



University of the
West of England

Independent Evaluation of the ASDAN Islam and Citizenship Short Course

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May 2012

Acknowledgements

The team from the University of the West of England would like to thank the staff of ASDAN; The ICE Steering Group; the staff and students of some of the schools and the volunteers and young people in the Madrassas that have taken part in the pilot of the ASDAN short course for their cooperation with the evaluation team, their agreement to be interviewed and providing material where relevant that has allowed for the evaluation to be conducted.

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Introduction

This report results from an evaluation of the pilot of the ASDAN Short Course in Islam and Citizenship Education (ICE) carried out by the University of the West of England. This ASDAN Short Course was created in response to the desire by the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) and the Schools Development Support Agency (SDSA) to have the Islamic learning obtained in Muslim schools and Madrassas accredited. Madrassa is the Muslim term for 'place of learning' and in western terms is the equivalent to the word 'school'. Within the UK education system Madrassas are a part of the supplementary school¹ system, offering out of school-hours learning which in a Madrassa is usually based around religion and cultural learning.

The ASDAN ICE Short Course took its steer from a course created by the SDSA with DfES funding. The SDSA ICE course proved popular with Madrassas and Muslim schools but a weakness identified was the lack of accreditation for the students that completed the course; ASDAN provided the means for this accreditation to take place.

The context of the Islamic and Citizenship Education course development sits within the era following 9/11 and 7/7 where hostility in the UK towards Muslims was growing and there were concerns around increased extremism in UK Muslim communities. Following the perceived success of the Islam and citizenship work of the Nasiha Project in Bradford and the Building Bridges Pendle Project, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government, as part of the Prevent Strategy (2008), jointly funded the development of a citizenship programme of study aimed at independent Muslim schools and Madrassas based on the teachings of Islam. The SDSA was funded to create the programme that was based on the national citizenship programme that UK schools use but with the addition of Islamic guidance as it was felt that citizenship values and Islamic values are broadly compatible. The website for the SDSA ICE course (<http://www.theiceproject.sdsa.net>) indeed says: "all participants agreed that to be a good Muslim is to be a good citizen".

The SDSA ICE project which initially ran over an 18 month period was primarily designed to support a citizenship curriculum in Madrassas and was aimed specifically at those aged 9 to 14 (Key Stages 2 and 3). The purpose of the programme was many fold:

- To teach about Islamic tradition, values and their roles and responsibilities in society as good Muslims;
- to promote Citizenship education in Madrassas;
- 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;

¹ A definition of supplementary schools can be found at: http://www.continyou.org.uk/what_we_do/supplementary_education/about_us/what_are_supplementary_schools

The 44 printed lessons and 6 downloadable additional ones, follow the same 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. As well as lesson plans there is accompanying teacher guidance notes and frequently asked questions; to gain acceptance by Muslim communities and within the Madrassas the programme was endorsed by a wide range of Islamic scholars and organisations, representing most of the major Sunni and Shia schools of thought. There are two versions: one aimed at Key Stage 2 age pupils and one at Key Stage 3.

The materials although primarily for use in Madrassas were created with the view that they could be used in mainstream schools as well, particularly where significant numbers of Muslims would also be able to access them. In other terms, the citizenship agenda could be taught using Islamic exemplars.

Following a further funded pilot phase in several independent Muslim schools an evaluation was carried out of the SDSA programme and two of the findings were:

- There was a desire for there to be some form of accreditation of the course to recognise the effort made by the pupils and to increase the value of the course making it more desirable for inclusion of the curricula of Muslim, independent and mainstream schools.
- Muslim schools funding is limited and can be an issue with many being run on very low budgets. So the SDSA ICE course gave these schools an excellent affordable resource which had a significant impact, as it provided an in-depth resource for use in the classroom with a structured route for teaching Islam and citizenship.

In light of these evaluation findings and personal links between those involved in the SDSA programme and pilot, ASDAN were approached to determine whether it would be possible for the learning to be accredited by a nationally recognised and reputed organisation.

From these initial discussions ASDAN were able to obtain further funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to help create materials for a short course and run a pilot of their accredited programme over two years starting in 2011. It is this pilot phase of the ASDAN Islam and Citizenship Short Course that the team from the University of the West of England are reporting in this evaluation.

