

COMPONENT STRUCTURE OF THE MADRASAH LEARNING PROGRAM

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PRELIMINARIES

The paper is designed to provide a comprehensive review of the different components that are essential in the development of a learning program for *madaris* (see the flow diagram). The review is meant to provide a basis for discussion with the goal of forging a consensus on the overall structure of the program that the World Federation plans to develop for adoption by *madaris* worldwide.

A number of principles underlie the discussion of the contents of the different components:

- Simple, practical definitions of components, free from academic jargon
- Objective assessment of pros and cons of alternative overall approaches
- Coverage of all components that constitutes a fully-rounded learning program
- Options suggested for key components to demonstrate possibilities
- Components and any attendant options illustrated by examples from existing curricula
- Examples intended to elucidate concepts and principles, not to advocate for any particular approach
- Global blueprint for *madaris* with possibilities for regional/local customization.

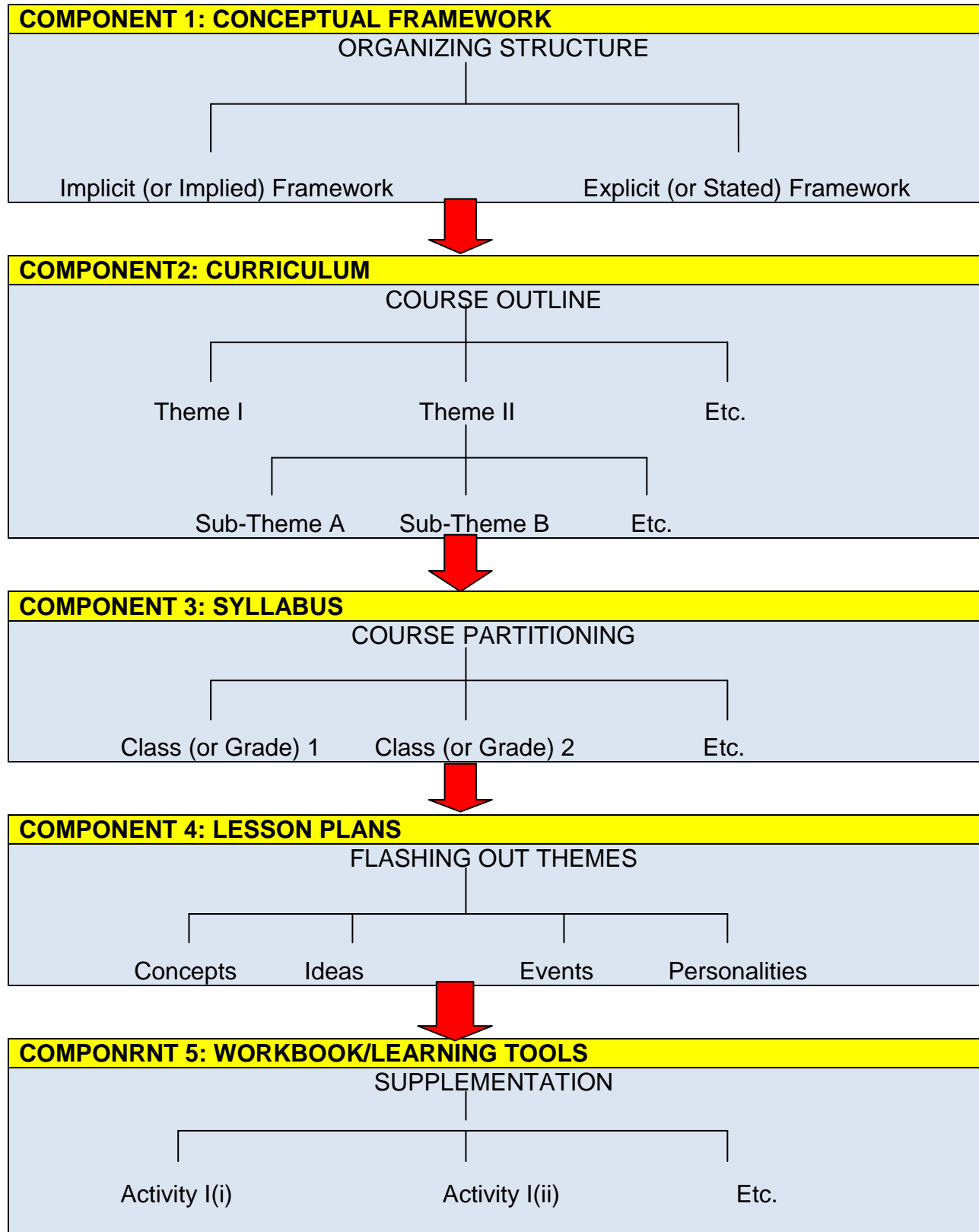
OVERALL APPROACH

There are **two basic philosophies** that characterize the overall approach to the courses taught in a *madrasah*. A third approach is a hybrid one that combines some elements of the two basic philosophies.

Besides **Qur'an Recitation and Tafsir**, there are **four core** courses that are typically taught in *madaris* -- in some *madaris* each course is taught on its own, while in others they are combined in several different configurations. The core courses are: **Aqaid** (Beliefs), **Fiqh** (Jurisprudence), **Akhlaq** (Ethics) and **Tarikh** (History).

There are other short courses which may also be taught; examples include Comparative Religions and Spirituality.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF THE COMPONENT STRUCTURE



1. **Integrated Approach:** An approach that integrates all the core courses through an overarching organizing structure. The themes that flow from the structure literally form an overhead arch and transcend, or cut across, all the courses. Additionally, themes are arrayed into tiers or layers, with each succeeding theme in a lower-level tier being a part of a broader theme of the preceding higher-level tier so that they form a nested hierarchy.

There is to my knowledge **no** madrasah curriculum that is truly integrated in the sense defined above. However, the IEB of Nasimco in a retreat held in Los Angeles in 2002 developed such an organizing structure called **The Qur'anic Worldview**. Unfortunately, with the dissolution of the IEB in 2004, the initiative was not followed through and, consequently, the cross-curricular themes/sub-themes that logically flow from the structure were not identified.

