

The Real Histories Directory

Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE): A project for our times

What is ICE and how did it come about?



Issues of citizenship, of identity, of being British, of respective rights and responsibilities of individual and state are very much controversially alive in contemporary Britain. Similarly, issues of Muslim identity, of the legitimate place of Muslims in societies where they are in a minority and where they increasingly suffer Islamophobic hurts were current prior to the 9/11 and 7/7 outrages. Those tragic events, the sharpened anti-Muslim hostility that followed, and Muslim responses to international issues like Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq gave the debate a degree of urgency within the British Muslim communities and within government circles. The debate about being a British Muslim, about the centrality of faith in Muslim life, about countering extremism and about the impact these issues should have on school and madrasah curricula was heightened. It was within this context that the Home Office/ Communities and Local Government and Department for Schools Children and Families (DCSF) sought advice from communities and offered funding opportunities to develop materials that help young Muslims better understand the compatibility and shared values of Islam and citizenship. The pioneering Islam and citizenship work of the [Nasiha Project](http://www.nasiha.co.uk/) (www.nasiha.co.uk/) in Bradford and the Building Bridges work in Pendle (upon which a number of the ICE lessons are gratefully based) provided excellent models. The Government contract for ICE was accordingly devised, openly bid for and won by Leicester's School Development Support Agency (SDSA—www.sdsa.net/) and their partners [ContinYou](http://www.continyou.org.uk/) (www.continyou.org.uk/).



The ICE project initially ran over an 18-month period, was a government-financed but community-led initiative that was designed to support the development of a Citizenship curriculum for use by madrasahs. It aimed specifically:

- to educate pupils aged 9 to 14 (Key Stages 2 and 3), about Islamic tradition, values and their roles and responsibilities in society as good Muslims;



- to promote Citizenship education in madrasahs by developing appropriate online resources and materials for teachers and pupils;

- to pull together and build upon the existing work done by many British Muslim communities in teaching Citizenship education;



- to develop suitable materials that can be used by mainstream schools to teach Islamic values in the citizenship curriculum.

ICE successfully managed to produce 44 lessons particularly geared to the teaching of Citizenship in madrasahs. They are available online at www.theiceproject.com and can be downloaded and used immediately. They are broadly clustered in the four areas of: the skills of citizenship and Islamic enquiry; rights and responsibilities; identity and diversity; and democracy and justice. The templated lessons follow a simple three-part format and in each pupils discuss essential citizenship and Islamic values. All lessons have Qur'anic guidance and most have supportive *ahadith*, or stories. These lessons are accompanied by teacher guidance notes and frequently asked questions; and have been enthusiastically endorsed by a wide range of Islamic scholars and organisations, representing most of the major Sunnis and Shia schools of thought.

What principles underpinned ICE?

From the outset the small core team stressed the collaborative nature of the project and attempted to involve as many schools of thought and Muslim organisations as possible. Madrasah teachers, their pupils and their parents were all involved in commenting on



the lessons undertaken. Every lesson, every Qur'anic and Prophetic tradition used was discussed and validated for the ICE programme is Islamic studies using Citizenship as a vehicle

to help teach Islamic *Tahdhib* and *Akhlaq*. *Tahdhib* is training and education for personal improvement and moral education; and *Akhlaq* is good manners, good temperament and noble character. Both are fundamental parts of the madrasah curriculum. They also stressed, and over time with the help of scholars, were able to demonstrate, that Islamic values and democratic values are broadly compatible, and that to be a good Muslim you have to be a good and active citizen. Finally and crucially the ICE team, who have had considerable experience with madrasahs and supplementary schools, based all their lessons within the framework of the National Curriculum Citizenship programmes of study. The aim



was to provide a holistic pupil experience, one in which pupils could reinforce what they had learnt in madrasah with their mainstream school teaching, and vice versa.



Although the materials were designed primarily for madrasahs they were written in such a way that mainstream schools with large numbers of Muslim pupils might also access them easily. Several primary and secondary schools in different parts of the country have opted to do so with, to date, little support or guidance needed from project members. The lessons are so designed that, with a little tweaking mainstream teachers can concentrate on teaching the Citizenship agenda, only using the Islamic materials as exemplars.

What processes were used to develop and validate the materials?

