ILEM: TOWARDS A CONFIDENT MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE

Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura

(Islamic Religious Council of Singapore)

Overview of Contents

FOREWORD

Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim.
Assalamualaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuh,

The past three years have seen the Islamic Education Centres and Providers (IECP) in Singapore taking serious steps to adapt its teaching practices and operating models to the challenges posed by the pandemic. This is in addition to the prevailing efforts taken to improve and enhance the teaching and learning experiences and career opportunities for the Asatizah working in these centres. These efforts cannot but be applauded and celebrated as they are critical to the provision of credible Islamic Education for the Muslim community here. It is also an indication of the sense of duty and diligence that the providers have as they recognize the extent of the impact Islamic knowledge has on all aspects of the life of a Muslim.

Remarkably, it is the lessons learnt and experiences gained through the events of the pandemic which have further propelled IECPs into the next frontier of Islamic Education. Going back to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the years 2020 and 2021, we will remember a world filled with confusion and disruptions. Traditional Islamic learning spaces such as mosques, and Islamic Education Centres, were forced to immediately cease operations to curb the spread of the virus. Education leaders at the time wondered how the masses would - across the various age groups - continue to maintain their religious life and connection to their faith. Concurrently, learners' expectations of Islamic Education evolved. They yearned for religious guidance that is responsive to their needs and imparted in a creative yet relatable manner. This was largely due to greater religiosity, the emergence of complex socio-religious issues, and easier access to an influx of information online.

In response to these evolving situations, IECPs were agile and quickly organised themselves to build capabilities in conducting home-based lessons via teleconferencing tools. IECPs also inserted various progressive religious guidance into their curriculum and redesigned their courses to better reflect the lived experiences of their learners. Several also took the opportunity to accelerate the digitization of learning resources and materials for circulation to students. Asatizah at IECPs acquired new skillsets to engage learners online such as gamification. They also expanded their reach via social media content creation and platforms such as podcasts.

It is vital that IECPs and Asatizah retain this growth mindset along with the various positive adaptations, as we move into a potential future where the authority of religious education may be questioned, or even replaced. Hence, it is important to ensure that IECPs' presence is regularly felt by meeting the needs of various community segments and offering flexible and modular learning arrangements such as asynchronous learning. The worry is if this gap is not addressed, coupled with learners' tendencies to search for answers online without proper guidance, the community's cohesion and religious life might be endangered.

With the courage and wisdom gained in taking on multiple challenges in the past few years, I believe that IECPs are cognizant that the content taught, and engagement methods employed cannot be static, and must constantly be improved upon. To ensure that the classes create a real impact on the learners, the Islamic Education Workgroup (IEWG)[1] in close partnership with IECPs and Muis, developed the Islamic Education Learners and Educators Map (ILEM). It represents the sector's collective observation of the Islamic Education landscape, the future trajectory for its programmes, and an enduring aspiration for learners and educators of Islam.

Let's view this Guidebook as a conversation starter for many more collaborations and not as the final brick in the wall. The aspiration is for ILEM to provide an iterative reference for IECPs when reviewing and enhancing their programmes and teachers' training, so as to reflect a synergized future-ready Islamic Education.

I conclude by putting on record my deepest appreciation to the IECP sector and the IEWG members for your invaluable contributions to this effort.

Dr Albakri Ahmad
Deputy Chief Executive Muis
Chairperson of the Islamic Education Workgroup (IEWG)

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[1] IEWG members include Al-Zuhri, Andalus, As-Siddiq Centre for Islamic Studies Pte Ltd, Cordova, Darul Quran Singapura, ILHAM, Indian Muslim Social Service Association, Muhammadiyah Islamic College, Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore, Perdaus, and Pergas.

SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the purpose of developing the Islamic Education Learners and Educators Map (ILEM) and its Guidebook. It states the Guidebook's various sections and highlights its key points. It then culminates by mentioning the recommendations collectively agreed by the Islamic Education Centres and Providers (IECPs).

Islamic education has always been an important element of the Singapore Muslim Community's religious life. Over the years, the form and structure of the programmes may have changed, but it has always remained true to its intent which is to provide relevant religious guidance for the community. Feedback gathered from recent engagements with various segments of the community have revealed increased expectations on the quality of Islamic Education offered by the Islamic Education Centres and Providers (IECPs) and Asatizah. It also indicated a rising expectation for IECPs to address emerging religious issues, offer courses that are closely related to the lived realities of the learners and teach in a more engaging and creative manner. These feedback, if left unattended, could leave learners feeling dissatisfied and turn them away from attending classes offered by local Asatizah.
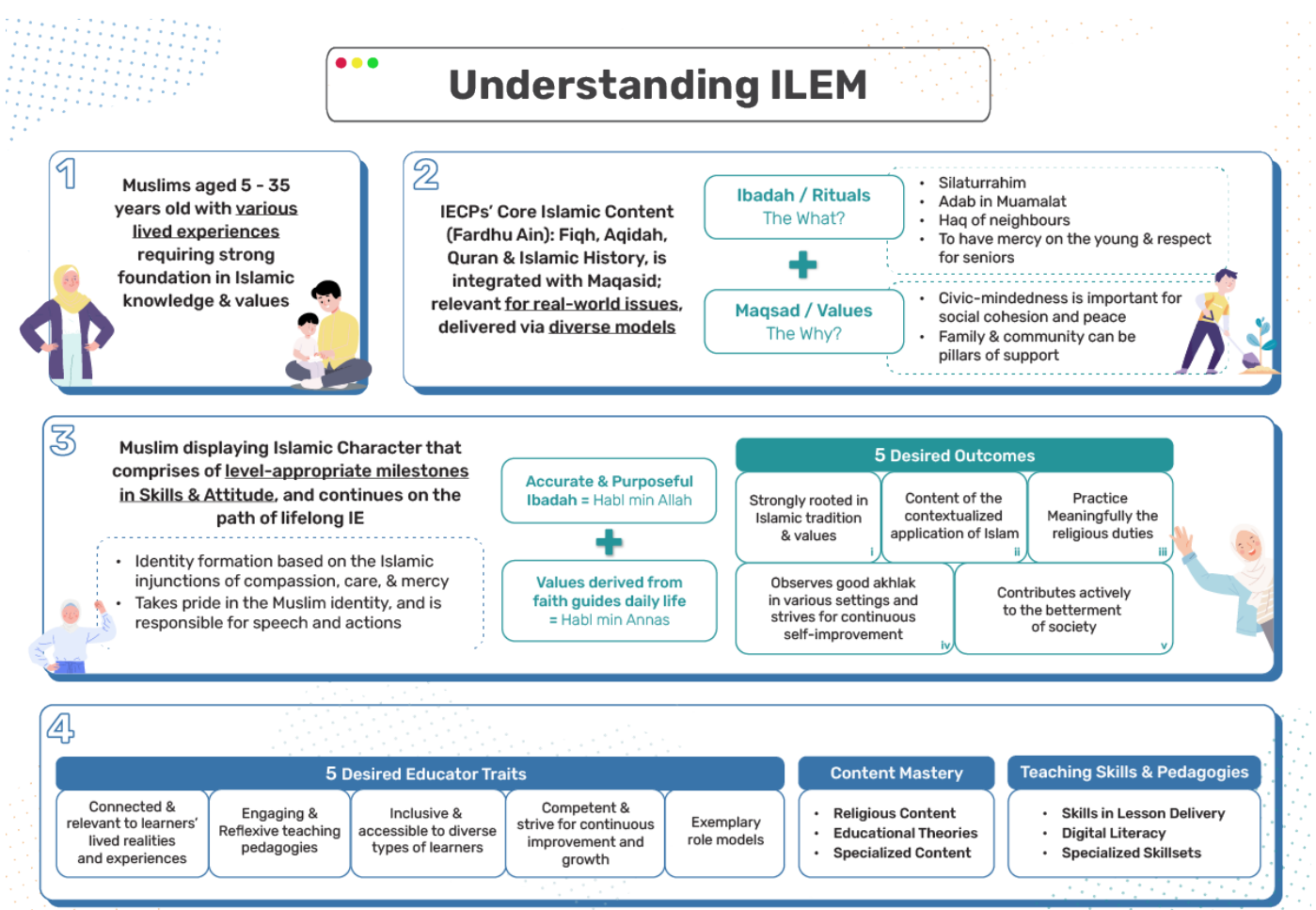
To address this, Muis and the IECPs led by the Islamic Education Workgroup (IEWG) came together to put up a sector-wide commitment to refresh the relevancy of its programs and equip its Asatizah to be impactful communicators of Islam, by charting out a set of learner outcomes for the community, and the direction to teachers training. This aspiration is known as the Islamic Education Learners and Educators Map (ILEM).

