is different from teaching. Most people can teach, but only a very few can educate.' (Ibid. p. 312)

Therefore, notwithstanding the time and importance the schools attach to training in practical classroom technique as outlined earlier, the role of the teacher is more than just to be a purveyor of information or skills. It stretches far beyond the walls of the classroom; the character of the teacher must be outstanding; the relationship between teacher and student is crucial and this places great emotional and spiritual demands on the teacher:

> Real teachers sow the seed and preserve it. They occupy themselves with what is good and wholesome, and lead and guide the children in life and whatever events they encounter. . . . In addition to setting a good personal example, teachers should be patient enough to obtain the desired result. They should know their students very well, and address their intellects and their hearts, spirits and feelings. The best way to educate people is to show a real concern for every individual, not forgetting that each individual is a different "world". . . . Teachers should know how to find a way to the student's heart and leave indelible imprints upon his or her mind. They should test the information to be passed on to students by refining their own minds and the prisms of their hearts. (Ibid. pp. 312-13)

It can be seen that everything said here also applies to the teaching of adults as well as children. Within the movement, therefore, probably the most commonly held view of teaching is that it is a sort of endless service (*hizmet*) to the students of whatever age, society, the world, and God. This is much more akin to the classical Christian view of teaching as a sacred calling or vocation than to the modern managerial view of teaching as a collection of competencies which may be listed and the success of which may be inspected by deciding whether a set of easily measurable targets has been attained.

Measuring achievement

Given the intangibility of some of the movement's aims, how then can the achievement of the schools and other educational activities be assessed or measured? How can we know the causes of whatever achievement is claimed? We may first of all consider the tempo-spatial aspect: how far and fast have the activities of the movement spread? We may then consider the globality of the issues or universality of the values propagated and the particularity of goals (the establishment and continuance of particular activities or institutions) (Melucci, 1999: 307-12)

With respect to the tempo-spatial aspect, it is precisely the rapidity of the spread of these educational activities and institutions which has attracted attention and comment, ranging from praise to hostility. The most formally constituted institutions are the private primary and secondary schools, university preparation courses, and private universities. These first sprang up in Turkey and then the neighbouring Central Asia countries with a common Turkic culture but have now been established in South-East Asia, Africa, Russia, Eastern Europe, and

Australia. In Western Europe there are community centres and/or student hostels in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium and Holland. These latter provide support for those studying in the mainstream or public education system. Estimates vary as to the exact number of schools associated with the movement but it is probably true to say that they number something approaching seven hundred throughout the world. Scholarships are always available for talented pupils who cannot afford the fees.

The educational activities of the movement also include circles. These are relatively informal study groups of adults. They meet regularly, varying the content of study sessions according to participants' needs, wishes, environment, previous knowledge and so forth. Content may range from teaching and Qur'anic script and recitation to talks on various topics. Participants commonly read the writings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, contemporary exegeses of the Qur'an dealing with the problems of the 20th and now the 21st century. These are purely voluntary activities, provide an additional social function, and being peer-led are invariably free of charge. Such circles are probably the most common and widespread way of teaching about Islam throughout the world and are used in most Muslim communities, not only among the Gülen movement. The circles are far more extensive than the schools. In other words everywhere where there are schools, there are also circles of adults and in many places where there are no schools of the movement, there are circles.

In addition to the types of institutions already mentioned, Turkish entrepreneurs who share these values have established a number of bodies in the information industry, ranging from voluntary associations like the Foundation of Journalists and Writers, to television and radio stations, newspapers and journals. This reflects Gülen's view:

> People who want to guarantee their future cannot be indifferent to how their children are being educated. The family, school, environment, and mass media should cooperate to ensure the desired result. Opposing tendencies among these vital institutions will subject young people to contradictory influences that will distract them and dissipate their energy. In particular, the mass media should contribute to young people's education by following the education policy approved by the community. (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 310)

This is not a totalitarian view; Gülen makes it clear that it is not suppression of opposition but tolerance and patience that form the necessary complement to encouragement:

> (I)mproving a community is possible by elevating the coming generations to the rank of humanity, not by obliterating the bad ones. Unless the seeds of religion, traditional values, and historical consciousness germinate throughout the country, new bad elements will inevitably grow up in the place of every bad element that has been eradicated. (Ibid. p. 308)

When considering the globality of issues concerning the activities of the organization, it is probably inevitable that some of these will be limited precisely by the locality of their origin, that is to say the specific conditions of the Turkish Republic in the mid to late twentieth century. It is undoubtedly true that some of Gülen's major themes and concerns or the emphasis given to them may on occasion strike those other than his initial target audience as parochial. Readers from a western cultural background, unless they are very big-hearted or far-sighted, are unlikely to worry unduly about the gap in science and technology education between the West and the Islamic world, since in some immediate economic respects at least this gap currently operates in their favour. This is not the case in Africa, the countries of the former Soviet Union and Asia, however, where such concerns are uppermost in many a social activist's mind and Gülen's writings will therefore generate identity of interest. In contrast, in the West, where inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflict is once more on the rise and where, although we live in great affluence compared with past years, society appears to be becoming ever more crime-ridden and hazardous to its own members, where the morality of our

economic activities as a civilization are causing increasing concern, Gülen's calls to tolerance of plurality, the social justice demanded by Islam, and spiritual and moral renewal hold more than a little appeal to many.

In a very real sense, one of the movement's aims with greatest global appeal is not the propagation of Islam's universal values but the prevention of the misrepresentation of Islam. In this the movement can be seen to be replacing or blocking more extremist developments in modern, politicised Islams, particularly in Turkey and Central Asia. The Turkish writer Neval Sevindi has described how the movement has blocked the activities of Shi'ite and sectarian groups in Tajikistan where the people prefer the educational activities of the Gülen movement (Ibid. p. 39).

This channelling or diverting function also applies in the Muslim diaspora in the West, where there is growing concern (and not only in the Muslim community) about what young people are being taught, by whom and to what purposes. The British Muslim scholar Abdal-Hakim Murad (T.J. Winter) has spoken tellingly of the paradoxical effects of the Muslim community's experience of modern state education:

> Modern schooling is designed for a culture that puts an increasing share of acculturation and upbringing, as opposed to the simple inculcation of facts, on the shoulders of schoolteachers rather than of parents. Muslims who have moved to this country have done so at precisely the time when British education is also going into the business of parenting; most Muslim parents do not recognise the fact, but Muslim children in this country always have a third parent: the Education Secretary. Even those second-generation Muslims here who claim to have angrily rejected Britishness are in fact doing so in terms of types of radicalism which are deeply influenced by Western styles of dissent. Most noticeably, they locate their radicalism not primarily in a spiritual, but in social and political rejection of the oppressive order around them. (Murad, 1997)

Like Gülen, Professor Zaki Badawi, founder of the Muslim College in West London, chair of the Council of Imams and Mosques in Great Britain, has also rejected the rejectionism of modern Islamists. *The Guardian* of Wednesday January 15, 2003 reports:

> Far from portraying Islam as being at odds with modernity, he sees it as the immigrant's route to becoming a contented Briton. 'There is no theological problem in Islam taking on a great deal of western culture and values and incorporating them' . . . Badawi has likewise revolutionised the training of Islamic thinkers in Britain, challenging the traditional inward-looking, rule-based education of most British imams with a broad, multi-faith training grounded in western philosophical study. It will not be easy for Osama bin Laden to hijack these updated, westernised Islamic scholars.