The overarching themes of the Qur'anic Worldview are *Tawhid* (Monotheism), and its corollary, *Tasleem* (Submission) as is indicated by the Qur'anic *ayah* (21:25): "... We did not send any Prophet before you except that we revealed to him that there is no god but Me so worship Me [only]." The constituent sub-themes of each, together with the different aspects of supplication that are directly tied-in with the themes and sub-themes, are shown in the diagram below and are described in detail in [Towards the Qur'anic Worldview](#).¹

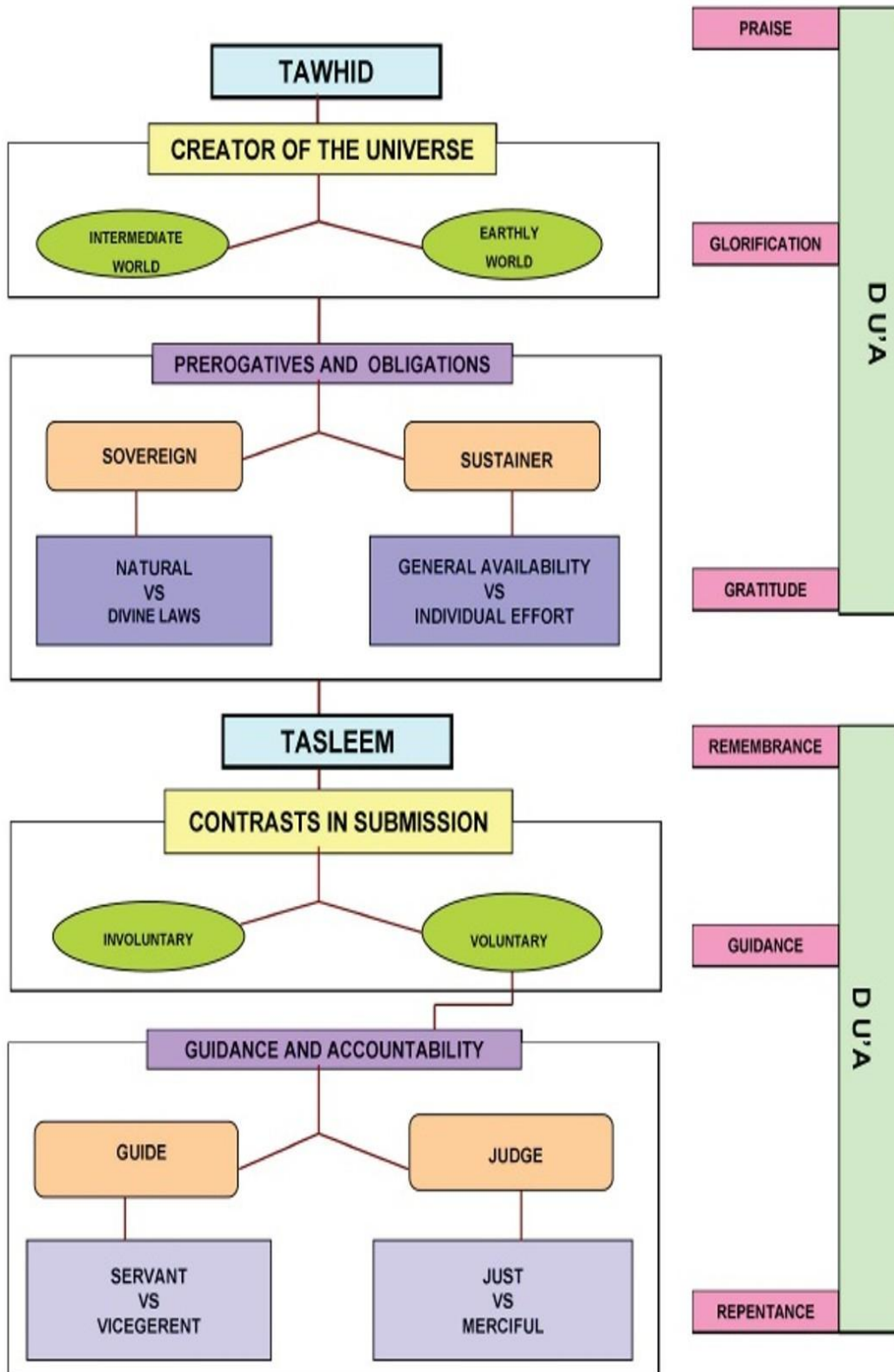
Pros

- a. Islam is a holistic religion so linkage across all facets of the religion makes an integrated approach inherently appealing
- b. An overarching structure cannot but be based on the Qur'an which makes the Qur'an the central focus of the *madrasah* curriculum
- c. With the significant reduction in number of courses to be taught, greater time and resources can be devoted to the integrated approach that could include, for example, live demonstrations of religious practices.

Cons

- a. Challenging to develop a curriculum that effectively ties in all the themes from each of the core courses
- b. Challenging to allocate themes to different classes/grades while maintaining the basic integrity of the overarching structure
- c. Much of the course content will have to be developed from scratch which will add time to the development of the program.

Breaking down *Tawhid* and *Tasleem* into their Constituent Components



2. **Conventional Approach: A course-by-course approach that provides an in-depth study of the themes that are an integral part of a core course.**

The curriculum used by many *madaris* in all regions of the world is based on a conventional approach (though two or more courses may be combined together under one rubric such as *Diniyaat*).

The first such approach was developed by Nairobi in the 1970s (IRE Syllabus).² It has since been updated and enhanced by Stanmore which is now the most widely used curriculum by Khoja *madaris* (or those affiliated with a Khoja institution),³ and most recently by Shaykh Khalil Jaffer for Brampton, Canada which reportedly will be adopted by all the *madaris* in Canada.⁴

Pros

- a. Most commonly used approach, so a majority of the *madaris* are already familiar with it and would more readily adopt a new syllabus based on it
- b. Easier to develop course curricula and to tie them to a course-based conceptual framework
- c. Allows a comprehensive treatment of the themes/sub-themes in their entirety, rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

Cons

- a. Compartmentalizes Islam when it is a holistic religion
- b. Still, there is to some extent intrinsic, necessary overlap among courses
- c. Students will likely fail to inter-connect related concepts /ideas from different courses (unless Lesson Plans explicitly point these out).