To achieve this, it is vital for the sector to understand the various demographics of its learners, and their unique needs. This ILEM Guidebook discusses this in the section "Lived Realities & Experiences" by establishing the analysis of learners via two lenses of Life Stages and Personas. It lays down the milestones and issues of each Life Stage and selected Personas, such as the pervasive use of technology, and changing social norms. This is to illustrate the array and sophistication of the challenges which learners face. If learners continue to be dissuaded from attending Islamic Education programmes, there is the threat to the community's wellbeing and a danger to social cohesion.

In the sections "Curriculum Approaches" and "Teacher Competencies", this strategic shift to Islamic Education is exhibited via the critical discussion of the Core Islamic Content offered by IECPs, and to understand it from a *Maqasid* Approach which carries a more enduring objective. It posits that this *Maqasid* Approach to the Core Islamic Content may impact learners' behaviors positively, and help to retain correct and consistent practice of the

faith. This transformation of Islamic Education can then be a catalyst to produce the five desired learner outcomes for the community.

In the final section "Moving Forward", this Guidebook encourages IECPs to refer closely to ILEM when making improvements to its Islamic Education offerings, due to its value of providing guidance and cultivating synergy across the sector. It also reminds IECPs to continue to collaborate, and that they are invited to contribute to freshen ILEM from time to time. With the aspiration that Islamic Education becomes more connected to the Lived Realities & Experiences, it is hoped that this strengthens the perception of the community towards IECPs and Asatizah as relevant and credible religious institutions.

Diagram 1: Understanding ILEM

SECTION 2:

LIVED REALITIES & EXPERIENCES

This section examines the typical demographic groups of the Singapore Muslim Community, which make up most of the IECP learners. Several examples of these groups' lived realities in terms of the varying experiences they each face in the course of their lives in Singapore, and how guidance from within the religious tradition is vital to address these socio-religious experiences, are presented.

The Singapore Muslim Community is by no means a homogeneous group of people. There are many layers to it which can be sliced across according to various noticeable indicators such as sex, age, educational qualifications, occupation, and socio-economic status. But there are also less noticeable indicators, yet contain factors that impact the individual significantly, such as family traditions, social and cultural influences, personal traumas and multi-stressors.

This diversity is especially evident to personnel at IECPs when they enroll the learners into their programmes. Apart from the above, other indicators such as the level of prior Islamic knowledge come into play when discussing the variety of learners at IECPs. IECPs are expected to provide programmes for learners from zero to advanced knowledge of Islam. Additionally, IECPs also have to take into consideration the various religious understandings, *Mazahib*, and practices.

Although it may be unwise and even impossible to paint a generic picture of the breakdown and nuances of the Singapore Muslim Community, IECPs at the 1st Townhall have mooted a non-exhaustive starting point of classification which may illustrate the common segmentations of learners walking through its doors. We will term this segmentation as the "Life Stages".

LIFE STAGES

There are typically four major life stages of significant milestones which the learner experiences throughout their life: the **Child Life Stage**, the **Teen Life Stage**, the **Youth Life Stage**, and the **Adult Life Stage**.

The **Child Life Stage** can be characterized by learners who are between ages 5 to 12 years old. Usually, children of these ages are enrolled in daily Kindergarten, and Primary school education from years 1 to 6, which builds their foundational academic knowledge and culminates in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE).

IECPs observed that students in this 8 year-bloc experience a broad set of socio-religious issues. Typically, learners in this life stage are at the starting point of their religious learning and are forming the foundations to the beliefs and practices of Islam and hence require strong and systematic Islamic education programmes. Children in this bracket are also now exposed to many socio-emotional stressors at such an early age. These include negligent or abusive families, friendship and social pressures. Many in this age group are considered as digital natives having only ever known a world where the mobile device and connectivity are seen as basic life necessities. Fragile family bonds compounded by unregulated exposure to this pervasive technology pose a serious threat of addiction and negative influences for individuals in this Life Stage.

The **Teen Life Stage** generally consists of individuals in Singapore who are of ages 13 to 19. They attend Secondary school education, and thereafter proceed to Junior Collages, Institutes of Technical Education (ITE), or Polytechnics. Learners in this 7 year-bloc may, in different instances, feel a degree of isolation from the wider community. As they keep up with the substantial load of lessons and assignments and spend lesser time with family, they also must deal with growing up and going through rites of passages as they journey towards maturity. As they seek comfort and confidence in their new appearances, some may take longer to grapple with identity-building and acceptance. If this space and time are not safely afforded to them, some may be hard hit by the effects of societal expectations on their mental and emotional well-being.

Teens in Singapore will also be well accustomed to life in a diverse and multiracial society as it reflects one of the cornerstones of Singapore's nation-building ethos. In school they interact with friends from other faiths, appreciate other's different backgrounds, and even integrate into the student body. Singapore has worked hard to keep the dialogue on diversity constructive. However, this interaction if left unguided, may lead to potentially challenging conversations surrounding interfaith matters, and may even snowball into topics such as Islamophobia, and dilution of religious values.

Moving on to the **Youth Life Stage**, where generally learners are between ages 20 and 25 and are taking on various new experiences as a young adult. In this 5 year-bloc, majority of the male learners will be serving National Service, which in itself poses several interesting socio-religious challenges, and will subsequently continue their education at the tertiary level or start working, as per their female counterparts.

In this life stage, youths are at the crossroads between personal development and assuming greater responsibilities within the family. This nexus is perfectly captured, by on the one hand, the youth's idealistic drive to champion global social-justice grievances such as racial equality, climate change, and rights for migrant communities, with the realities of impending employability, skills-to-jobs match, and lack of future work opportunities. This is compounded by a desire to contribute to the family nucleus amidst rising living costs. In addition to this, they may also be concerned with the uncertainties surrounding certain religious positions that affects them or the community. With the influx of varying arguments and driven by the pursuit of authoritative guidance, youths may be led down a slippery slope of absolutism or God-forbid an affiliation to a deviant practice, and disbelief or worse, apostasy.

The final Life Stage would be the **Adult Life Stage**, typically identified by those aged 26 to 35. These individuals would have recently stepped into the workforce, and the natural progression for some would be to start their own nuclear families. This 9-year bloc can also be termed as the early period of Adulthood, where individuals in this bracket usually are multi-stressed as they deal with and provide for material needs, child rearing, growing careers, planning for retirement in their golden years, and tending to the needs of ageing and ill parents.

This impending experience of greater responsibilities could include shrinking social circles, demanding careers, dealing with the loss of loved ones, and personal regrets which leaves a gaping "religious guidance-shaped hole" that is yearned for amongst learners of this segment. With time as a scarcity, this group tend to turn to short-form and bite-sized online religious advice. These types of religious advice also typically present themselves as generic and decoupled from any underlying context to the guidance provided. Moreover, when this content is delivered by charismatic religious personalities including those from overseas, its legitimacy is cemented in the eyes of the consumer.