While in Turkey, talk may be of the reconciliation of religious knowledge and modern science, if it is to remain true to the universal values of the movement as a whole and not only to improving the lot of Turkish Muslims in Britain, the work done at grassroots level by the Gülen movement in the United Kingdom will need to tend towards the working out and support of this new cosmopolitan British Muslim culture and thence to tolerance, dialogue and good community and international relations. Thus far the movement in Europe has tended to focus on the education and self-improvement of the Turkish immigrant community in particular. This is undoubtedly a vital task but it is probably true to say that this use of available resources means that the movement has had, as yet, little impact on society as a whole and at least in the United Kingdom has until recently developed few strong relationships with outside bodies. Nevertheless, responding to this situation the movement recently established the Dialogue Society, which has engaged in discussion and lobbying activities, particularly in interfaith dialogue, but also with Members of Parliament and other public figures, in order to acquaint others outside the Turkish community with possible contributions to society by the Gülen movement

Melucci's other measure of success is taken by reference to the achievement of particular or local aims, for example in the case of this movement, setting up a school in a particular location, improving the standards of training of a specific group of teachers, providing a particular holiday course and so forth.

The success of local projects is measured first at a local level and later collated at a higher levels to allow for strategic management of the movement's activities. Particular projects do not invariably succeed but activists learn from their experiences and success is more common than failure. In addition, the closure or cessation of a particular activity is not necessarily a sign of failure; it may arise from an analysis that says that the activity is no longer worthwhile or desirable. Staff and supporters may then be moved to another area of activity. Thus the global spread and success of the movement indicates a great deal of local success.

It is true to say that there is within the movement a constant process of consulting, planning, trialling and feedback, possibly because Gülen has warned of the inevitable consequences of inadequate planning and failure:

> It is essential to be as precise as possible about the aim and object of every duty we undertake so that we do not, as it were, fall between objectives. In our particular service, if we do not direct our spirits to a definite aim, our thoughts will collapse into a whirl of confusion and we will become their powerless plaything . . . With respect to thinking, clarity about the objectives is especially important; indeed it must always take the first place and be defined. Otherwise, we will be lost in the flood of thoughts. (Gülen, 1996: 75)

The means of success

We have mentioned already that the mode of influence typically employed within the movement is one of its most significant features and leads to a high level of commitment amongst participants. It is striking also that all this has been achieved while Fethullah Gülen, various different branches of the movement and indeed on occasion the movement as a whole have come under sustained and repeated political and legal attack. We may therefore deduce that perhaps one of the most salient characteristics of the movement is its ability to adapt to widely varying local conditions and its flexibility and responsiveness in the face of rapid changes over time, in other words its remarkable mastery of change itself.

In view of the fact that they argue that 'organizations *are* cultures', the views on change expressed by Meyerson and Martin (1987) seem particularly apt to this movement. They suggest that there are three different paradigms or points of view which participants (and researchers) use, that each of these contribute something to our understanding of change, and that all three may be simultaneously in use within the same organisation at any given point in time. The first paradigm sees the organisation or culture as a monolith: this view focuses on consensus, for example commonality of language, beliefs or values, rituals, leader or other aspects of culture, throughout the organisation in question and disregards, downplays or even denies the existence of differences or variety within the culture with which it is concerned. This view may account for many of the features of Gülen's movement: most obviously, the majority of members are Turkish and Muslims and so share a language, beliefs and religious and national rituals (though the latter vary from country to country); they are predominantly young (in their twenties and thirties for the most part); members acknowledge a particular leader. Here, leadership is perhaps the strongest support of this point of view. While Gülen himself does not apparently accept it and has complained of it, an uncritical attitude to Fethullah Gülen and his writings is a *sine qua non* at lower (or perhaps all) levels and those who wish to be identified as 'members' invariably refer to him as 'Hodjaefendi'. This is perhaps the paradigm through which many of those working at 'entry level' in the organisation see it. There is talk and competitiveness about who is 'in the organisation' and

who is 'not in the organisation'. There is sometimes criticism, open or implied, about degrees of 'Muslimness' with respect to such visible aspects as the wearing of the headscarf, the performance of the five prayers and other practices which may be held to demonstrate commitment to the values of the movement. Outside Turkey, degrees of 'Turkishness' and commitment to the welfare of the Turkish community sometimes become an issue and so forth.