3. **Hybrid Approach: An approach that attempts partial integration of selected courses which necessarily requires supplementation in some form. The approach, in essence, becomes an amalgam of some elements of the integrated and conventional approaches.**

The approach is exemplified by the QFatima curriculum. It adopts “**a cross-curricular approach**” for students up to 11 years old, and “**a modular approach**” for ages 11 to 16. The cross-curricular approach discusses themes/sub-themes from core courses. However, there does **not** appear to be any obvious linkage of the themes/sub-themes discussed within any lesson plan. The modular approach focuses on selected topics for an in-depth study and diverse concepts/ideas are introduced that are germane to those topics.⁵

There are variants of the QFatima curriculum which make the linkage among selected courses more apparent. One example is the AIMS syllabus. By designating courses with such names as “Personality Building” and “Islamic Lifestyle,” it combines certain aspects of *akhlaq* and *furuḥ* within the same course. However, “Ideology” and “History” still constitute two independent courses⁶

The most recent hybrid approach is by the Muslim Congress of USA. The syllabus has so far been developed for the first five grades. The approach takes “**concepts such as foundational concepts (*Usool ad-Deen*), religious practices (*Furoo’ ad-Deen*), teachings of the Prophets and Imams and the verses of the Holy Quran [and combines them] into an integrated set of lessons.**” Furthermore, it uses a “spiral model” as students “repeat the study of a subject at different grade levels, each time at a higher level of difficulty and in greater depth.”⁷

Beginning with Grade 5 (and presumably with subsequent grades that will follow), the Muslim Congress syllabus tackles some themes and sub-themes though the inter-relationship among them is **far from clear**.

Illustrative examples of the topic areas for these three hybrid approaches are shown in the Appendix. For comparative purposes, topic areas for Grade Five are shown for all of them; Grade Five was selected because that is the highest grade for which the Muslim Congress syllabus is currently available.

Pros

The approach integrates, albeit partially and judgmentally, concepts/ideas from multiple courses reinforcing them with verses from the Quran and *ahadith* of the *masumeen* (as).

Cons

There are necessarily “gaps” in the course content, so these are to some extent “plugged” in via one of several ways -- an in-depth study of selected topic areas in higher grades (Q Fatima), designation of some subject-based courses (AIMS), or incorporation of topic areas with no real relationship to the main theme (Muslim Congress).

With the AIMS approach in particular, the number of courses taught (excluding Qur’an recitation) varies from six in lower classes to eight in higher classes which not only creates logistical issues but also goes against the grain of an integrated approach.

FIRST COMPONENT: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The full-fledged Integrated Approach has, as its organizing structure, an all-embracing framework. Individual courses based on the Conventional Approach each have their own conceptual framework, though it is typically implicit and only rarely explicit.

A conceptual framework organizes themes to be covered in a course in a systematic, logical fashion to provide cohesion to the course. Its function is to help teachers and students to focus – for the teachers to organize their thought processes and for the students to structure their learning – in a way that helps them to respectively tie the content and learning back to the framework, thereby respectively aiding communication and retention of the subject matter.

The frameworks used in the Conventional Approach of the exiting curricula are at best **implicit or implied**, that is, it is up to users to figure out the framework from the course content. However, suggestions have been made about **explicit or stated** frameworks, that is, users are specifically instructed about the framework.

Given the purpose of the conceptual framework, it is important that it remains forefront in the minds of the students. This can be achieved in two ways:

- **Introduction to the Framework.** This may be a challenge if the framework is an esoteric one. One way to address the challenge is to develop a diagrammatic representation. Another is to defer a detailed discussion of it until, say, the mid-years of the *madrakah's* program at which point teachers can first look back to what has been covered and then look ahead to what has yet to be covered and show how the themes fit into the framework.
- **Reminder of the Framework.** This involves doing a periodic recap, with the aid of the diagram, during the year, say, at the beginning of each term or semester. Again, the themes to be covered during the term/semester would be shown to be directly linked to the framework.

Aqid

Aqid has a **Natural Framework** in *Usul-ud-Din* with some re-ordering and/or systematic build-up of the beliefs across classes/grades, so their discussion is comprehensible to students of a certain age bracket.

Fiqh

The **Implicit Framework** is based on *Furu-ud-Din* (and since religious practices have to be accompanied by laws to ensure their appropriate observance)

complemented by the *Marja's Risala*. Again, there may be some re-ordering and systematic buildup of the practices across classes/grades, so they are age-appropriate.

A potential example of an Explicit Framework is QFatima's "QLife" (see the diagram below). While the framework may be intended for Akhlaq, it can more appropriately be used for Fiqh. However, it mixes life stages with topic areas, so it will have to be restructured to wholly represent **Life Stages** beginning with pre-birth and birth, through pre-teens and teens, to young adults and death. Religious practices and associated *fiqh* rulings can then be introduced at life stages when they are most applicable or relevant. This would have the additional benefit that basic regular practices would be covered in lower classes and unique episodic practices would be taught in later years.