PERSONAS

In a fluid and ever-changing world, another lens of which to view the Singapore Muslim Community by, and which also complements the "Life Stage" model, would be through the axis of the personas of interest. These personas exist within the different life stages, and may embody socio-religious needs which are greater in intensity. A non-exhaustive look at some of these personas could include personas which are less noticeable and "hidden", yet possess certain unique needs, such as the shift worker. On the other hand, there are other personas which are more noticeable such as the **student**, the **healthcare professional**, the **national serviceman**, the **working wife**, and even the **revert to Islam**.

The first example of this is of a Muslim **student** in Singapore, who may be selected to attend an overseas education programme with the school. This lived reality as an engaged student will pose several religious implications. In terms of dining, how will the student decide what to eat at a non-halal certified restaurant? In the case of the obligatory *solat*, how does the student perform the *solat* confidently while facing space constraints, tight schedules, and less-than-ideal conditions?

Having experienced the pandemic, we now have a deeper understanding and new found respect for the duties carried out by **Healthcare Professionals**. For those tasked to oversee long procedures in the operating theatres, they may have concerns on whether they are allowed to *jama'* (combine) their *solat*? Those in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may also be wondering the ways for them to perform *taharah* (purification)?

Another example of a persona within the Singapore Muslim Community, is the **National Serviceman.** In the course of his training and duties, he may have questions pertaining to the concessions relating to the methods of *solat* whilst in camp. For those deployed to training in the outdoors and having to equip themselves with outfield gear, how might they perform *wudu'* (ablution), and determine the *qiblah* (direction of prayer)?

Next, we look at the **athlete or sports person**, if they are participating in training camps or competing in tournaments that coincide with Ramadan and the obligatory fast. Are they allowed to miss and make up the days later? How about if these key events occur during the Friday prayers, are they allowed any concessions?

Another persona to consider is the **working wife** who aspires to climb the corporate ladder yet fulfill her duties as a wife, mother, and daughter. How does she navigate her relationship with her husband should she earn more than him? Does she have to contribute to household expenses? Is she guilty of not carrying out her role fully should she employ a domestic worker to help her with the household chores or if she sends her child to a childcare centre?

The final example of a persona in the Singapore Muslim Community worth noting would be the **reverts to Islam or new muslims**. They may have unique considerations, having embraced Islam, and yet striving to maintain positive relations with family members of other faiths. In some instances where filial piety is measured in the observances of certain religious and ritualistic practices which are not from the Islamic traditions, how then would the revert navigate through these possible tensions?

As a tie-up to this section, we can appreciate the array of challenges, circumstances, and concerns, which our learners bring with them as they pass through the doors of our IECPs to seek guidance and closure to their predicaments. Rarely do we find them entering without any preconceived dispositions. Hence, it is our collective responsibility as IECPs and providers of Islamic guidance, to recognize these lived realities and experiences faced by our learners - brought upon by the various Life Stages they may be in – and to respond in a meaningful manner. How this metanarrative manifests itself will be outlined in the following section.

SECTION 3:

CURRICULUM APPROACHES

This section analyzes the metanarrative of ILEM. With a specific focus on the broad Desired Learner Outcomes, that highlight the proposed strategic shift found in ILEM which may be employed when designing impactful content that could transform learners' behaviours.

As a starting point, at the 1st Townhall in 2021, IECPs have agreed that ILEM addresses the age band of learners which is most common across IECPs, of those aged 5 to 35 years old. This age band within ILEM is for the purpose of easy reference for all IECPs, and is not meant to exclude learners outside of this age band in benefiting from the efforts of ILEM. IECPs will be afforded the independent space to analyze ILEM, and their learner profiles, and decide which strategies may also be adapted to engender positive transformation. Another advantage of pivoting ILEM to this age band is that it also reflects the major "Life Stages" and its various Lived Realities and milestones, as discussed in the previous section.

It is precisely because IECPs recognize these lived realities and experiences of our learners, and the dangers related to it if these needs and issues are not attended to, that they have come together to develop these strategies with regard to Desired Curriculum Outcomes and Teacher Competencies. Most, if not all, of the learners at IECPs possess an educational background from the National schools. Although a segment of these learners subscribe to IECPs for their niche or higher learning Diploma and Degree programmes, it is important to acknowledge that among the major motivations of most of these learners when they enroll into IECPs is to attain a strong grasp of the basics of Islamic knowledge and values, in order to solidify their identities and practices as Muslims, and to help them navigate the challenges of their socio-religious life.

As a result of this expectation, if the Islamic Education programme is not meaningful to the needs of the learners, either by way of a lack of content coverage, or poor delivery of educators from the Asatizah fraternity, these learners may be dissuaded from further attending IECP programmes. The deeper implication to this would be the weakening confidence of the Singapore Muslim Community in local Islamic education institutions to understand learners, develop relevant guidance in a timely manner, and as equally crucial, would be to disseminate and deliver the religious messages effectively to its intended audience.

Another far-reaching implication for the Muslim community should the programmes offered by the IECPs come into serious question, would be the emergence of alternative sources awaiting to fill this vacuum for the community. Take for example the latest innovation garnering influence and competing for attention; the Artificial Intelligence (A.I) natural language model chatbot. It is readily accessible and allows the user to hold a conversation with it on any topic. In the context of religious queries, it does provide several benefits to the Muslim learner, as it can respond faster and seemingly provide a more updated and holistic answer. Even Asatizah can leverage on this technology when they research on emerging issues, develop lesson plans, and strategize creative pedagogies.

But as with every tool, there can be possible downsides and risks to human wellbeing when safeguards are absent, especially in a highly polarized world. One such example is when a Muslim from a more complex background, who may be susceptible to dangerous dogmas, comes to generative A.I. with a religious query which requires a more nuanced response and then receives a generic or sweeping position, which alienates every other possible legitimate religious perspective. These less nuanced answers devoid of further context, may lead to understanding Islam from an Absolutist viewpoint, and may pose a challenge to the community's wellbeing and social cohesion.

This is why it is vital for IECPs as a sector to support ILEM in a concerted effort, to refresh the methods of presenting sound religious guidance in the most compelling and useful manner and leveraging the latest technology to guide the Singapore Muslim Community in leading their religious life confidently and faithfully.

CORE ISLAMIC CONTENT

All IECPs agreed on the importance of re-energizing the offerings of Islamic Education. Nevertheless, they also agreed that not all is up for transformation. They term these non-negotiables as the "Core Islamic Content", which essentially resemble the main value proposition of IECPs throughout the decades. In a more traditional sense, "Core Islamic Content" can also be defined as the *Fardu Ain* portion of the religion, which is the baseline group of knowledge required for a Muslim to profess and practice the faith.

As a point of convergence and focus for all IECPs, we can breakdown *Fardu Ain* broadly into studies of *Aqidah, Fiqh, Quran, and Hadith*. In this manner, an Islamic Kindergarten, a

Quranic centre, a seminar-based IECP, and a Pre-Diploma programme may be able to refer to ILEM, as they all — in one way or another — are offering *Fardu Ain*, with various gradations depending on the respective level of studies.

The iterative nature of ILEM would still allow for creativity within this core. IECPs have the autonomy to apply the strategies of ILEM not only to linear programmes but also to abridged versions of these programme offerings. Beyond this core, IECPs are highly encouraged to continue offering a slew of specialized and advanced programmes of other Islamic Sciences, to complement the overall learning. These Islamic Sciences may include: *Ulum Quran, Mustalah Hadith, Usul Fiqh, Arabic Literature, and Mantiq*. However, a distinction should be made between the coverage of these Islamic Sciences at IECPs as compared to Madrasahs, in terms of breadth and depth, as Madrasah education seeks to develop future Asatizah with deep academic foundations.