The ASDAN ICE Short Course

Once agreed that ASDAN could provide the means for accrediting the learning from the SDSA course and additional funding to develop materials and run the pilot was obtained from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation a working group was set up to determine which of the lessons and subject areas from the SDSA course would be suitable for an accredited ASDAN Short Course. The working group included several people that had been involved in the creation and piloting of the SDSA ICE course and members of ASDAN staff that were experienced in writing short courses and/or Islam along with representatives from the Madrassas and Muslim schools. This group as well as determining the overall structure of the course also devised the content.

The subsequent ASDAN Islam and Citizenship Education course is part of a suite of short course programmes offered by ASDAN that can “be used as a stand-alone award or as progression routes into qualifications such as CoPE, AoPE or wider key skills” (ASDAN website). Though designed for

those aged between 13 and 19 the courses are not specifically aimed at a particular level, but are 'multi-level' (ibid) thus the challenges are completed according to 'individual ability' (ibid).

The course is set out as a series of challenges, within ten modules, and each module is divided into two sections; Section A challenges are designed to be shorter, each taking between 1 and 3 hours to complete, whereas Section B challenges are longer, which ASDAN suggest should take around 5 hours each to complete. There is the option of completing up to 60 hours of activities, with each block of 10 hours equivalent to 1 credit (thus the total credits achievable is 6).

Students are expected to select which modules and challenges they wish to attempt then plan organise and carry out a series of activities or challenges, identify the skills used in completing these activities and to finally collect evidence of carrying out these challenges in the form of a portfolio. The types of evidence can included a 'diary or log, academic work, witness statements, surveys, research, photos, letters or emails, diagrams, notes, powerpoint presentations or charts' (ASDAN short course booklet p4). In addition to this evidence the students need to complete the booklet showing their record of progress, the Action Plan and Review (APR) sheets, a summary of achievement and a personal statement. Once the student has completed as many credits as they have negotiated with their tutor or teacher, the work is internally moderated.

The course has modules which cover the following areas:

- Active Citizenship
- Giving Charity
- Diversity within Islam
- Community Cohesion
- Islam and the Environment
- Equality between Men and Women
- Dealing with and Resolving Conflict
- Law, Order and Democracy
- Respect
- Madinah- The City of the Prophet

In order for those that have registered to be part of the pilot and to obtain the full funding at least two of these modules must be completed in full (2 credits).

The Evaluation Context and Methodology

A requirement of the funding secured by ASDAN to create the course and run the pilot was for an independent evaluation to be carried out. The University of the West of England have shadowed the development of the ASDAN ICE Short Course from when the content was being determined in early 2011.

The intention was that the evaluation team would follow the process from the creation of the materials for the course through to its introduction into Madrassas and Muslim schools and report once the majority of institutions had completed two modules – the number required for those registered for the pilot to obtain their full funding for taking part. However the evaluation has had to report before many of the institutions have started to implement the course and when others

have only just started running the modules. The delays to the implementation are discussed in more detail in *The Evaluation Findings* section of the report.

The data for this report was gathered through interviews with: ASDAN staff members (3); Steering Group Members (3); Young people completing the pilot (3 focus groups); teaching staff in schools and Madrassas (4) and notes from a number of meetings we were able to observe and 3 classroom observations. We were also supplied with all relevant paperwork and materials we requested or were available to us.

The Evaluation Findings

As outlined previously there were a limited number of Madrassas and Muslim Schools actively engaged in running the ASDAN Islamic Citizenship Education (ICE) Short Course during the pilot phase. As a consequence the evidence for this report was gathered from a relatively small number of people who were directly involved with the Madrassas and Muslim Schools engaged in the pilot phase of the programme². Therefore, any findings presented here should not be taken as representative of the views of the much larger population of people involved in Madrassas and Muslim Schools within the UK.

Teaching and Learning within the ASDAN ICE Short Course

Curriculum, materials and resources

From a teaching perspective the ASDAN ICE Short Course may provide a useful framework for structuring and supporting aspects of Islamic teaching required for Muslim children as part of their religious education. Feedback from all of the stakeholders working on the ASDAN ICE pilot course (young people, teachers and Madrassa staff) indicate that the activities were well written and were suitable for all branches of the Islamic faith, as one participant observed:

Because a lot of it is based on Islam as well and Madrassas would find it easy to teach I think, as long as they have got the time.