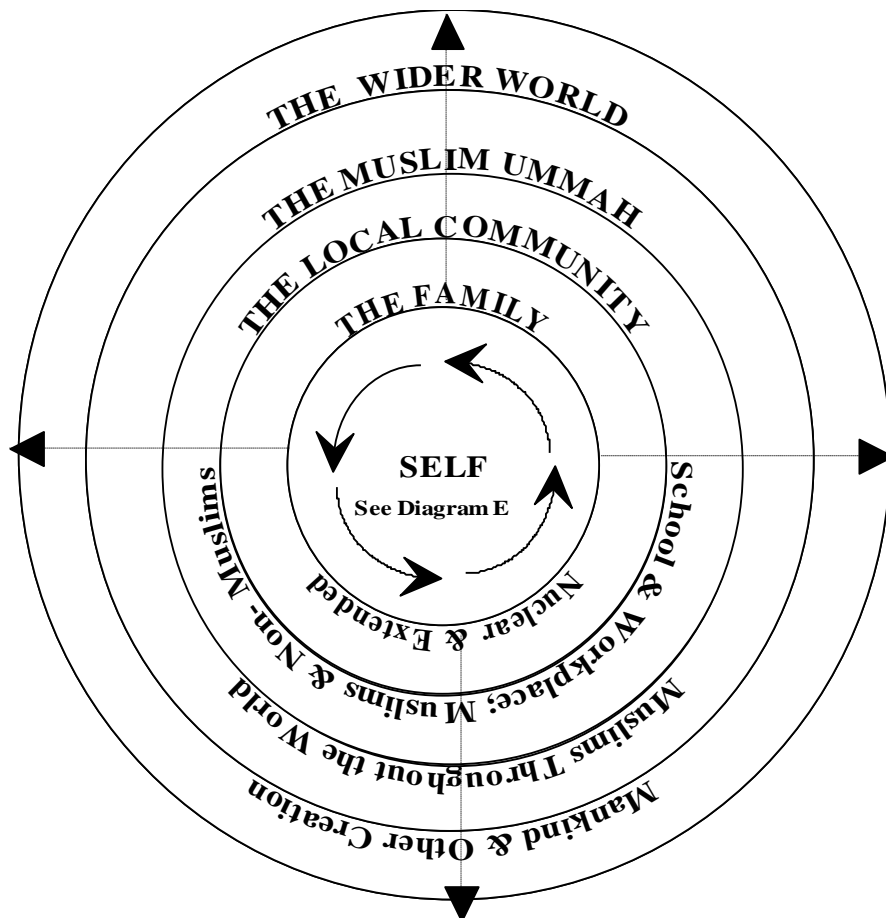
Akhlaq

There does **not** appear to be any **Implicit Framework** in any of the existing curricula. It is simply an attribute-based structure that intersperses positive traits or virtues with negative traits or vices. Attributes may occasionally be grouped into

meaningful categories. Thus, it is basically a laundry list of “do’s and don’ts” with little, if any, attempt to inter-relate the attributes.

An example of an **Explicit Framework** is one proposed by IEB Nasimco and described in the Curriculum Development Process (see the diagram below). The conceptual framework is “grounded in the fundamental goal that Islam espouses for human beings – to induce movement in human beings so as to move them closer and closer to Allah (swt)... **Akhlaq should have twin foci**: how to live and interact in society. The former focus leads to **self-development and purification** (through *al-akhlaq al-fardi*), how to achieve moderation over the powers that are inherent in a soul and so avoid the dangers of both their excessive or deficient development. The latter focus results in **societal well-being** (via *al-akhlaq al-ijtimai*), what are the appropriate modes of social interactions, and what are the associated obligations and rights of individuals, or of groups with whom we come into contact and who may have different ethnic, cultural, ideological and/or religious background than our own.”

The IEB provided an analogy for this course structure (see the diagram below). The analogy is the concept of concentric circles: “The concept denotes one center of origin. There are a series of circles, each succeeding circle having a bigger diameter than the preceding circle. So, too, with Akhlaq. The center of origin is the individual person. The first obligation is to oneself. Then one’s obligations extends to ever widening circles of



the nuclear and extended families with which one has close relationships, the local community in which one resides, the larger Muslim *ummah* to which one is spiritually joined, and the wider world with which one has points of contact.”⁸

Tarikh

The **Implicit Framework is chronological** though selected later events may be introduced earlier on so students are familiarized, albeit in a summary simplified way, with critically important events/personalities in Shia history. Examples include the Tragedy of Karbala and the Birth and Occultation of Imam al-Mahdi (a).

An example of an **Explicit Framework** is one proposed by IEB Nasimco and described in the Curriculum Development Process. The conceptual framework is “rooted in the ultimate goal that Islam cherishes for human society – the establishment of a just and an equitable society. ... Thus, the proposed Tarikh framework is a thematic-cum-chronological one. Thematic designates the emphasis on the non-separation of ‘Church’ and ‘State’ in Islam. Chronological denotes a time line between the sixth century and the contemporary period. **The course focuses on the common thread, the conflict between religious authority and secular power** that runs through historical periods.”

The IEB provided an analogy for this course structure as well: The analogy is the pattern of railroad tracks: “As the tracks lead out of the station, they bifurcate, at first gradually but, then, they increasingly diverge. When they approach their ultimate destination, the tracks converge again to line up against the platform. So, too, with Tarikh. The divergence and convergence now occurs in time, as opposed to in space. In the period after the establishment of an Islamic city-state of Madina, there was first an implicit and, later, an explicit separation of church and state. Thereafter, there were sham attempts to foster the perception of fusion between the two entities. But it was not until the concept of *wilayat-ul-faqih* (governance by the *fuqaha*) was actualized in post-revolutionary Iran that the potential for merger of church and state has, once again, been demonstrated.”⁹

SECOND COMPONENT: CURRICULUM

Curriculum consist of themes and sub-themes associated with a conceptual framework (be it an all-embracing one for all the core courses combined, or a separate one for each individual course) that constitute the broad outlines of a course.

A theme is a topic area that falls within the larger scope of a conceptual framework; a sub-theme is the breakdown of a theme into a series of information areas.

This is not the place to identify themes, let alone sub-themes for each course. However, for the purpose of illustrating the concept and most especially of demonstrating (a) linkage to a conceptual framework and (b) expansion of the traditional scope of the curriculum, one course has been selected along with an explicit framework for it. However, for the sake of brevity, sub-themes of only four themes will be described.