Those who view a movement through this paradigm see it as a hierarchical structure, governed from the top. Given the power and importance of the values of the top management in this view, this analysis of organisations as hierarchical holds out the tempting prospect of change initiated and managed from above, but at the same time one is forced to acknowledge the likelihood of 'persistence, inertia and thus resistance to change' at the level of 'deeper manifestations of culture, such as taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings that underlie behavioural norms or artefacts'. Aras and Caha (2000) indicate two major shortcomings of this kind of structure: (a) its non-democratic nature, (b) a very strict ranking and increasing number of subordinates from the top to the bottom, in which ranks obtain only a certain amount of knowledge of the activities occurring or under discussion while agreeing to refrain from asking questions or seeking more knowledge about the higher ranks. They add that this sort of structure may be helpful if the members of the community were being persecuted. However, it raises serious problems in terms of democratic decision making and taking. It may therefore be argued that this type of structure might indeed be useful to the movement on occasions and in certain specific locations and timeframes; it is not hard to argue that the movement has experienced a period of persecution in Turkey in the last few years. It is, though, hard to agree that this is consistently the structure of the organisation or that it can always be viewed through this paradigm; it would be unexpected given the Gülen community's liberal attitudes and tolerance of differences.

The second paradigm, in contrast to this hierarchical model, sees organizations as 'composed of a diverse set of subcultures that share some integrating elements of a dominant culture'. Variety rather than uniformity is the key to this view and the environment plays a much greater role:

> Complex organizations reflect broader societal cultures and contain elements of occupational, hierarchical, class, racial, ethnic, and gender-based identifications . . . Different types of subcultures can be distinguished (Louis 1983). For example, subcultural differences may represent disagreements within an organization's dominant culture, as in a counter-culture (Martin and Siehl 1983). Or subcultural identification may be orthogonal to a dominant culture, reflecting functional, national, occupational, ethnic, or project affiliations (e.g. Gregory 1983; Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Or still, a subculture might enhance a dominant culture. For example, members of one particular functional area may fanatically support the values espoused by top management (e.g. Martin, Sitkin and Boehm 1985). (Meyerson and Martin, 1987: 34-35)

Considering the geographical extent and range of activities of Gülen's movement this view is clearly just as tenable as the first paradigm. It is more likely to be found among those who have worked for the movement in different locations or countries, on a variety of projects, and in different roles. As it allows a number of different kinds of 'belonging' and requires less narrow conformity, we expect to find this view more frequently among non-Turkish than Turkish members, among members of less formally constituted groups, like circles, and more among supporters than employees, for example.

The view of change corresponding to this paradigm relies on the notion of 'loose coupling'. In contrast to the view of change within an organization or culture as 'top-down', directed, and revolutionary, as outlined above, in this paradigm 'diffuse and unintentional sources of change are more salient'. This view of organizations offers advantages but also challenges for those attempting to instigate change. Meyerson and Martin sum these up:

> Change from a paradigm 2 perspective, then is localized, incremental, and often environmentally stimulated (if not controlled). Those studying or enacting change from a paradigm 2 perspective, but desiring an organization-wide impact, would therefore face a difficult predicament. Because locally-based changes are often diffuse and loosely coupled to each other, their organization-wide repercussions are difficult to predict and problematic to control. (Ibid. p. 37)

This view of organizations and change supports Gülen's claim not to lead, and even not to know about many of the schools in the organization. It also accounts satisfactorily for the adaptability and subsequent success of the movement's schools, universities and other projects in widely varying cultures and locations across the world. The fact that this paradigm is also consciously employed within the movement is evident from the way that schools and other projects are often set up in small groups of two or three under a governing body, sometimes a small trust and sometimes a small company, with a board of trustees or directors respectively, in such a way that the governing body may respond to local demands rapidly and without central restrictions. In this view, the occurrence of regular meetings of different members of the movement working at the same 'rank' while allowing local control to continue to operate, may be less evidence of a strict hierarchical structure, than of an attempt to counteract the problems this kind of devolved structure has with communications and to encourage but not impose the organization-wide spread of particular valued innovations, where they may be found suitable to other local conditions. In this way: 'Each subculture is an island of localized lucidity, so that ambiguity lies only in the interstices among the subcultures.'