Having the original SDSA ICE course materials freely available online seemed particularly advantageous as it provided lesson plans and subject resources at both Key Stage 2 and 3, these were referred to by teachers and several of the tutors in the Madrassas.

those schools particularly that were involved in the initial ICE project they've got the Key Stage 3 resource, or, if you're at primary school they had the Key Stage 2 resource and part of getting pupils to do the challenges you could go back to the resource and use lesson plans, you could use activity ideas to help meet the requirements of some of the challenges.

The ASDAN ICE pilot operated in a number of Muslim schools and Madrassas in different parts of England (including Luton, Leicester, Bristol and Manchester) and in areas where the SDSA ICE course had been popular and successful, use of the SDSA materials was much more evident. In some institutions it appeared that teachers and Madrassa staff did not know about the SDSA materials and had not accessed them. The SDSA materials may be particularly useful for Madrassa tutors as they do not have access to alternative materials available to teachers in Muslim schools:

I think particularly schools probably may not use it because they've got a PSHE curriculum, they've got a citizenship curriculum ... whereas with the Madrassas they don't have that and therefore they are much more likely to use the original ICE resources which lays down lesson

² This included Teachers, Headteachers and pupils/young people following the programme in schools and Madrassa, as well as ASDAN personnel including ASDAN Regional Link Co-ordinators and Regional School Development Officers.

plans, that tells you the activity ideas and all that sort of thing and so I think that it depends on which areas you're coming from really.

The link between the SDSA programme content and the ASDAN programme content would seem to warrant a systematic review of how the SDSA materials might be used to support school and Madrassas staff in the delivery of the modules within the ASDAN ICE Short Course.

Although Muslim schools may be able to access a broad range of materials and plans as a result of delivering topics relevant and related to the ASDAN ICE Short Course within, for example, PSHE and Citizenship, they clearly face challenges of their own in terms of funding suitable resources:

Muslim schools generally struggle with good resources, access to the resources primarily because there is a limit on funding for Muslim schools, many of whom are independent

Madrassas also have to cope with limited funding, this is usually provided by the parents of the young Muslims attending with some local community support. However, Madrassas have even greater challenges than schools as not only do they not have access to materials related to PSHE and Citizenship, they may also lack resources, such as computers which are not generally available to tutors or students while in attendance at the Madrassas. As a consequence the main methods of delivery may be note taking and handouts and a reliance on students having access to computers at home for task completion.

Although there are computers in the room we do not have access to them under our agreement with the centre. I have to print and copy any notes I want the students to have or I get them to copy the major points down from the presentation

Planning and delivering teaching and learning activities

School teachers are professionally trained and as such are familiar with following schemes of work and preparing associated learning activities for young people. In Madrassas many of the tutoring staff are volunteers with no prior teaching experience. The different teaching and learning approaches experienced in schools and Madrassas is highlighted in the following statement made by one person who was involved in implementing the SDSA ICE course:

We realised very early on that the Madrassas were hugely varied. They were varied in terms of teaching quality; they were varied in terms of the syllabuses they follow. ... the key thing was their resources. ... it's not very interactive, you haven't got any whiteboard stuff, there are no videos.

Planning teaching activities for the ASDAN ICE Short Course should not be as challenging for trained teachers as it could be for some of the unpaid volunteers tutoring young people in Madrassas. The availability of support materials and lesson plans, such as those freely available on the SDSA website, could be of benefit to those delivering the ASDAN ICE Short Course, but overall success will also depend upon the ability of the school teachers and Madrassa tutors to grasp the teaching and learning approach that is particular to ASDAN, as one interviewee explained:

You could deliver an (SDSA) ICE lesson now. If I gave you the booklet, you could follow it, because although there's Arabic in it, there's also the English translation, and all the questions are set, the feedback from the previous lesson, what you actually do – it's all done. It's all very, very structured, you see. Whereas ASDAN, you know, it's much more about them [the pupils] doing things, isn't it? Them coming, them looking, them researching stuff ... ASDAN, in one way is more sophisticated, because it demands slightly different skills of the children. As I say, it's more research-orientated. It's more your personal reflection. Whereas (SDSA) ICE is essentially teacher-directed ... The whole ASDAN approach ... it's very skill-orientated, and it's very self-driven, and I think it does force, you know, the young people to be reflective and to do- And I like the range of skills they also examine.