“Church-State” Framework for Tarikh¹⁰

The themes and illustrative sub-themes have been adapted from IEB Nasimco’s publication on Curriculum Development Process:

- Pre-Islamic Arabia: the Backdrop to the Prophet’s Mission (pre-570 C.E.)
- Declaration of Prophethood: The Prophet in Makka (570-622 C.E.)
- Concept of Church and State: Western and Islamic Perspectives
- Establishment of an Islamic City-State (Monocracy): The Prophet in Madina (622-632 C.E.)
- Spread of Islam during the Prophet’s Time
- Implicit Separation of “Church” and “State”: The *Khilafat* (632-656 C.E.)
 - Functions of the leader of an Islamic state
 - Divisions within the Muslim community (Event of Saqifa)
 - Sayyida Fatima’s challenge of the authority of the *khulafa* (Usurpation of Fadak)
 - Reasons for Imam Ali’s acceptance of the status quo
 - Evolution in the methods of the selection of *khulafa*
 - Imam Ali’s relationship with the *khulafa*
 - Extent of fulfillment of a leader’s functions by the three *khulafa*.
- Conflict between the Divine and Populist Orders: The Reign of Imam Ali (656-661 C.E.)
- Explicit Separation of “Church” and “State”: The Abdication of Imam al-Hasan and the Start of the Ruling Dynasties (Umayyad Dynasty, 661-750 C.E.)
 - Muawiya’s challenge to Imam’s *khilafat*
 - Rival claimants’ arguments for assumption of leadership (Religious vs. political leadership)
 - Imam Hasan’s wisdom in signing the peace treaty
 - Consequences of the shift of the capital from Kufa to Damascus
 - Breach of the peace treaty

- Expansion of the Muslim Empire and the First Wave of the Spread of Islam (during the *Khilafat*, 632-656 C.E.)
- Revolutionary Movement in Islam: Martyrdom of Imam al-Husain and its Aftermath during the *Imamat* of Imam Zain ul-Abidin (670-713 C.E.)
- Change in the Political Environment: Short-lived Opportunities for Imams al-Baqir and as-Sadiq (713-765 C.E.)
- Reaction to the Excesses of the Umayyad Dynasty: The Development of the Sunni Schools of Law and the Foundation of Sufism/Formation of Sufi Orders
- Second Wave of the Spread of Islam during the Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties (66-974 C.E.)
- Establishment of the Shia Community within a Secular State: the Underground Network of *Wikala* during the *Imamat* of Imam Musa al-Kazim (765-799 C.E.)
- Sham Merger Between “Church” and “State”: The Establishment of the Abbasid Dynasty and the Appointment of Imam Ali ar-Ridha as Heir apparent (799-818 C.E.)
- Intensified Jealousy of the Abbasids towards the Rightful Leaders: *Imamat* of the Ninth through to the Eleventh Imams (818-874 C.E.)
- Occultation of Imam al-Mahdi (874 - C.E.)
 - Why did it start with *Gaybat al-Sughra*?
 - Appointment of the special deputies during the *gaybat*
 - Why did it then change to *Gaybat al-Kubra*?
 - Our obligations during the occultation
- Religious Leadership in the Post-Occultation Period: Interpretation of the *Sharia*
- Fragmentation and Collapse of the Muslim Empire (945-1258 C.E.)
- Third Wave of the Spread of Islam and the Rise of the Sultanates (10th-18th Centuries)
- Changing Relationship between “Church” and “State”: Case study of Persia under the Safavids (1501-1736 C.E.) and Qajars (1779-1924 C.E.)
- European Penetration and Control of Muslim Lands (18th-19th Centuries): Complete Separation of “Church” and “State”
- Extreme Muslim Responses to European Influence: “Adaptationism” (Secular Republic of Turkey, 1924 - C.E.) and “Rejectionism” (Wahabi Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1932 - C.E.)
- Fourth Wave of the Spread of Islam and the State of the *Dawah* (2nd Half of 20th Century)

- Preparatory Merger of “Church” and ‘State’: Example of Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979 - C.E.)
- Ultimate Merger of “Church” and “State”: The Return of Imam al-Mahdi
 - Events leading up to the Imam’s return
 - *Zuhur* of the Imam
 - - Link-up between the Ismail and Ishaq branches of the Abrahamic family
 - *Rajaat*
 - Establishment of a global Islamic government.

THIRD COMPONENT: SYLLABUS

A syllabus involves partitioning of themes and sub-themes of the curriculum so that they can be covered in a specified number of classes/grades over a given period of time.

Partitioning is not simply a matter of identifying convenient stopping points in the outline of a curriculum for two key reasons:

- Certain themes may have to be covered ahead of their logical sequence because their knowledge is central to our faith or history.
- Similarly, some other themes may have to be systematically built up since their coverage has to be gradually expanded and constantly reinforced.

The *madrasah* years can be divided into four age bands (plus an extra band for post-*madrasah*) as follows:

- Pre-Elementary: 4-5 years old (Pre-School and Kindergarten)
- Elementary: 6-9 years old (Grades 1-4)
- Intermediate: 10-13 years (Grades 5-8)
- Senior: 14-17 years (Grades 9-12)
- (Post-*Madrasah*: 18 year (Pre-College/University or Workforce))

The process of partitioning is hypothetically illustrated with three intermediate age bands – elementary through to senior:

- First, themes/sub-themes are allocated among the three age bands based on the logical sequence but making judicious allowance for the complexity and understandability of the course material.
- Next, themes that should be introduced early on are identified and simplified treatments are included in lower classes while more extensive discussion is deferred for later classes. For example, in a Conventional Approach for the Tarikh Syllabus for Orlando USA, the Tragedy of Karbala chronologically belongs in the intermediate band but it is also included both in the elementary and senior bands.¹¹
- Third, themes that are extensive in scope and /or should be constantly reinforced may be included in all the three bands; content of the intermediate band would build on that of the elementary band, and similarly, content of the senior band would be a step-up from the intermediate band. For instance, in the Orlando Tarikh Syllabus, the *Aimmahs'* brief profiles and life incidents are described in the elementary band, their extended profiles and lifestyles in the intermediate band, and their contributions to Islam and society in the senior band.

While the outcome of the partitioning as described above does mean that the logical structure of the curriculum is “compromised” to the extent necessary, the spirit of the structure is still maintained with the stratagems of early and/or overlap in the treatment of important themes.