Having established that *Fardu Ain* remains the staple, it is equally important for IECPs to ask themselves the following critical questions: (i) what is their appetite in wanting to understand their learners' emerging issues?, (ii) how deep are their concerns for these challenges?, (iii) how much change are they ready to incorporate in their courses to address these lived realities?, (iv) how willing are they to explore different modalities to religious education?.

At the 1st Townhall, IECPs voiced out their intentions to enhance their offerings to be more preemptive of these emerging issues, to be in tandem if not proactive in addressing the challenges brought upon by the lived realities and to be dynamic in the way the sector addresses and approaches these topics.

MAQASID APPROACH

As the nature of these issues are that they rapidly evolve and rarely manifest in the same mould over time, the IECPs have concurred that one of the strategies which define ILEM will be its dynamism and fluidity, as encapsulated in what is known as the *Maqasid* Approach.

In reality, the *Maqasid* Approach is not a new groundbreaking framework, and several IECPs are already employing this method theoretically in their curriculum. However, the next

frontier is to engender an intentional awareness of this method across the sector, and position it in a practical manner which is relevant to real-world issues. In its most simple illustration, the *Maqasid* Approach is to observe *Tafaqquh* to reveal the enduring objectives and values behind the doctrines and rituals of the *Fardu Ain*. It is these objectives and values of faith which can positively impact learners' behaviours and help them see the relevance and *hikmah* of the forms of practices itself. What it isn't, is an exercise to do away with the knowledge of the forms and rituals in Islam. By coupling the "What", with the "Why", it will allow greater appreciation and longevity of the doctrines, rituals, and practices in the minds of learners. They will be practicing the rituals purposefully, and without corrupting any of its forms.

As an example, if we have a learner who is from the Teen Life Stage, and the lived reality of this person is the struggle to determine an acceptable personal identity, and due to this inward tension, the person does not see the merit of maintaining any meaningful connection with the wider community and proceeds to be a recluse which then greatly impacts the mental wellbeing. IECPs can take the opportunity to introduce this person to the Islamic injunction of *Silaturrahim* or maintaining ties of kinship, and the rewards for its practice. IECPs can also share the religious encouragement on Muslims to show mercy to the young. But what follows beyond these forms – and integrated within the same topic – is an explanation of the ethical principles behind these rituals. With *Silaturrahim*, one can learn from mentors, develop a support system, and progressively shape a positive and resilient identity. In addition, the ethos of showing mercy to the young within ties of kinship leads to a safe and empathetic space for healthy mental and emotional wellbeing.

Another example of this Teen Life Stage, would be that the learner for the first time is significantly exposed to dogmas which are different from their own, in terms of interacting with non-Islamic belief systems introduced by friends of other faiths, and even getting to know new lifestyles. If these conversations are not conducted with confidence and sensitivity, it may lead to problematic outcomes on a spectrum such as exclusivism and even Islamophobia. IECPs can respond to this scenario by inserting the merits of the Islamic teaching of *Huquq Jaar* (Rights of Neighbours) regardless of the faith background. The learners can also be introduced to the *Adab of Muamalat* or the etiquettes of interaction from the Islamic perspective, such as the ones codified within surah *Al-Hujurat*, or accounts of mature interfaith incidents from the life of Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, such as the *Sahifat al-Madinah* (Charter of Madinah). The ethical principles which can be garnered from these concepts will inform learners that having a civic-minded disposition in the face of differences is paramount to maintaining peace and social cohesion, which is also the bedrock for religions like Islam to thrive.

TRANSFORMATIVE CHARACTER

It is hoped that by adopting the *Maqasid* Approach, highlighting the objectives, values, and deeper meanings of a particular religious topic, Islamic Education can inspire learners at IECPs to have a better appreciation of the rituals and forms of Islam. Knowing the higher aims of Islam will be the catalyst for learners to appreciate and understand the rituals in a more meaningful way and drive them to be more disciplined in practising them correctly and consistently. This also lessens the chances for a disconnect between religion and lived realities, as it provides another dimension to the conventional perception of religious injunctions.

Another upside of exposing learners to the *Maqasid*, is that it cultivates a critical mind, a tool which is essential to support discernment in an ever-evolving globalized world. By bringing our learners on a journey of studying Islam from the perspectives of the Aims of *Shariah* - consisting of concepts such as *Daruriyat, Hajiyat, Tahsiniyat* – our learners will be empowered to be facilitative when faced with socio-religious issues. They will be accustomed to transitioning from a fixation on the *Ahkam* (rituals/regulations), to a utilization of the *Maqasid* (objectives/intents). The list of these emerging issues will continue to burgeon, but an empowered and critical Muslim mind will be able to adapt to any future emerging challenges and will have the confidence to contextualize accordingly.

This *Maqasid* Approach is not an exhaustive way of reconnecting our learners with their faith. It is still broad and iterative and requires a whole-of-sector contribution to continue building on ILEM. As IECPs possess greater rapport with their learners, IECPs may adopt the spirit of ILEM by analyzing their issues, conducting further research on it, and curating religious guidance that will provide solutions and address their needs in the Singapore context. What is vital is that learners find the religious guidance provided by IECPs to be the most compelling standpoint for the rational mind when discussing issues and realities.

HABL MIN ALLAH, HABL MIN ANNAS

This approach also draws parallels with the model of *Habl Min Allah* (maintaining ties with Allah), and *Habl Min Annas* (maintaining ties with humankind). When learners can

practice the rituals accurately and purposefully, they are fulfilling their *Habl Min Allah*. When learners see the relevance of faith practices and that it imbibes values of humanity, they are fulfilling their *Habl Min Annas*.

The aspiration is that over time, this meaningful practice of Islam - *Habl Min Allah*, coupled with a cognition of its transformative deeper meaning - *Habl Min Annas*, will support the development of a desired Islamic character which is able to display milestones of Islamic practice. Taking the example of the learner from the Teen Life Stage again, it is hoped that through the *Maqasid* Approach, the learner who once was devoid of a stable identity, and hesitant to interact with the religious other out of fear, now takes pride in the Muslim identity, confidently carries out the rituals, assumes responsibility for interactions, and exudes compassion, care, and mercy to others. The expectation for the learner now shifts from making *Da'wah* via speech, to *Da'wah* in action.

The IECPs at the 1ˢᵗ Townhall also agreed in principle, that the vision for the Singapore Muslim Community is to exhibit five broad desired outcomes that is encapsulated in the concepts of *Habl Min Allah* and *Habl Min Annas*. Having accurate and purposeful *Ibadah - Habl Min Allah*, will manifest three of the five desired outcomes: being strongly rooted in Islamic tradition and values, being confident of the contextualized application of Islam, and being able to practice meaningfully the religious duties. Additionally, cognition of the *Ibadah's* transformative deeper meaning - *Habl Min Annas*, will produce two of the five desired outcomes: being able to observe good *akhlak* in various settings and striving for continuous self-improvement, and being able to contribute actively to the betterment of society. Here are the five desired outcomes in a snapshot:

Concept	Desired Outcomes
Habl Min Allah	1. Strongly rooted in Islamic tradition and values
	2. Confident of the contextualized application of Islam
	3. Practice meaningfully the religious duties
Habl Min Annas	4. Observes good *akhlak* in various settings and strives for continuous self-improvement
	5. Contributes actively to the betterment of society

Table 1: Desired Outcomes

THE DESIRED FIVE

Beginning with the *Habl Min Allah* cluster of desired outcomes, the first is to be **"strongly rooted in Islamic tradition and values."** The learner understands the importance of learning Islam from the right sources, and displays a solid moral compass grounded in the fundamentals of Islam. In addition to this, the learner complements this mastery of Islamic practice with an appreciation of the higher objectives of the Shariah. For example, a learner who knows the vitality of the role of the mosque in a community but appreciates the higher objectives of *Hifz Nafs* (preservation of human life) in determining the temporary mosque closure during the pandemic. Similarly, a learner who believes in the obligation of performing *Haj*, but is also resilient in his faith in accepting the temporary suspension of *Haj* for the above reasons.