The following statements illustrate that the positive benefits for young people of the range of skills being developed by ASDAN are recognised and that the ASDAN approach may benefit other aspects of the curriculum:

because they are learning how to do team working skills, communication skills, they are doing PowerPoint Presentations ... because for PSHE they try to build the confidence in working as a team and sharing their opinions ... I am thinking of bringing it into their PHSE, because they do that, the team working and they do the presentation skills and standing in front of people and doing assemblies and things like that ...

I think that will be a good opportunity for them to do problem solving and ICT and they can go into the computer lab, go into the computer suite and do some PowerPoint presentations

... the girls absolutely love discussing things and in PHSE they do a lot of discussions about things and this will... I think some of these topics allow them to do more further discussion.

Overall, for volunteers working in the Madrassas the positive benefits of having a structured curriculum to follow could be counter-balanced by the fact that they are not trained teachers and that they may require particular training and support to deliver the ASDAN ICE Short Course effectively. A number of interviewees indicated that Madrassa tutors would need to attend training courses in order to deliver the ASDAN modules effectively and that these courses would need to be reasonably regular given the high turnover of volunteers that some Madrassas appear to have.

Feedback from those who had attended such ASDAN training was good; they could see how they could use the skills learned in their general teaching at the Madrassas, as well as for teaching the ASDAN ICE Short Course. However, not all of the adults delivering the pilot ICE course in Madrassas had attended the ASDAN short course tutor training and this has the potential to lead to a greater inconsistency in the approach to teaching and learning than might be the case if all were to attend ASDAN training.

In addition to the difficulties associated with resources and training outlined above, in some Madrassas the age range and number of young people involved provide a further challenge

We have a class of 30 and they're from the ages of 4 to 14 and we're in one room. Now that's going to test even, you know, the best teacher in the world, isn't it?

There were questions raised about the young participants and if they were mature enough to be engaged in some of the ASDAN activities. It is usual for young Muslims to stop attending the Madrassas once they have completed the Islamic teaching and learning of the Qur'an. In the majority of cases this is around the age of 12/13. It was felt that for many of the younger students while the learning of Islamic faith was appropriate, the completion of the majority of the ASDAN tasks was not suitable, particularly without additional help from a supportive adult or older sibling at home.

Furthermore, within the Madrassas time is limited and dropout levels appear to be high as the young people have to fit ASDAN sessions in and around other Madrassa classes. The challenge of running ASDAN courses in Madrassas is compounded by the fact that homework is not usual or expected by the young Muslims, or their parents, in relation to the Madrassas.

Those that are doing it are enjoying it, initially when we started we expected 18 people in the Madrassas, but gradually they started to leave...we are down to 5 or 6 now. When the children come to the Madrassas, they don't expect to have to do homework and extra things.

Both prioritise school homework, which is directly linked to National Curriculum subjects and GCSE qualifications.

Tutor: Have you all done the exercise we agreed you would do at home last week? Have you brought it all with you?

Student: Erm, I started it, but I haven't done much and it's not here.

Rest of class talk over each other and indicate that they too have not done it

Tutor: Oh! Why not?

Student: I didn't have time we had a lot of homework last week and I had to look after my sister a lot too.

Culture, tradition and expectations may have a significant impact on the delivery of the ASDAN ICE Short Course in at least some Madrassas. Interviews with participants indicated that Madrassas fulfil a very specific function and that this may not sit comfortably with the content and learning approaches of ASDAN programmes:

Madrassas are basically purely about just reading the Qur'an and you know, yes, learning it by heart and things like that, but they have to take out time and this [ASDAN ICE] would be very different because it is written pieces of work and discussion, it's different. I think it's a very teacher based and school based type of activity

The structure of ASDAN sessions observed in some Madrassas was quite formal, with the adult in control of the learning environment and the young people sitting still for much of the time. Young people's engagement was often limited to responding to questions or listening to answers to specific questions that had to be addressed as part of the learning experience. However, some of the teaching and learning observed in the Muslim schools also involved pupils seated at desks in rows with the majority of lesson time focused on the teacher providing information to enable the pupils to answer particular issues/questions raised in the ASDAN material, and/or providing clarification of the questions and the suitability of particular answers. This seems in contrast to approaches to

teaching and learning observed in other contexts where ASDAN programmes are delivered, these tend to involve more experiential learning with young people working in groups sharing their ideas and experiences. As discussed above there was evidence of this approach being used in some Muslim schools, in particular when the pupils were asked to work on tasks involving ICT e.g. to create a flyer about a charity of their choice.