Post-Madrasah Band: The Orlando Jamaat is planning to introduce a novel program for an additional year. With the goal of enticing students who are inclined to drop out of the *madrasah* in their senior high school year, the program would be offered outside of the *madrasah* setup and would have a different religious focus - Preparation for College/University and the Workplace. As examples, themes that would be explored include Crises of Conscience, Gender Interactions, Misconceptions about Islam, Comparative Religions, Mode of Inter-Faith Dialogue, and Business and Workplace Ethics.¹²

FOURTH COMPONENT: LESSON PLANS

Lesson plans are generated by flashing out themes and sub-themes of the curriculum into specific concepts, ideas, events and personalities.

As alluded to earlier, this cannot be done in this paper even by way of example. Further, as will be pointed out later, content for many of the themes/sub-themes already exist and the task would be to **adapt** them to meet the guidelines set for lesson plans.

It is, therefore, important to **develop a template** (actually, a couple of templates that are age appropriate) for lesson plans **so specified outcomes/learnings are achieved and their organization is consistent across all lesson plans**. The items that should be part of the template include, but are not limited to the following (though all items may not be incorporated in every lesson plan):

- Objective of the lesson unit
- Appeal to the imagination of younger students and to the analytical problem solving skills of older students
- Easy on-the-eye format with headings/sub-headings, bullet points, images, illustrations (and avoidance of long narratives)
- Judicious selection of relevant Qur'anic *ayah*, *hadith* of the Prophet and the *Aimmah*, excerpts from *khutbas* and *duas*
- Pointers of linkage/association with other concepts/ideas, **especially important if a conventional approach is adopted**
- Attitudes to be shaped and values to be learned from the lesson
- Applicability to real-life situations

FIFTH COMPONENT: WORKBOOKS AND LEARNING TOOLS

This consists of activities that are designed to:

- Make learning fun for younger students
- Reinforce learnings acquired from a series of related lesson plans
- Apply learnings to real-life problems and
- Challenge older students to extend their thinking beyond the lesson itself.

Activities would be age appropriate and consist of a mix of coloring, match-up of items in two columns, and decoding of words/phrases with code books, through word search, crossword puzzle, and filling in the blanks, to unscrambling of words, true-false statements, multiple choice and short questions.¹³

Except for younger students, there is rarely enough time in the class to do these activities. They are necessarily, therefore, independent or homework assignments.

Additionally, given older students' aptitude and comfort with technology and their widespread use of smart phones and tablet computers, consideration should be given to

the feasibility of developing apps for these technological devices. This would encourage interest in and completion of these activities.

REGIONAL/LOCAL CUSTOMIZATION

In the survey that was conducted following the Madrasah Retreat in Dubai, three-quarters (about 75%) of the *madaris* agreed strongly or somewhat with the need for a global curriculum. A similar proportion also indicated a desire for regionalization of the curriculum, with a greater proportion agreeing **strongly** with regionalization than with globalization. (A significantly smaller proportion favors localization of the curriculum.)¹⁴

There are several reasons for this deeply-felt need for regionalization (and to a lesser extent localization) of the curriculum:

- All *madaris* may not teach all the core courses
- More likely, some *madaris* may combine two or more courses into a single subject
- Just as likely, some *madaris* may not teach all core courses from Year 1 of their calendar.
- Length of the *madrasah* academic year varies greatly from almost daily to weekly for anywhere between 25 to 35 weeks of the year.

Consequently, there has to be flexibility in the layout of the courses so individual *madaris* can customize them to meet their special circumstances. What are some possibilities in this regard?

It would not be practical to have more than one overall approach. Nor would it be practical to have different conceptual frameworks (be it an all-embracing or course-based frameworks).

Beyond that, opportunities exist for customization of the curriculum and the syllabus:

- **Curriculum:** Themes should be designated as **Required Themes** especially if they are germane to the conceptual framework and **Optional Themes** particularly if they deal with peripheral concepts, ideas, events and aspects of personalities.
- **Syllabus:** Similarly, Lesson Plans should be so structured that **Core Content** that is essential to the basic understanding of the theme/sub-themes is distinguished from **Supplementary Content** that gives

additional details about or provides further insights into theme/sub-themes.

Madaris would then be readily able to delete all or selected **Optional Themes** and **Supplementary Content** to suit their course configuration and *madrasah* calendar.

Two areas that would require customization are **language and examples**. Lesson plans can be translated into appropriate languages or their variants (British vs. American English) once they have been developed. However, examples that are based on the local socio-cultural environments should be developed for each major region.

FEEDBACK FROM MADARIS

The learning program as laid out in this paper has a “top-down” development phase that must be combined with a “bottom-up” feedback phase. The first phase would consist of a manageable panel of individuals with diverse skills set who would have to forge a consensus on the Overall Approach and the Conceptual Framework(s) and go on to identify Themes/Sub-themes that logically flow from of the framework(s). At that point it would be necessary to get the buy-in from the *madaris* so the second phase would involve explanation of the component structure of the learning program and solicitation of comments and concerns from a group of representative *madaris* from all the regions.

Buy-in is critical if the program is to be adopted by the *madaris*. Two critical areas on which feedback should be sought are:

- Overall reaction to the proposed structure and specific suggestions on improvements to the details of the program.
- Issues that would have to be addressed in transitioning from their current to the proposed curriculum.

Transitioning would constitute a major challenge and the panel should be mindful of it as it deliberates on the overall approach and structure of the program.

- **Impractical Solution:** *Madaris* would start the new syllabus in Year 1 and phase out their current syllabus over an extended period of time. However, if the new program is designed for 12 classes/grades, it would take 11 years to complete the transition.
- **Possible Solution:** Designate several “catch up” classes (say, at Year 1, 4, 7, 9 and 11 as shown in the diagram below) where the new syllabus for that year would be introduced but adjustments would be made by (a) adding course content from previous years of the new

syllabus that have not yet been covered, and (b) deleting course content from the new syllabus that has already been covered in the previous years. It would still mean that the old and the new syllabi would have to be conducted simultaneously but the transition would be completed in a much shorter period of three years. The *madaris* might or might not be able to do this on their own, so the WF team would have to be prepared to facilitate the transition.