The second desired outcome, **"confident of the contextualized application of Islam"** is when the learner understands that Islam's dynamism allows it to be contextualized to different milieu to continue guiding Muslims. The learner does not feel "less of a Muslim" when engaging in these adaptive religious practices. Instead, the learner is confident with the soundness of these adaptive applications. Some examples of this outcome may be manifested in the confidence in the legitimacy of paying zakat online, and the resilience in the temporary measure of social distancing during prayer against the backdrop of the pandemic.

The third desired outcome **"practice meaningfully the religious duties"** may be viewed as the culmination of the earlier two outcomes. This is when a learner not only knows about the fundamentals of Islam, and its contextualized adaptations, but is also able to possess the love and discipline to follow through with its consistent practise. This love for the religion is embodied in a sincere and meaningful practise of the religious injunctions and duties, which will also act as an inspiration to other Muslims. One example of excellence in performing religious rituals would be the lesser-known practise of performing *wudu'* (ablution) at home before heading to the mosque for prayers.

Under the *Habl Min Annas* cluster of desired outcomes, is the fourth outcome **"observes good akhlak in various settings and strives for continuous self-improvement".** The learner's education in Islamic knowledge has allowed for a transformation of good *akhlak* (positive behavior). The learner exudes a pleasant disposition

to others, whether at home with the family, or at school with classmates and teachers, or at work with colleagues and clients. The learner is *Da'wah* in action, a walking ambassador for the virtues of the religion. Beyond this, the learner is a proponent of displaying good *akhlak* in the pursuit of religious knowledge, by affording respect to the process of learning, and by adopting a mindset of lifelong learning. The learner strives to reach optimal potential.

The fifth and final desired outcome is **"contributes actively to the betterment of society"**. This is a natural progression from knowledge, to contextualization, to practice, to self-betterment, and to an attitude of social responsibility and contributiveness. The learner does not stop at self-improvement but is spurred on to be a contributive member of society. The learner strives to provide benefit to the Muslim community and humanity at large, by embodying the ethos of *Rahmatan lil Alamin*. In this way, the learner also acts as an nspiration and role model to others.

Taking into consideration the lived realities and experiences of learners' life stages and personas, as well as the curriculum approaches, and the desired outcomes, IECPs would be able to design lessons that would meet the learning needs and aspirations of the learners, leading into the development of the vision of a Singapore Muslim Community of Success.

Sample template for ILEM schema:

Desired Learner Outcomes		CORE ISLAMIC CONTENT				CHARACTER
	Strongly rooted in Islamic tradition and values	Confident of the contextualized application of Islam	Practice meaningfully the religious duties	Observes good akhlak in various settings and strives for continuous self-improvement	Contributes actively to the betterment of society	Level-appropriate Skills & Attitude Outcomes throughout Life-stage
		FIQH	AQIDAH	QURAN	HADITH	
Broad Life-stage issues	Values/Maqsad (Why?)	Rituals (What?)	Rituals (What?)			
			Values/Maqsad (Why?)			
Total 30 years						
Life-stage 1 **Child 5-12 yo Kindergarten to Primary School** **At year 8**	Lack of basic religious knowledge, weak foundation in religious character making it difficult to deal with socio-emotional stresses partly due to familial, social and early device & social media exposure and addiction	**Fiqh — Rituals (What?):** Understand, memorize, and practice the Rukun Islam; 5 Ahkam Wad'i; Purification from Najis and other needs where appropriate; Wudu and Tayammum; Knows how to pray in congregation and the sunnah prayers. **Values/Maqsad (Why?):** Purification and submission in humility to God, by discharging responsibilities	**Aqidah — Rituals (What?):** Understand, memorize and belief in Rukun Iman; Tadabbur on the greatness of Allah s.w.t; Know Maruf & Munkar; Adab in making Doa; Various doas relevant to age group and needs. **Values/Maqsad (Why?):** The creations of Allah s.w.t as a sign of His greatness, fortifying a love to abide by His commands and to stay away from His prohibitions, and to call upon Him	Read, memorize, and basic understanding of chosen surahs in juz 'amma; Selected verses to support character building	Sirah of the Prophet s.a.w in Makkah and Madinah; Character building based on the Prophet Peace Be Upon Him, and the Sahabah	Exudes Islamic character by distinguishing right from wrong, consistently in different social settings; Adab in realtionships; Character building; Resilience

Sample template for ILEM schema:

		CORE ISLAMIC CONTENT						CHARACTER
		FIQH		AQIDAH		QURAN	HADITH	
	Broad Life-stage issues	Rituals (What?)	Values/Maqsad (Why?)	Rituals (What?)	Values/Maqsad (Why?)			Level-appropriate Skills & Attitude Outcomes throughout Life-stage
Total 30 years								
Life-stage 2 **Teenager 13-19 yo Secondary School to Polytechnic** **At year 7**	Isolation from the community, while grappling with identity issues, mental health, Islamophobia, exposed to friends' religious beliefs and changing life norms	Muamalat & Silaturahim Haq of neighbors, Mercy on the young, respect for the seniors. Puberty and purification Concept of Aurah Fasting & discipline Basic Islamic Finance concepts	The role of family and community in inculcating good values, such as Islamic concept of sexuality Purification of the outwardly and inwardly, and abstention from temptations	Meaning of syahadah and tauhid Introduction to the concept of Ihsan Syirik and its various forms Addressing misconceptions on other religious beliefs Ulul azmi stories of prophets Maksum nature of the prophets Importance of Selawat onto the Prophet s.a.w Various doas relevant to age group and needs	Having strong foundation and belief in Allah s.w.t anchored in HIS oneness and acknowledgement of his existence and our relationship with HIM through the teachings of the Prophet s.a.w and basic understanding of other faiths systems Resilience of the prophets in the face of adversity, knowing their source of comfort in God	Read, memorize, and basic understanding of all surahs in juz amma Selected verses related to identity formation, wellbeing, and life values (stories of past peoples, etc)	Khulafa Rasyidun, on leadership, innovation, and creativity Hadith 40	Responsible in speech and actions and takes pride in identity as a Muslim Identity formation based on compassion, care, and mercy (Al-Anbiya':107, Al-Qalam:4)

Sample template for ILEM schema:

		CORE ISLAMIC CONTENT						
		FIQH		**AQIDAH**		**QURAN**	**HADITH**	**CHARACTER**
Total 30 years	*Broad Life-stage issues*	*Rituals (What?)*	*Values/Maqsad (Why?)*	*Rituals (What?)*	*Values/Maqsad (Why?)*			*Level-appropriate Skills & Attitude Outcomes throughout Life-stage*
Life-stage 3 **Youth 20-25 yo** **National Service to University** **At year 6**	Overwhelmed with increased responsibilities, uncertainty regarding religious positions, worries about lack of future opportunities and increasing living costs, and fixation on global issues and grievances	Mazahib Fiqhiyyah Living in secular societies Zakat, Islamic Finance Rukhsah Umrah Concept of Ikhtilat - relationships	Discerning of deviant elements Inspired by the dynamism that allows human socio-religious life to prosper Understanding the parameters of relationships with the opposite sex in various situations	Concept of trials in life Expanding the understanding of the concept of Ihsan in different aspects of life Concept of Ikhtiyar in dealing with Qada and Qadr Purpose of life and drive to cooperate in goodness and be of most benefit to others	Assured by Tawakkul and God's wise plan for His creations Objective with regards to state of the world and inspired to contribute in healthy ways	Read, memorize, and basic understanding of surah Yasin & Al-Mulk Selected verses relevant to issues faced during this life stage	Umayyad and Abasid Caliphates Key learning points from these caliphates that are relevant to life stage (learning from others, civilizational achievements,etc)	Exudes Islamic consciousness in various situations Constantly improving self through humility (tawadu'), sincerity (Ikhlas), continuous improvements and serving others (Khidmah)
Life-stage 4 **Adult 26-34 yo** **Workforce to Starting Families** **At year 9**	Shrinking social circles, dealing with loss and regrets, interest to plan for old age, burden of providing and saving for children and providing for elderly parents	Marriage Raising families Concept of Taubah Haj Faraidh	Importance of building cohesive families to support a person's holistic needs Stewardship of families requires introspection of one's actions	Concept of Istidraj Signs of the Last Day Concept of competing in goodness Sincerity & Itqan in actions	Objectivity regarding worldly pleasures Emphasis on quality over quantity of deeds	Introduction to tafsir of chosen surahs	Islamic Golden Age Islam in Southeast Asia	Confidence to deal with diversity, and possesses deeper Islamic knowledge for moral decisions