The Curriculum

The school teachers and Madrassa tutors interviewed for this evaluation were enthusiastic about the opportunities that ASDAN courses provided for them and the young people that they worked with. The ASDAN ICE Short Course was designed to be flexible with centres able to choose which modules are most suitable for them to complete. The only stipulation is that each module should equate to ten hours of work. ASDAN is currently pursuing materials produced at centres running the pilot course to use as exemplars and create a bank of ideas/materials for others to see what can be done. This will also help ASDAN to evaluate the pilot and get a better idea of what is happening within the classrooms and Madrassas. However, because of the flexibility built into the ASDAN ICE Short Course it is not particularly clear what is actually being delivered across the different centres. There is a need to implement strategies to enable the sharing of best practice and to provide quality assurance, this would reassure centres and enable them to achieve the high quality outcomes that they are keen to achieve for the young people they are working with.

School staff indicated that within Muslim schools the ASDAN ICE Short Course sits well within the Citizenship and PHSE programmes and Religious Education classes. They could clearly see where it sat within the curriculum and they felt that the resources provided by ASDAN were appropriate, as a result they felt that they had no difficulty in being able to deliver the course. However, the ASDAN ICE Short Course also seemed to provide a new and a different curriculum offer for both the Muslim schools and the Madrassas that were involved in the pilot. Schools and Madrassas saw it as a valuable addition to the curriculum offer and the challenge for them was more about how to fit it in rather than should they offer it. Indeed the delays to the implementation of the ASDAN course in the majority of schools and Madrassas appears to be mainly down to being able to find room in the current curriculum to add the ASDAN course. This is due to the limited amount of time young Muslims spend in the Madrassas and the existing programme that needs to be completed. The following statement explains the situation for Muslim schools:

That's another reason why perhaps schools haven't been part of this type of programme before because it is very restrictive how much time they've got for certain things and the national curriculum subjects have to take priority. And of course within a Muslim school's timetable will be a significant amount of time spent for teaching Islamic studies, teaching different disciplines within the Islamic faith and there has to be room for all of those things. So where do we build in the opportunities for flexible learning that this programme brings.

The ASDAN ICE Short Course was recognised as adding value to the school curriculum and one interviewee's observation that "once the pilot's over we're going to run it" is an indication that there is likely to be take-up beyond the funded pilot phase. To facilitate expansion across a large number of schools/centres throughout England ASDAN may need to provide guidance material, including frequently asked questions, to promote the course and to support those planning to deliver it.

For the schools involved in the pilot, it seemed likely that they would continue to develop/expand their curriculum offer to include the ASDAN ICE Short Course in the long term. For the Madrassas, the approach to learning promoted by the ASDAN ICE Short Course could be very significant as it involves young people learning in ways that they may be familiar with in the school setting but not used to in the Madrassas.

I think it's the way to go really for the Madrassas, I think it's time to move forward, it's time for young people to be able to have access to, and this is what I've said to you about raising aspirations and motivating particularly my less able learners. I think to deliver this within the supplementary setting really will drive children's learning and I think that that's lacking, that is missing.

School teachers saw the ASDAN ICE Short Course as fitting in very well with some of their existing course:

That will enhance their revision on their law and politics and democracy and it all fits in really well with some of the GCSE modules that I do...it fits in really well with Citizenship and Islamic Studies.

I am thinking of bringing it into their PHSE, because they do that, the team working and they do the presentation skills and standing in front of people and doing assemblies and things like that, and I think that will be a good opportunity for them to do problem solving and ICT and they can go into the computer lab, go into the computer suite and do some PowerPoint presentations so I think it is just not only enhancing their subject knowledge but they are learning to speak in front of others, how to communicate, to voice their opinion effectively...

The young Muslims involved in the ASDAN ICE Short Course felt that the activities and the portfolio were easily attainable. In one centre the ICE pilot was delivered through activities directly linked to an ASDAN leadership programme. This enabled young people to build evidence for both programmes concurrently, effectively 'double badging' their learning. This seemed to motivate the young people, helped them to build their confidence and communication skills and provided them with achievement/qualifications in leadership and citizenship. It also supported staff in planning by structuring activities to cover the content required for citizenship alongside the development of leadership skills.