Schematic of Possible Transition from Old to New Syllabi

Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12
New Curr.	Old Curr.	Old Curr.	New Curr.	Old Curr.	Old Curr.	New Curr.	Old Curr.	New Curr.	Old Curr.	New Curr.	Old Curr.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Upon completion of the Feedback Phase, the mammoth tasks would begin of (a) partitioning the themes into classes/grades, and (b) developing Lesson Plans and preparing Workbooks/Learning Tools.

Fortunately, there are a number of syllabi that have recently been updated or developed from which appropriate sections can be selected. These can then be:

- **Adapted** to fit into the conceptual framework
- **Structured** to conform to a template for the lesson plan
- **Edited** for any errors/clarification and extraneous details
- **Enhanced** with any additional content.

There would still be gaps in the syllabus which would have to be filled by developing new lesson plans from scratch. Even so, irrespective of the overall approach that is adopted, much time and effort would be saved by utilizing existing materials to the extent possible.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Report of the Los Angeles 2002 Retreat, authored by Bashir A. Dato, IEB Nasimco, Toronto, 2004.

² Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Syllabus, Nairobi, 1988

³ Stanmore Syllabus (www.madressa.net)

⁴ Sirat Books, Islamic Shia Study Center, West Madrasah, Toronto Syllabus. It should be noted that the four core courses form part of one broader course, *Diniyaat*, so the number of lesson plans for each course is only seven.

⁵ Interestingly, while lesson plans combine elements from different courses, the “Certificate of Achievement” issued to students lists areas covered in any given year under titles that equate with traditional courses (QBeliefs = Aqiad, QLaws = Fiqh, QConcepts & QLife = Akhlaq, and M14, QTime & QCalendar = Tareekh. QSchool World of Learning: Resources for Teaching (www.qfatima.com)

⁶ **Ahlul Bayt Islamic Mission School** (AIMS) of Karachi.

⁷ Islam is our Message, Grades 1-5, published and distributed by Khatoons Inc, MD, USA, May 2012 (www.khatoons.com)

⁸ Report of the Minneapolis 1998 Retreat, authored by Bashir A. Dattoo, IEB Nasimco, Toronto, 1999

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Since Prophet Muhammad (s) was the first to establish an Islamic state, the “Church-State Framework” doesn’t apply to the earlier historical period. However, in the lower classes, the emphasis anyway is on Qur’anic stories of Early Prophets and brief introductions of the *Aimmah* via life incidents all of which are meant to convey moral lessons.

¹¹ Orlando revamped Tarikh Syllabus (which uses a Conventional Approach), Islamic Education Center, Orlando, 2012

¹² This program would be offered under the “Academy” section of the “HIC (**H**usseini **I**slamic **C**enter, Orlando) Education Plan” which is under development.

¹³ An excellent example of a Workbook is one that is an integral part of the syllabus of the Islamic Shia Study Center, West Madrasah, Toronto. The Learning Tools will be accessed through the Learning Resources portal of the **M**adrasah **C**enter of **E**xcellence (MCE).

¹⁴ The World Federation, “The Madrasah Curriculum Questionnaire Assessment Analysis - Results,” February 2012

APPENDIX: COMPARISONS OF SYLLABI OF HYBRID APPROACHES

QFatima: Ages 8-9

Week	Cross Curricular Study	
1	Manners in the classroom Respect of a teacher	Usul revised - Tawheed
2	Contract of behavior structured through discussion	Tawheed discussion
3	Discussion of Adala – concept of good & evil	Fiqh terminology of Muslim, mumin, kafir
4	Buloogh – personal hygiene (girls); Najassa & Tahara and toilet manners (boys) Wudhoo with mustahabaat revisited Adala discussion	Introduction to Al Wahab (He is the donor of all ...)
5	Nabuwwa – developing on previous years Ya Mutakabbir as dua	Fiqh terminology of mushriq and munafiq
6	Fiqh terminology	Nabuwwa – discussing duties of Ambiya Introducing dua for Qunoot (14:41)
7	Fiqh terminology including previously learned	Imama as leadership Qualities of an Imam discussion
8	Buloogh – Related fiqh laws for taqleed, tahara, salaa, sawm, khums & salaa times	
9	Taqleed continued	Buloogh – Personal awareness (physical changes) – introduce haydh/istihada
10	Buloogh – Discuss expected behavior of a young lady	Qiyama and accountability
11	Buloogh – Respecting parents	Introducing Al Razzaq (Provider of physical and spiritual sustenance – Rizq)
12	Ya Razzaq as a dua Introduce tayammum	Revise 16 Asmaul Husna with meanings
13	Wudhoo going over dua for wudhoo	Revision of Asmaul Husna learned
14	Times of salaa and importance of revolving day around salaa time	Adhan & Iqama with meanings
15	Process of life – Birth, Buloogh, teenage years, youth, middle age, seniors ...	Introduction to Hijab
16	Continue discussion on the process of life Identifying Makka, Madina, Jerusalem, Damascus & Karbala on	Identifying images of Kaba, Masjidun Nabi, Masjidul Aqsa, Haram of Imam Husayn & Sayyida Zaynab

