

Background

For the better part of the modern era, Muslim societies have been on the defensive when it comes to education. Whether compelled by colonialism or inspired by globalization, the traditional *madrasah* has been eclipsed by modern primary and secondary schools on Western educational models. As a result, the majority of Muslim students today have only a passing familiarity with their religion.

More recently, the private Islamic schooling movement has offered a new alternative to Muslim parents who want their children to have the best of both worlds. As a result, several types of Islamic curricula are increasingly available in different parts of the world.

Overview

The types of Islamic curricula available in contemporary schooling today can be broadly categorized into three categories, or levels of intensity.

Islamic curricula available in mainstream schools

	Level 1: Supplementary	Level 2: Integrated	Level 3: Original
<i>Sector</i>	Public and private	Private	Private
<i>Rationale</i>	Government's desire for Muslim citizens to have basic Islamic knowledge	Parents' aspirations for contemporary education in line with Islamic values	Parents' aspirations for contemporary education based on Islamic sources
<i>Content</i>	Single course on Islamic sciences to supplement national or international curriculum	Several courses on Quran, Arabic and Islamic sciences along with customization of core subjects from national or international curriculum	Original courses developed across curriculum to meet national or international standards and Islamic learning objectives

Level 1: Supplementary curricula

The most typical form of Islamic education taught in mainstream schools today is also the most basic: usually a single core subject comprising various Islamic sciences (for example, the Quran, hadith, theology, ethics and Islamic history). We call these *supplementary curricula* because they are added to existing national or international curricula without modification to the wider curriculum.

This is a common requirement by ministries of education in Muslim majority countries. In Pakistan, for example, the government has stipulated that all secondary school students must complete a mandatory course on Islamiyat (along with Urdu and Pakistan Studies) since 1980 in order to obtain admissions to any university in the country. The UAE Ministry of Education introduced a national requirement to teach Islamic studies (along with Arabic and



Mandatory subject on Islamic studies

Social Studies) since 2001, with a new curriculum and textbooks just introduced in January 2018. Both countries require the teaching of Islamic studies in all schools, whether public or private, and whether they follow the national or international curriculum (one different being that this is applicable to all students in Pakistan and to only Muslim students in the UAE).

The Islamic education requirement in supplementary curricula is often met by mainstream curriculum providers and textbook suppliers whose curriculum and textbooks have already been adopted by public or private schools. Cambridge, for example, includes A-Level and O-Level syllabi in Islamiyat, for which textbooks are available from both Cambridge and Oxford University Press.

Level 2: Integrated curricula

While supplementary curricula have been introduced by Muslim governments, contemporary Islamic education has also emerged as a private sector phenomenon in a number of countries. Since each new school or schooling group typically develops its own curriculum, they have an opportunity to integrate Islamic education across subjects and programs—hence the term *integrated curricula*.

Private Islamic schools still aim for academic success, usually judged on a school's ability to place graduates in secondary schools and universities of choice. They therefore adopt existing national or international curricula and their textbooks as the starting point for their own curricula. New subjects are included with specifically Islamic content (e.g., the Quran, Arabic and other Islamic sciences), while the original subjects of the existing curriculum are modified in line with Islamic values (e.g., by adding Quranic verses and dropping Santa Claus or Valentine's Day).

A wide variety of private Islamic schools have emerged in both Muslim countries and minority communities. The Level 2 curricula used in these schools are very often an amalgam of mainstream curricula and textbooks, Islamic textbooks from specialist Islamic curriculum providers, and the school's own curricular inputs to integrate these various sources. The level of integration, choice of subjects and instruction time for various subjects will vary widely across this category.



Multiple Islamic subjects and modified wider curriculum

Level 3: Original curricula

Even with integrated curricula, private Islamic schools are necessarily limited by the national or international curricula they use as their starting point. The next level of curriculum development in Islamic education is to develop original content across all subjects—hence the term *original curricula*.