Throughout the evaluation of the pilot ASDAN ICE Short Course there has been much discussion of the opportunities for the young people involved to develop or enhance their personal skills for life beyond school. The active participation of young people following the ASDAN ICE Short Course appears to give them work and life skills that are not so evident in, or build upon, the learning experiences they have in school or supplementary settings.

What do employers want? They want people who are personable; they want people who can actually work as teams; they want people who are creative and can think outside of the box; they want people who are innovative; they want people who understand some of the major

issues in the world; they want people who actually have got some degree of empathy, emotional literacy, spiritual literacy.

Whereas in school we particularly find that we are doing so much of what the [ASDAN] modules cover whether it be in PHSE, whether it be in Islamic studies, whether it be in an RE programme, whether it be in assemblies you know there are so many areas of the school in which we cover so much of what goes on, what's been covered in the modules you know for us it's just a matter of just putting all that into a portfolio and saying 'here we go'.

Accreditation and Qualifications

It was clear from the adults and young people that we interviewed in Muslim schools and the Madrassas that accreditation that led to a qualification was a particularly significant factor. The young people mentioned that the ASDAN ICE Short Course would give them the teaching they required for their religion, and that this could be done at their school, but also that they were motivated by the fact that it would be accredited and lead to a qualification.

We have been told it will give us an extra GCSE, that makes it worthwhile doing. We haven't started the course yet but it sounds really interesting and if we get a qualification from it to go on our CV then that is really good. That is what we need. It looks good when you go to college don't it.

They explained that before the ASDAN ICE Short Course they had to study their religion but it didn't count towards anything, but they liked doing the ASDAN ICE Short Course as it was relevant to their religion and it was an accredited qualification. The teachers seemed motivated by the pupils gaining qualifications additional to GCSEs:

They get to Year 11 and when they are applying for 6th Forms this is a good opportunity to say not only we've done GCSEs but we've done short courses on things like this [ASDAN ICE].

But they're beginning to see that there are opportunities to accredit young people's work in a way that will enable pupils to feel very motivated about their learning, particularly the way you've got pupils that are not of a high ability because it's not often that those children will be able to take away certification or certificates that say well done you've managed to complete two modules of the ASDAN project.

Some leaders and, we are told, parents, would like some form of national accreditation of the learning that happens within the Madrassas. It is felt that the reputation of ASDAN within the education sector would make this a suitable vehicle for the accreditation. They are not necessarily looking at something at GCSE level but something that would be seen as being of value to the students. Although no parents were interviewed within this evaluation, several interviewees commented that they thought parents would be prepared to pay for ASDAN courses and materials if they led to a recognised qualification. The ASDAN ICE Short Course can form part of the learning required for the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) which up to this year has enabled young

people to obtain credits towards a GCSE equivalent qualification. It is not clear how the recent changes proposed by Government to withdraw the GCSE equivalence (and therefore school performance points for CoPE) will impact upon the willingness of parents in the Muslim community to support the ASDAN ICE Short Course and CoPE. As parents value the opportunity to gain GCSE equivalent qualifications, ASDAN courses that do not lead to GCSE equivalent qualifications could be negatively affected by the recent changes introduced by Government. However it was clear amongst the pupils that the accreditation was all important and in many cases the main motivation for doing the course:

Madrassa Student: It is really good. It means I will get an extra qualification that I won't get at school. I will have something I can tell people I have done

School Year 10 pupil: She [the teacher] explained that it is half a GCSE and that all we have to do is make a portfolio, like do presentations and interview people and create posters and stuff. That is a lot of stuff to do – a lot of time, but it is worth it if we get a GCSE.

School Year 10 pupil: We have been told there is a prize at the end [giggles from others] well you know what I mean we get to go to a prize giving. I'm looking forward to that. We have been told it is in Birmingham, that'll be cool.

However, there were mixed views expressed about the desirability of accredited learning within the different Madrassas and the views expressed above need to be balanced against other opinions, such as:

Madrassas have really struggled because it's a system that they're not used to, to be part of, and Madrassas don't want a credit in the same way as schools do and for them it's a very new world, something that they're very alien to, many are not experienced teachers, they've been merely employed because of their Islamic knowledge and that's I think where the issues have come and of course it's very limited the time that Madrassas have and they've got a lot of curriculum to cover

Even in schools, however, adjusting to delivering non-national curriculum and GCSE courses could present initial challenges:

For many Muslim schools doing qualifications that are not your normal GCSE standard qualifications is quite different so for many schools the ASDAN qualification is a new thing and getting your head round that for some I think has been a challenge just like it has been for the Madrassas as well.