	map	
17	Salaa – importance of intention (niyya) and meaning of Takbeeratul Ihram Identifying Najaf, Mashhad & Kadhmayn on map	Identifying images of Haram of imams Ali & Ali Ar-Rida, Aqsa, and Haramain of Imams Musa Kadhim & Muhammad At-Taqi
18	Salaa – Meaning of Suratul Fatiha Importance of not wasting time	Build on concept of time management revolving around salaa times
19	Salaa – Meaning of Suratul Fatiha	Doing one’s best at everything connected with using time effectively
20	Salaa – Meaning of Suratul Ikhlas	Keeping a diary and knowing lunar dates/salaa times & important occasions
21	Salaa - Meaning of Suratul Fatiha & Ikhlas	Time management and keeping diary
22	Salaa – Rukoo and meaning of its zhikr	Identify and importance of living it e.g., Khoja Shia Ithnasheri Muslim ...
23	Sajda and meaning of its zhikr	Discuss manners learned to incorporate in daily life
24	Salaa – Meaning of recitation in juloos (Istighfar, Tashahhud & Salaam)	Discussion on dangers of social networking sites
25	Revision of salaa actions, recitations, meanings ...	
26	Duas of Qunoot (17:24, 20:114, 66:11, 14:41) with a focus on respect for parents	Importance of acquisition of knowledge and focusing on aakhirah
27	Build on discussion of sighting of the moon & dua	Build on knowledge of basic beliefs of other faiths
28	Furu and simple understanding of all	
29	Continuation of Furu, with emphasis on khums and zakatul Fitr	
30	Taqibat – Tasbeeh of Sayyida, Ayatul Kursi, Ayatul Mulk, Amaner Rasul & 17 Asmaul Husna learned so far	
31	Introduce Al Fattah (Removal of difficulties and Giver of decisions)	
32	Manners of a lady/gentleman	Discuss issues relating to social manners
33	Etiquettes of behavior continued in all aspects of life	Discuss intention and its necessity before doing anything
34	Build on identity (Who am I?) and responsibility to live one’s identity – introduce concept of setting and developing personal goals	
35	Revise wudhoo, 3 rakats salaa, and duas for Qunoot & taqibat	
36	Revise Ziyara and identification of places of Ziyara on world map	Introduce Ziyara Waritha
37	Revision of 18 Asmaul Husna with their meanings and usage as duas	

QFATIMA Ages 8-9: SUMMARY OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

A99: Asmaul Husna

- Knowing 18 Asmaul Husna

QBeliefs: Aqaid

- Concepts of Tawheed, Adala, Nubuwwa, Imama & Qiyama
- Understanding good and evil
- Accountability

QLaws: Fiqh

- Muslim, mumin, kafir, mushrik, munafiq
- Taqleed
- Introduction to Tayammum
- Salaa in detail
- Basic concept of Khums

QConcepts: Akhlaq

- Importance of practicing knowledge
- Social manners
- Being aware of the danger of some computer games and social networking sites
- Doing ones best
- Being just
- Zakatul Fitr
- Discussion on inter faith
- Letting one's light shine
- Importance of good deeds through understanding

QLife: Akhlaq

- Buloogh in detail for girls
- Intro to Haydh/Istihadha(girls)
- Process of life discussion – birth, Buloogh, Family life, Career, Old age, Death
- Dress code- Hijab for both
- Femininity & Masculinity

QPrayer: Dua

- Duas of Qunoot
- Duas after salaa

M14: Tareekh

- Names & aspects from the lives of the Masumeen built on previous years

QTimeline: Tareekh

- Stories from the lives of Idrees & Isa
- Study of the life of Prophet Muhammad

QCalendar: Tareekh

- Moon sighting & dua
- Recognizing important aspects of each month

QZiyara: Tareekh

- Recitation of daily Ziyara
- Introduction of Ziyara Waritha
- Location of Makka, Madina, Jerusalem, Karbala, Kadhmayn, Najaf, Mashhad, Damascus

AIMS: Age 9 (Courses other than Quran Recitation)

Nahjul Balagha	Personality Building	Social Responsibility	Islamic Lifestyle	Ideology	History
Saying 146: Knowledge vs. Wealth	Imams are spiritual role models: Improving our lifestyle through understanding the seerat/manners of masomin	Teamwork: To cooperate and share responsibilities in order to achieve targets for better outcomes	Wudhoo: Wajib and mustahab steps	Tawheed: The best of lesson: The most important creation of Allah is man	Imam al-Baqir: His biography, his teachings, companions and rulers of his time
Sermon 82: Organs and their purposes	Brotherhood: Understanding that all Muslims are united by their faith and it is their duty to assist other Muslims in their time of need	Caring for elderly: Awareness of duty towards senior members of society	Taqlif and Taqlid: Who is a marja? What is his role? Obligation to do taqlid when baliigh, necessity of taqlid	Perfect harmony of universe: Water cycle – a perfect example of Allah’s creations	Imam al-Sadiq: Biography, scholarly jihad, teachings, students and companions, rulers of his time
Sermon 198: Importance of salaah	Understanding the importance of acquiring skills for earning lawfully and maintaining our dignity by not depending on others	News reading practice	Tayammum: Conditions, things on which it can be made, method	Maad: Harvest period - Allah created everything for a purpose; world is a place for sowing seeds and hereafter for getting our rewards or punishments according to what we have done	
Saying 133: Who is your friend?			Method of performing salat	Nubuwwah – Transition to the next world	

			<p>Salat al-Jamaah: Benefits</p>	<p>A lesson on the peak of the mountain: say Mashallah after looking at the wonderful creations of Allah; Nothing is impossible if we have faith in Allah; Hardworking people are successful</p>	
				<p>Prophet: The only perfect guides Allah has sent to teach us the divine system and show the right path</p>	
				<p>Importance of valuing Allah's blessings: Nabi Saleh and the tribe of Saba; Obedience to Allah</p>	
				<p>Foundation of Tawheed: Reconstruction of the Kaba; Unique Characteristics of the Holy House; Qiblah for the entire Ummah; concept of equality</p>	

MUSLIM CONGRESS: "ISLAM IS OUR MESSAGE," GRADE 5

Unit One	Allah, The Almighty is our Creator
1.1	Repent to My Lord
1.2	I Know My Prophets
1.3	Prophet Shuayb
1.4	Lessons from Surat Luqman
1.5	Religious and Social Order
Unit Two	Divine Guidance
2.1	Surat Dhuha
2.2	The Battle of Badr
2.3	The Battle of Uhud
2.4	Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib
2.5	Nahjul-Balagha
Unit Three	We Worship Only You
3.1	Daily Prayers
3.2	The Month of Ramadhan
3.3	The day of judgment
3.4	Hijab
3.5	Zaynab
Unit Four	Guide Us to the Right Path
4.1	Brotherhood and Reform
4.2	Sahifa Sajjadiya
4.3	Learning Humility
4.4	Imam Muhammad al Baqir
4.5	I Love Knowledge and Respect Scholars