The Tarbiyah International Curriculum reflects this approach. Virtually every subject and program is based on original research by a dedicated team at Skylight Education Solutions, a private Islamic educational initiative focused on holistic education for Muslim families. It still prepares students on the O-level pathway, but prepares its own textbooks across the curriculum.



Original subjects across curriculum

A snapshot of the Tarbiyah International Curriculum on the following page indicates the subjects that have been developed to date.

Subjects offered in the Tarbiyah International Curriculum

Subject	Purpose	Learning objectives	Textbooks
Arabic	To gain direct access to the sources of our religion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and understand classical Arabic 2. Develop a strong vocabulary 3. Express ideas and feelings with confidence and creativity 4. Prepare for future scholarship in the Islamic sciences 	Partially developed by Skylight
English Language	To learn how to speak and write for an international audience with wisdom and beauty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and understand standard English 2. Develop a strong vocabulary 3. Express ideas and feelings with confidence and creativity 4. Learn how to differentiate between positive and negative influences in world literature and cultures 	Developed by Skylight
Geography	To observe, explore and utilise available means to ameliorate living conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study the physical makeup of the world 2. Explore different aspects of human living in accordance to location, culture, and religion 3. Studying the different geographical phenomenon mentioned in the Quran 4. Understand the environmental changes like global warming, deforestation, pollution, agriculture, and technological development 	Developed by Skylight
History	To rebuild the Ummah's identity by studying our past	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create recognition for the mistakes in our past to better understand our present dilemma 2. Build awareness about the wrongful conduct against the Muslims. 3. Explore strategies for bringing change and improvement in the future 4. Study the historical facts mentioned in the Quran 	Developed by Skylight
Mathematics	To improve focus and learn how to solve problems.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand and compute numbers 2. Understand and solve word problems 3. Understand and calculate measurement 4. Understand money and learn how to earn and spend it properly 5. Improve mental focus 	Not developed by Skylight
Science	To investigate the creation in order to know the Creator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn about the universe and nature 2. Understand and apply the scientific method 3. Understand the scientific principles and observations in the Quran 4. Understand historical contributions by Muslims to science 	Developed by Skylight
Social Studies Plus	To gain a competitive edge through knowledge of the world	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand natural and social phenomena based on the latest available knowledge 2. Undertake special projects to put knowledge into practice 3. Develop the knowledge to demonstrate leadership 	Developed by Skylight
Urdu	To learn how to speak and write for a national audience with wisdom and beauty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and understand standard Urdu 2. Develop a strong vocabulary 3. Express ideas and feelings with confidence and creativity 4. Learn how to differentiate between positive and negative influences in national literature and culture 5. Argue effectively for pride in the religion of Islam 	Developed by Skylight

Other types of Islamic curricula

In the interest of simplicity, our comparison deliberately excludes two other forms of Islamic education prevalent today:

Traditional seminaries: Often called madrasas (technically, madaris), traditional seminaries are found around the Muslim world, including pesantren boarding schools in Indonesia and Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. They usually predate modern schools on the Western model, cater to lower class students and train future preachers and religious teachers. While they represent a very important form of religious education, they have not been included in our comparative analysis because they are usually seen as a viable educational path by middle-class and upper-class parents.

Part-time programs: Curricula in this category generally follow the educational approach of traditional seminaries, but they are part-time and target a wider section of society. In this sense, they are closer to Level 1 curricula since they supplement the education students receive in mainstream schools. Examples include ugama schools in Brunei, weekend Islamic schools in minority communities and tahfiz schools that focus on Quran memorization.

Summary

Islamic education is no longer relegated to traditional seminaries. Depending on the availability of private Islamic schools in their area, Muslim parents increasingly have the choice among *supplementary, integrated or original* Islamic curricula in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

The Tarbiyah International Curriculum offers existing and upcoming Islamic schools the opportunity to introduce an original Islamic curriculum built from the ground up, in which each subject and program has a purpose and learning objectives linked to Islamic sources and the educational philosophy and pedagogy are inspired by Prophetic teaching.

For more information

Visit the Tarbiyah International web site at tarbiyahinternational.com or email the Skylight Education Solutions team at info@skylighteducation.com.