The 44 draft lessons were written by core team members and consultants. They were trialed in 30 madrasahs in six areas of the country: two London clusters, Bradford/Kirklees, Leicester, Oldham/Rochdale and Bristol. Each area had an appointed leader who was responsible for signing up madrasahs, offering advice and support and collating pupil and teacher feedback. Some 70 madrasah teachers were trained and then trialed the materials. In advance of materials going to madrasahs, a validation board met to discuss and approve the Islamic content which had to be ac-

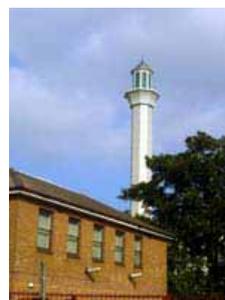
ceptable to as wide a Muslim range as possible. A larger validation group met prior to project end to go through and approve all materials. The validation board and the area leads became true critical friends who modelled Islamic discourse in their open, yet good spirited debate.

The same was equally true of the large advisory board who, throughout the project offered critical advice and strategic direction. They were encouraged to be as critical as possible of all ICE aspects and followed this request with vigour. An executive delivery group (EDG), which consisted of the SDSA and ContinYou members together with CLG and DCSF partners, provided a sharp project focus throughout.



What issues arose during the life of the project?

Inevitably, with such an ambitious project, attempting as it did to bring together as many Muslim schools of thought as possible and to offer a package to a wide range of madrasahs who may not have ICT and other resources, there are bound to be some points of concern. In-house and independent evaluations revealed that some teachers thought the lessons too citizenship focused; some criticized the theological level at which they were pitched. Some pupils wanted DVDs and far more interaction. Muslim readers will know the government funding from the Preventing Violent Extremism pots has aroused suspicion as to motive in certain



quarters because it is believed the terminology involved demonizes a community who are law abiding and industrious and who have been the quickest to stress that extremist acts committed in the name of Islam are a hideous distortion of Islam's essential message of love and peace. This concern over funding may have prevented some

madrasahs from volunteering to come on board, and may have deterred some schools of thought from participating. There were also issues about female underrepresentation on the advisory and validation boards. Similarly there was a concern that young people themselves were not involved at this level. The project team attempted to address some of these the issues during the project's life; but some were outside of their control

Was the ICE project a success?

In a simple sense people can decide for themselves. The product is detailed and available online. The enormous numbers of hits already indicate interest. Later

there will be a printed version that people can use in their madrasah or school. The material endorsement from a large range of scholars and organisations was hard won and indicates their solid Islamic approval. In addition, our own extensive pupil and teacher feedback and the quantitative data collected by the independent evaluators indicate strong support. Generally pupils, teachers and parents were very complementary about the project's processes and outcomes.



The debate about what it means to be

British and what it means to be a British Muslim continues. Hopefully, ICE has contributed something to helping young Muslims understand that to be a good Muslim you have to be an active citizen. If ICE achieves that it will truly be a project for our time.

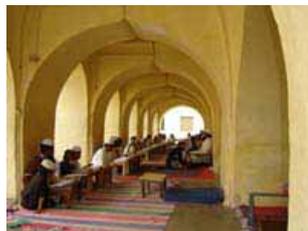


The lessons themselves deal with the necessary skills to become a good citizen and demonstrate that these skills are essentially Islamic; indeed in many cases Islamic concepts and practices predate the present

agenda by centuries! (My forthcoming discussion paper, 'Islam, Citizenship and Education: When Hope and History Rhyme', provides a more detailed polemic concerning the nature of citizenship and democracy within an Islamic frame of reference.) They deal sensitively and in an age appropriate fashion with some of the more controversial issues of our time. The longer term impact is of course impossible to measure. The project can finally only be judged a success if it plays some part in persuading young people to become active British Muslim citizens.

The way forward

The first stage of the project ended with a ringing endorsement of the produced material and collaborative enterprise from senior members of many Muslim organisations, partners and friends. Government decided that there would be a continuation project that aimed to build upon the many successes. The next round, therefore, seeks to encourage a further 300 madrasahs to use the materials. It aims also to continue the lesson adaptation for use in maintained schools, especially those with a large number of Muslim pupils. Finally the independent Muslim sector is to be encouraged and trained to use the materials. After open competition the SDSA were successful in winning the bid and are continuing the work over another 18 months.



If you are interested in finding out more please contact [Khalid Mahmood](#), the Project Manager (khalid.mahmmmod@sdsa.net) or [Rukhsana Rana](#), the project's Administrator (rukhsana.rana@sdsa.net) for more details. If you simply want to use the materials please log on to www.iceproject.com.

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Maurice Irfan Coles has been in the education service for 40 years. He established the largest Multicultural Support Service in the country and for a period of time led one of the largest advisory teams. He has been an OFSTED Registered Inspector in both the primary and secondary phases, and a team member for special schools. He now acts as an associate consultant to the SDSA and is Chief Executive of Curriculum Enrichment for the Common Era (CE4CE) and author of *Every Muslim Child Matters* (Trentham 2008).