School staff indicated that if the ASDAN short course was not likely to lead to a nationally recognised qualification – such as a GCSE, they would likely still continue with the course as it would be away of accrediting the Islamic learning but rather than do it with Year 10 students it is likely that they would do it with Year 8 or 9 students and it would form part of the teaching of the citizenship curriculum at that level.

Pupils/young people in Muslim schools and Madrassas

The pupils/young people involved in the pilot ASDAN ICE Short Course appeared to enjoy the sessions and were particularly positive about the use of group work and Information and Communication Technology within the sessions. Those interviewed could see that the skills required to create the portfolio were transferable to other areas of their study – particularly the research skills – and both students and staff could see the advantage of developing presentation skills and group work skills outside of the school environment:

Especially the presentations, it would be good to be able to do that for when we go to college or get a job.

In one Madrassa pupils as young as 5/6 years old were working on the ASDAN ICE Short Course. One person explained that this was because the material matched what they would have been learning at that age group in the Madrassa. It was unclear to the evaluators how the portfolio would be created with this age group. However the teacher implied that they would do certain exercises in class together with her help.

In two of the Muslim schools visited the course was being taught to those in Year 10 and Year 11. In one situation it was being incorporated into the Citizenship and PHSE programme and in the other it sat alongside the ASDAN Leadership Programme. However, it was felt that given the amount of time that is required to complete the portfolio and the thought that it might detract from time spent on other subjects, it was likely that it would be put into the Year 8 or 9 curricula in future. This view was also expressed by pupils interviewed:

Student X: If it didn't count to a GCSE? It sounds like it would be a lot of work, why would we do that if it didn't count?

Student Y: It sounds like it is good to do – we get to do presentations to the school and stuff which is good learning but I wouldn't want it to mean I can't do so much for my GCSEs.

Interviewer: What about if you did it in Year 9 instead?

Student Y: Oh well that would be O.K That would be good.

In the other school it was being taught to year 7 pupils, although this was not thought to be ideal:

Ideally we would have implemented it with the Year 10 pupils but we had concern from parents that this is a pilot and that it would interfere with their GCSE study – and ultimately their results so we have introduced to Year 7 and it appears to be working well – well I think so and I'm sure the ladies will say they are enjoying it. Once we can show it is a good course and worth them doing I think we will be able to put it in Year 10 so that there is the GCSE possibility.

There is a need for further investigation of the appropriate age for young people to be working on the ASDAN ICE Short Course so that they might gain maximum benefit from the learning and personal development that it can provide.

As there is funding available for the pilot ASDAN ICE Short Course the centres involved take part for free, and all of the materials are supplied for free. However, young people in some schools and Madrassas did not appear to be using the ICE Course handbook and were working from worksheets and information given by the teacher or adult running the session. It may be the case that activities and learning experiences are being closely matched to the age of the young people involved and to the curriculum of the school and the Madrassa.

One school indicated that they were keeping the workbooks as the students were likely to lose them and they would fill them in together at the end when the portfolios were completed. However, when the evaluators spoke to the students in this situation they were not aware of what the course required them to do. They said they did what they were asked as it was what the teacher told them. They were not aware that there was accreditation for what they were doing they assumed it was what they had to do for their Islamic studies. They were very positive about the Islamic studies they were doing (i.e. the ASDAN ICE Short Course):

It is really good it teaches us about our culture and being a good Muslim. I like the fact that we get to work in groups and use the computers for interesting stuff. Like next week we've got to make flyers for a charity thing, that'll be good.

It means we can chat to each other while we are working in groups – it makes it more fun. I look forward to the class – mainly 'cos we can talk about stuff.

Using ICE in Mainstream schools

It is the long term aspiration of ASDAN that the course is taken up by mainstream schools as part of the Citizenship and/or Religious Education Curriculum. When looking at the detail within the modules, without the help of Arabic speaking tutors, it was a concern of the evaluation team that this may not be possible. However, when deeper analysis was done it was clear that there is enough choice amongst the modules that the course should still be able to be completed by a non-Muslim, especially in light of the fact that Religious Education teachers are expected to have knowledge of all faiths. Although the number of exercises that non Muslim students/teachers could complete would be reduced they should still be able to complete modules. However, one interviewee said that “It would be difficult for a non Muslim teacher to teach it” the majority of those interviews indicated that it could, as long as someone with a good knowledge of the Qur'an or the faith was available to speak to the pupils.