SECTION 4:

TEACHER COMPETENCIES

This section explores several of the desired Educator traits, and Teacher Competencies as proposed by the sector at the 1ˢᵗ Townhall, to be adopted by Asatizah in teaching roles at the IECPs. These competencies will be pivotal to support the delivery of the Desired Outcomes envisioned for the Singapore Muslim Community as outlined in ILEM.

An equally integral part of the ILEM effort besides the Desired Outcomes, is the collation of the Teacher Competencies required to support the effective delivery of the lessons. After all, a curriculum is only as good as its teaching force.

Following the discussions at the 1st Townhall, IECPs recommended five broad desirable traits for educators. These traits describe IECP educators who are **1) connected and relevant to learners' lived realities and experiences,** employ **2) engaging and reflexive teaching pedagogies**, are **3) inclusive and accessible to diverse types of learners**, are **4) competent and strive for continuous improvement and growth**, and are **5) exemplary role-models of Islamic values and teachings**.

Feedback gathered from a segment of IECP learners relating to some of their educators indicated a deficiency in content mastery, as well as a gap in 21ˢᵗ Century Competencies in teaching skills and pedagogies employed. This shows that, the first three desired traits for educators have yet to be fulfilled. For educational institutions to retain relevance and credibility in the minds of the community, they have to empower and upskill their Asatizah – who are the first touch point for learners in their education journey. The bedrock to this is by engendering a growth mindset throughout the teaching fraternity. Asatizah need to realize that the only way to compete for the mindshare of their learners in the face of global influencers and easy access to information, is the willingness to unlearn and relearn skills and strategies to administer impactful learning experiences. Additionally, Asatizah should also exhibit exemplary role-modeling of Islamic *Akhlak* and values to the students. This is a testimony to their internalization and realization of the message that they carry and their role as *warathatul anbiya'*. This will then fulfill the fourth and fifth desired traits for educators.

As a starting point, the following is a non-exhaustive set of competencies in two areas — **content mastery, and teaching skills and pedagogies** proposed by IECPs as critical to the success of the sectoral effort. IECPs are invited to progressively build and expand this set of competencies so as to remain relevant, especially to its unique segment of learners.

CONTENT MASTERY

In terms of content mastery, this set of competencies can be divided into three categories: **religious content, educational theories, and specialized content**. For **religious content**, besides diving deeper into the traditional subjects or Core Islamic Content, this category may also comprise equipping educators with knowledge of the latest global developments and emerging issues that impact religious life. Educators at IECPs could then be trained on how to address the concerns related to these issues through lesson design. Educators can also be trained to integrate the content in an interdisciplinary manner by contextualizing these issues to the Singapore milieu through concepts from *Nawazil Fiqhiyah* (Contemporary issues pertaining to *Fiqh*). Educators may also be equipped with knowledge from Comparative *Fiqh* to address diversity matters such as intrafaith and interfaith issues. In addition to this, Asatizah will also benefit from discussions on ways to reveal the ethical considerations from *Tarikh* (Islamic historical studies), to apply to real-world problem-solving.

For knowledge in **educational theories**, Asatizah are not expected to be fully immersed in the breadth and depth of this domain, but rather to be astutely familiar with the basics of curriculum design, its related theories, and the concept of design thinking. These tools will support them to be bold in reshaping lesson plans, and design a classroom that provides an emotionally and psychologically safe space for learners to voice out critical viewpoints with confidence. This is especially important for critical young Muslim minds who thirst for knowledge and understanding.

With regard to the third category of knowledge in **specialized content**, Asatizah can be exposed to training across domains, such as that of special needs and mental health. With increasing inclusivity and awareness of marginalized segments of the community, Asatizah need to recognize trends and the level of expertise required to engage learners from special needs backgrounds, as well as the need to be sensitive to the issues faced by learners struggling with mental health.

TEACHING SKILLS AND PEDAGOGIES

For teaching skills and pedagogies, this set of competencies can also be divided into three categories: skills in **lesson delivery, digital literacy, and specialized skillsets**. With regard to skills in **lesson delivery**, Asatizah may be trained in various techniques and strategies which will drive learner engagement. Asatizah should be equipped with collaborative, facilitative, problem-solving, as well as modeling and mentoring skills. These would allow them to design and deliver student-centred lessons that are developmentally appropriate, experiential in nature, and allow for critical conversations and dialogues.

The next category of skills - **digital literacy** - is pivotal especially with this generation's positioning at the crossroads of digitalization and learning culture. Digital literacy allows for learning via different modalities, which may include leveraging on technology-led learning assessments such as gamification, utilization of Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, and Virtual Reality for an immersive experience. It also requires Asatizah to be able to plan lessons well using these digital tools and to use them appropriately. But beyond using these digital tools, digital literacy is also the courage to talk about the impact of technology and social media on learners and how to manage them.

The third category is the **specialized skillsets**, which closely mirror its counterpart which is the knowledge of specialized content. In this category, Asatizah are to be equipped – beyond the knowledge – but also with skillsets such as basic child psychology, to engage with learners of specialized backgrounds. As an example, Asatizah when necessary, can setup classes for learners with special needs and are able to chart out learning outcomes for them. Besides curating for learners with special needs, Asatizah may also incorporate inclusive classroom practices for other specialized segments, thus expanding their outreach and ensuring that religious education is indeed for all.

Areas	Description				
Desired Educator Traits	Connected & relevant to learners' lived realities and experiences	Engaging & reflexive teaching pedagogies	Inclusive & accessible to diverse types of learners	Competent & strive for continuous improvement and growth	Exemplary role-models of Islamic values and teachings
Content Mastery Competencies	Religious Content | Educational Theories | Specialized Content				
Teaching Skills & Pendagogies Competencies	Skills in Lesson Delivery | Digital Literacy | Specialized Skillsets				

Table 2: Desired Educator Traits

SECTION 5:

MOVING FORWARD

This section outlines the possible strategies according to the objectives of ILEM, which IECPs can embark on in the future to further strengthen Islamic Education in Singapore.

ILEM features the sector-wide, mutually agreed upon Desired Outcomes and Teacher Competencies that form the starting point for IECPs to uplift their offerings and close the gaps between them and their learners. The purpose of ILEM is to act as a common reference point and building block, to spark progressive and long-term impactful transformation. ILEM neither claims to possess all the answers to an ever volatile and changing world, nor does it intend to restrict any of the IECPs' autonomy and creativity. On the contrary, the iterative nature of ILEM will depend on the continuous contributions of IECPs to enrich and add value to the initial framework that was developed together.