In the third paradigm, instead of consisting of a monolith or a set of subcultures, 'cultural manifestations are not clearly consistent or inconsistent with each other.' This view of culture and cultural change accepts ambiguity as 'the way things are, as the "truth", not as a temporary state awaiting the discovery of "truth".' Meyerson and Martin say:

> A paradigm 3 portrayal of culture cannot be characterised as generally harmonious or full of conflict. Instead, individuals share some viewpoints, disagree about some, and are ignorant of or indifferent to others. Consensus, dissensus, and confusion coexist, making it difficult to draw cultural and subcultural boundaries. . . Even the boundary around the organization would be amorphous and permeable, as various feeder cultures from the surrounding environment fade in and out of attention. (Ibid. p. 38)

It can be seen that of the three paradigms, this is the one which places most emphasis on the importance and actions of the individual. Culture is seen as a web, and individuals, as nodes on the web, may be in more than one relationship at any one time, the relationships being of the same or different natures, comprising agreement, disagreement, ignorance or hypocrisy. Such organizations, particularly large public sector bureaucracies, can be characterized as 'organized anarchies'. Meyerson and Martin suggest a number of other structures which may be described in the same way, including 'new or unusually innovative organizations', and subcultures within organizations, such as 'research and development laboratories, and independent business units within a larger corporate framework . . . (and) some occupational subcultures, such as academic research, book publishing, social work, and international business development.' (Ibid. p. 38)

The advantage of this paradigm is that it allows participants a great deal of autonomy, allowing them to experiment with little risk of repercussion as causes of failure and even the criteria by which to judge failure are not clear. It therefore endows the individual with a very attractive sense of autonomy. They conclude:

> For these reasons, a paradigm 3 perspective should be most likely to be adopted in settings where creativity and constant experimentation are valued (classrooms, research

laboratories, innovative industries, etc.); in contexts where ambiguity is unavoidably salient (large public bureaucracies and political organizations); in occupations where technology is unclear (social work and book publishing); and in work where ideological and cognitive openness is required (such as cross-cultural business and inter-organizational negotiations). In these situations change is constant; indeed change is the business of many of these kinds of organizations and occupations. (Ibid. p. 40)

In examining change Meyerson and Martin's last paradigm stresses 'individual adjustment to environmental fluctuations, including patterns of attention and interpretation'. Change is therefore continual and almost uncontrollable and often or usually undetectable, since there is no stable background against which to measure it. This view of change accords perfectly with Gülen's constant urging of his followers to greater effort through his regular writings in his books, but particularly in his published talks and journals or periodicals. This concept of change in the individual and the community also fits easily with the Muslim conception of Islam as a process of submission, a life-long series of repeated efforts to submit to the Will of God, a series of advances and retreats, through the Mercy of God, towards a higher, purified, spiritual state, not an instantaneous or spontaneous conversion to something other, nor an easily identifiable, permanently fixed structure or external set of rules. As such this view is both 'modern' in some of its aims (e.g. the mastery of science and technology) and, according to the world-view of those Muslims working within the organisation, entirely congruent with 'traditional Islam'. The activities of those working within the movement in trade, education and the formation of warm social contacts and relationships with non-Muslims or uncommitted Muslims are, in their view, much more similar to the activities of the early Muslims, which also led in very much the same way to a very rapid expansion of Islam, than are those of other extreme political Islamic groupings which, as Gülen has frequently pointed out, owe much more to modern materialist philosophies, such as nationalism and socialism, than to Islam. Only the most determinedly ahistorical writers continue to argue that Islam in its early days was spread in any other way.

The correspondence between the range of activities of the movement and those listed in this analysis is striking. It may be suggested that this inclusive paradigm is more commonly used among those who appear or feel excluded from the hierarchy, while continuing to work in or alongside the movement, that is to say, those to whom, for whatever reason, the notion of belonging or membership of a social group is less important; it may also be found among 'front-line' or pioneering groups wherever a new project or new and atypical type of project is in the process of being established and is drawing heavily on resources from a new social environment.