The way forward is in the partnerships and collaborations forged between IECPs. The approach of many helping hands ensures that this commitment to providing Islamic Education, which is connected to the current and future lived realities of learners, remains a top priority. As IECPs know their learners and teachers best, they should continue to better understand and carefully profile the learners under their care as well as the specializations of their Asatizah. Doing so would allow them to strategize ways to provide nuances and gradations to their learning milestones and offer bespoke courses based on their Asatizah's expertise. Based on the information gathered and the expertise available at the IECPs, they can - individually or in partnerships - transform their offerings and achieve the desired outcomes by revising the existing curriculum and textbooks or co-organizing extension programmes focusing on diversity, or workshops discussing the intersections between Islamic knowledge and other disciplines such as psychology and sociology.

As for equipping educators with competencies which align with the learner's realities, IECPs can look to optimizing the collective wisdom of the sector, by organizing Communities of Practice (COP), for their Asatizah to exchange best practices. Asatizah may learn from each other on ways to teach Islam in context, with reference to identified contemporary socio-religious challenges. These COPs may also include Educationists and other experts and professionals, for Asatizah to seek inputs on ways to maximize the limited contact time that they have with learners at IECPs. While the intent is to continuously develop Asatizah professionally, IECPs should also ensure that the wellbeing of their Asatizah is not compromised. Thus finding the right balance between continuous professional development and personal and mental wellbeing is critical for the sector to flourish.

To culminate the learning and experiences exchanged from the COPs, IECPs together with the IEWG can also organise an educational seminar every few years so as to expand the learning, exchange best practices, understand the evolving socio-religious issues and discuss ways to better address and meet the needs of their learners by employing the latest educational tools and methods. This will ensure the vibrancy of the sector and enhance its reputation.

In conclusion, it is recognized that individually there are limits to the contribution that each IECP can offer. However, collectively as one united sector, with qualities of openness, adaptability, and resourcefulness, IECPs will be able to journey together with their learners, towards a Confident Muslim Community of the Future.

SECTION 6:

BUILDING CONSENSUS: CO-CREATION PROCESS WITH THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION CENTRES AND PROVIDERS (IECP)

This section revisits the key engagements with the IEWG and IECPs, in developing ILEM.

IECP ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

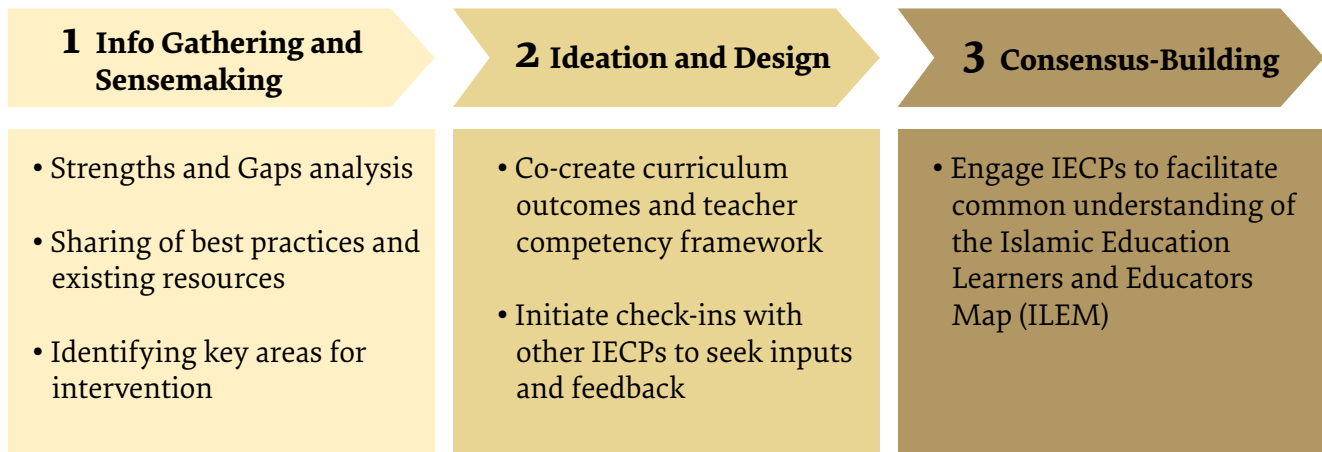| 1 Info Gathering and Sensemaking	2 Ideation and Design	3 Consensus-Building
• Strengths and Gaps analysis • Sharing of best practices and existing resources • Identifying key areas for intervention	• Co-create curriculum outcomes and teacher competency framework • Initiate check-ins with other IECPs to seek inputs and feedback	• Engage IECPs to facilitate common understanding of the Islamic Education Learners and Educators Map (ILEM)

Diagram 2: IECP Engagement Framework

There are three key workstreams employed by Muis in its engagement with IECPs to develop ILEM: Information gathering and sensemaking, ideation and design, as well as consensus-building.

For the first workstream "Information gathering and sensemaking", Muis formed the IEWG in 2019, to kick-off the analysis of strengths and gaps existing in IECPs' curriculum. It then organized the IEWG Retreat in 2020, for the IEWG to share best practices and existing resources. It also conducted an exercise to identify key areas for intervention.

The second workstream "Ideation and design" would be more immersive, as the IEWG expanded into sub-groups consisting of its experienced programme heads and educators. This was for the purpose of co-creating the first cut of desired outcomes and teacher competencies. There were two rounds of robust sub-group discussions to attain inputs and feedback, which concluded in 2021.

The third workstream is "Consensus-building", whereby Muis and the IEWG organized the 1st Townhall in 2021, to present the first cut of ILEM, and to facilitate common understanding and gather insights from the wider-sector. The presentation of the reviewed version of ILEM will be made at the 2nd Townhall in 2023.

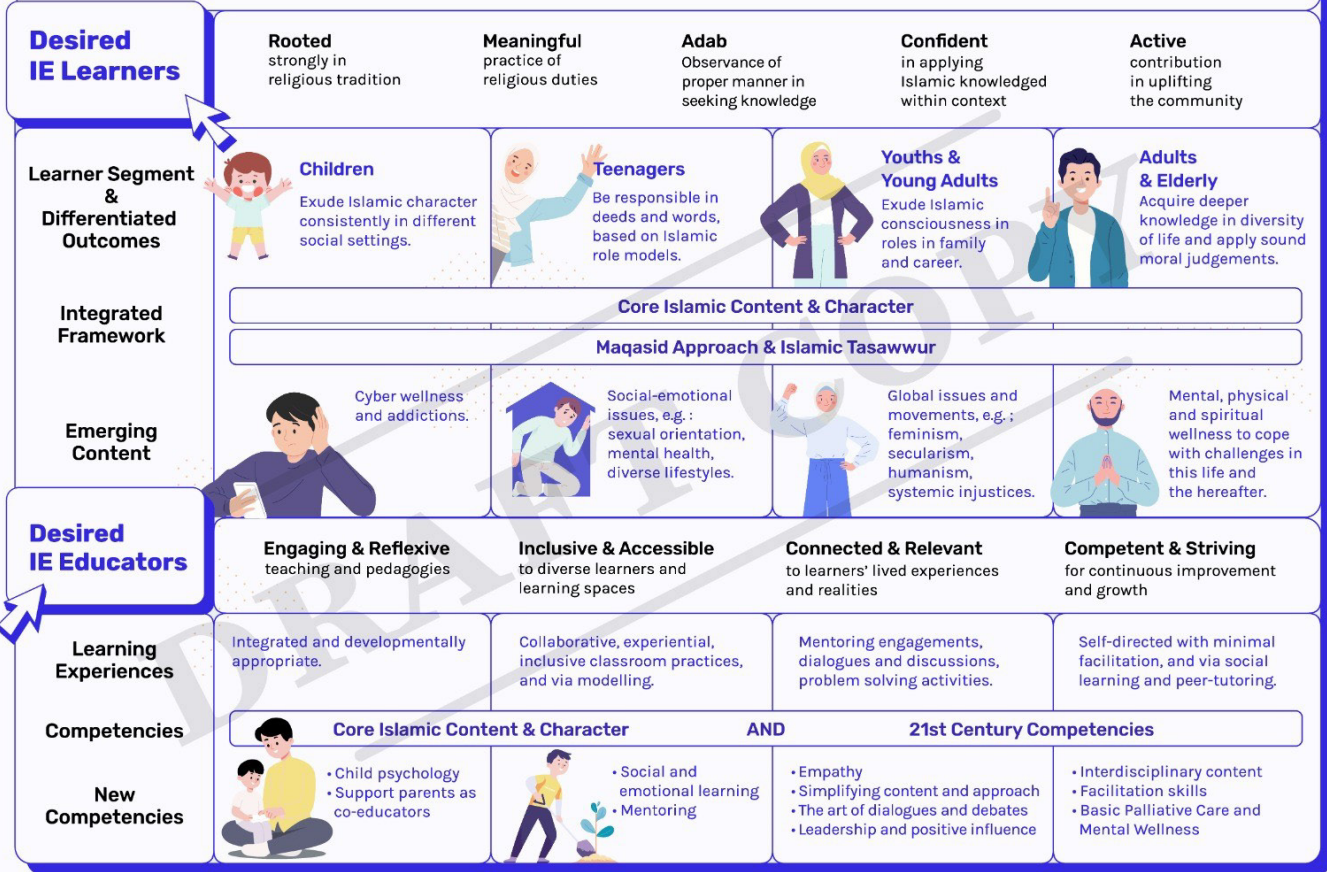**Islamic Education Learners & Educators Map (ILEM) (DRAFT)**