There is evidence, in addition, that this paradigm is used and advocated by Gülen himself when it suits the time and circumstances. At a strategic level Gülen's emphasis on the getting of scientific knowledge from the West is in itself an argument for the permeable boundaries demanded by this paradigm. The drive for formal and informal contacts and dialogue with other groups, as evinced by the various interfaith dialogue groups in the movement, for example, is another sign of the same appreciation of 'feeder' cultures. This permeability is, of course, not ungenerous or one-way. Gülen has made it clear that he believes with respect to the movement and its relationship with others 'we have more to give humanity than we have to take.' (Ünal and Williams, 2000: 318) More revealingly, at an individual level too, this tolerance of ambiguity is made explicit. Gülen recognises the potential for moral ambiguity within human beings and counsels a lenient response:

> Man possesses within himself the seeds of virtue as well as having the potential for every evil. Some undesirable characteristics such as passion and the desire to show off exist in him alongside the good qualities of sincerity, altruism, and self-sufficiency. Thus we should take all these qualities into account when considering human nature and not be disappointed. (Gülen, 1996:87)

He asks that this compassionate attitude should typify all encounters between human beings, not only those with whom we share our small 'occupational, hierarchical, class, racial, ethnic, and gender-based identifications':

> Be so tolerant that your bosom becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love of human beings. Let there be no troubled souls to whom you do not offer a hand and about whom you remain unconcerned. (Ibid. p. 19)

As we expect from one holding a view which accepts ambiguity, he argues that even the less attractive human characteristics, such as ambition and love of status and fame, can be turned to good use and one should not be quick to condemn others:

> Many deeds which are performed rather for show than out of sincerity should not be judged as absolutely harmful. People may sometimes contaminate their deeds by their egos and their desires; they may not always be seeking God's approval and showing repentance for their mistakes, but we have no right to claim that those people are not on the side of the truth. (Ibid. p. 88)

In practice within the organization the idea of tolerance of ambiguity is probably enacted more often than not. There is an explicit emphasis on forgiveness and a policy known as 'saving' or 'not wasting' people. That is to say, if for some reason a person is found unfit or unable to perform a particular task or role, he or she will frequently be offered another one. In some cases this reassignment may happen several times before a 'best fit' is found. Straightforward dismissals are very rare. Ambition proved by hard work is usually rewarded by promotion. It is to be noted that money does not play a great part in the desire for advancement as the upper levels of management are not paid significantly more than those lower down. Where an individual is ambitious without being particularly able, a role and title will also often be found for him.

The fact that this view of organizations and change does not provide clear criteria for measuring success perhaps makes Gülen's remarks about this issue very pertinent. He indicates that the means must be as valid as the end, apparent or material success is not the only measure and he suggests another measure:

> As for works undertaken to seek the Almighty's good pleasure—a particle can have the worth of the sun, a drop the worth of the sea, a second the worth of eternity. Therefore, even supposing the world could be turned into gardens of Paradise by means that He disapproved, it would be as nothing, completely worthless, and it would be a matter about which those responsible would be questioned.

Meyerson and Martin conclude their remarks on cultural change by pointing out how difficult it is for an individual to hold in mind and use more than one of the paradigms they describe at the same time and yet without this ability an organisation or individual will have many 'blind spots' and will miss many valuable sources of change.

Conclusion: the future of the movement

This study is based on my own experience of working within the movement in a number of different locations and roles over a period of almost eight years, I offer for consideration the view that it is only the remarkable harmony between Gülen's philosophy of education and the cultural practice of his followers which can explain adequately the continuing growth and success of the movement. It is my contention that Gülen is the unusual individual who is able to work with multiple paradigms simultaneously and this is one of the reasons that he has such extraordinary influence and leadership capacity.

Naturally the special qualities of the current leader and the huge variety of circumstances in which his followers labour must raise the issue of the fit future succession to his current leadership or of alternative future forms of leadership, but if, as I have argued, many of the movement's supporters have fully imbibed and understood these elements of his teachings, the potential adaptability and growth of the movement cannot be overestimated.

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