Desired IE Learners

Rooted	Meaningful	Adab	Confident	Active
strongly in religious tradition	practice of religious duties	Observance of proper manner in seeking knowledge	in applying Islamic knowledged within context	contribution in uplifting the community

Learner Segment & Differentiated Outcomes

Children — Exude Islamic character consistently in different social settings.

Teenagers — Be responsible in deeds and words, based on Islamic role models.

Youths & Young Adults — Exude Islamic consciousness in roles in family and career.

Adults & Elderly — Acquire deeper knowledge in diversity of life and apply sound moral judgements.

Integrated Framework

Core Islamic Content & Character

Maqasid Approach & Islamic Tasawwur

Emerging Content

Cyber wellness and addictions.

Social-emotional issues, e.g. : sexual orientation, mental health, diverse lifestyles.

Global issues and movements, e.g. ; feminism, secularism, humanism, systemic injustices.

Mental, physical and spiritual wellness to cope with challenges in this life and the hereafter.

Desired IE Educators

Engaging & Reflexive	Inclusive & Accessible	Connected & Relevant	Competent & Striving
teaching and pedagogies	to diverse learners and learning spaces	to learners' lived experiences and realities	for continuous improvement and growth

Learning Experiences

Integrated and developmentally appropriate.	Collaborative, experiential, inclusive classroom practices, and via modelling.	Mentoring engagements, dialogues and discussions, problem solving activities.	Self-directed with minimal facilitation, and via social learning and peer-tutoring.

Competencies

Core Islamic Content & Character   AND   21st Century Competencies

New Competencies

- Child psychology
- Support parents as co-educators

- Social and emotional learning
- Mentoring

- Empathy
- Simplifying content and approach
- The art of dialogues and debates
- Leadership and positive influence

- Interdisciplinary content
- Facilitation skills
- Basic Palliative Care and Mental Wellness

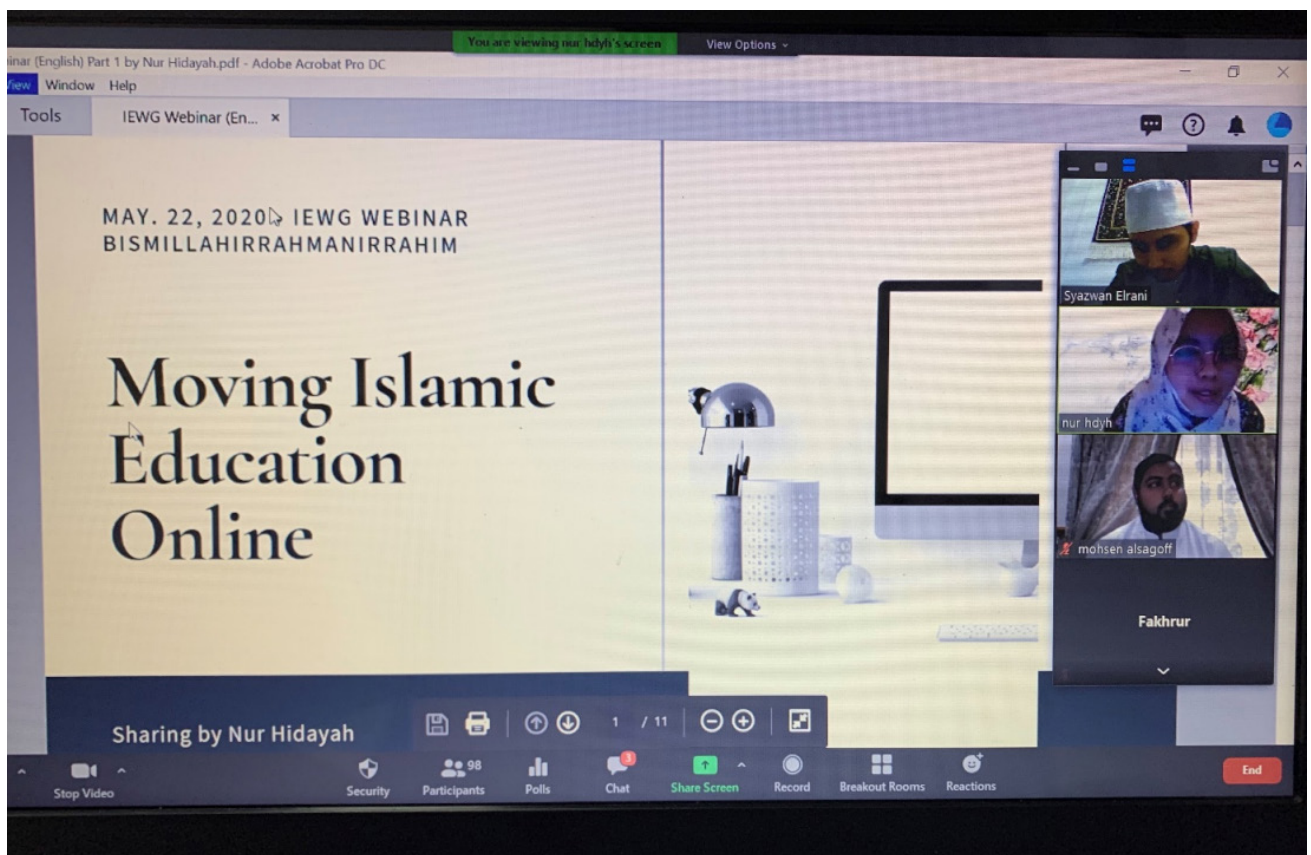**Diagram 3: Draft ILEM, 2021**

SECTION 7:

SNAPSHOTS FROM IECP ENGAGEMENTS

This section features a pictural highlight from selected IECP Engagements.

IEWG Retreat, 2020
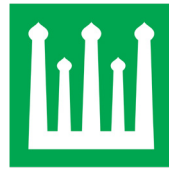

IECP Webinar, 2020

Panel Session at 1ˢᵗ Townhall, 2021

Breakout Session at 1ˢᵗ Townhall, 2021

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