It certainly could because obviously Islam is taught as a GCSE curriculum, it's taught at Key Stage 3 by non-Muslim teachers in state schools. You know obviously there are schools that are teaching world religions particularly in schools where there is a higher majority of Muslim students or Muslim pupils on roll there is a likelihood that the curriculum will cover Islamic studies or the religion Islam

This is especially pertinent to several exercises where in depth knowledge of the faith is required; Module 1, Active Citizenship and Volunteering, challenge 8 (page 10) asks students to ‘learn this Arabic verse from the Qur'an and recite it to your teacher’.

Module 5, Islam and the Environment, challenge 3 (page 34) requires the students to ‘find two

verses from the Qur'an that Allah teaches on this subject. Learn one of the verses of the Qur'an and recite it to a friend, your teacher or tutor. Learn and share a Hadith with others'.

Module 6, Equality between Men and Women, challenge 3 (page 40) sets the task to 'find two verses from the Qur'an that support this teaching. Recite one of them to your teacher'.

Module 7, Dealing With and Resolving Conflict, challenge 6 (page 47) requires the student to 'find two verses from the Qur'an that speak of forgiveness and recite them to your teacher'.

Module 9, Respect, challenge 3 asks the students to 'find two verses in the Qur'an...write them down. Learn one and recite to your teacher'.

Additionally, there are instances where students are asked 'what does the Qur'an say about...' and there are several exercises that require knowledge of the Qur'an:

Module 3, challenge 6 expects the students to 'find two verses from the Qur'an that show the Prophet's teaching on this subject. Write them down.'

Module 4, challenge 2 (page 28) asks students to find two Qur'anic or Prophetic Hadith that show the teachings of how we should act together as an Ummah'.

Module 4, challenge 7 (page 30) asks the students to 'find two verses in the Qur'an...write down the verses'. Module 7, challenge 3 (page 46 asks 'what does the Qur'an say about...'

Module 7, challenge 4 (page 50) requires students to 'use references to the teachings of the Qur'an where possible'.

Module 8, challenge 4 (page 54) asks the students to 'find four verses from the Qur'an about justice. Write then down and learn two of them'.

If this was to be extended to non-Muslim students then some of the wording of the exercises may need to be amended to make it more accessible. For example, there are assumptions made throughout, that everyone undertaking this ASDAN Short Course will be Muslim.

Module 1, challenge 10 'what can you, as a Muslim...' (page 11),

Module 5, challenge 2, 'what can we, as Muslims...' (page 34),

Module 9, challenge 1 'In the Qur'an, Allah reminds us...' (page 58).

The evidence suggests that at present for it to be completely successful in a mainstream school it was felt that the school would ideally have a large Muslim intake to be able to gain the most from the course as although completing modules is still possible as a non-Muslim many of the activities require the interviewing of a Muslim, speaking to local Muslims or researching events in the local Muslim community.

The Pilot

The ASDAN staff indicated that the writing and the implementation of the ASDAN ICE Short Course had happened over a much shorter time than would normally be expected to introduce a new ASDAN Short Course to their portfolio. It was accepted that this was mainly due to the course being based on the sessions and modules already written for the SDSA ICE course and the input and support from the Association of Muslim Schools in choosing the areas of study that would be suitable for an ASDAN Short Course. It would appear from those spoken to, the majority of people involved in the ASDAN pilot were also involved with the pilot of the SDSA course and so were aware of the desire to accredit the learning from Islamic studies in Madrassas and schools. By implication

those that had been part of the original SDSA course evaluation that had wanted the course and learning accredited were very positive about the ASDAN ICE Short Course and keen to be part of the pilot.

However, there did seem to be some difficulties in expanding the ASDAN ICE Short Course into Madrassas, in particular, that had not been involved in the SDSA pilot. Discussions at a support meeting held in Birmingham in March indicated that elders and parents had some misgivings about the purpose of the course and there were some misunderstandings around the meanings of citizenship and democracy within the context of the course. One person reported that there had been questions raised as to whether the course was required to gain British Citizenship and others had misunderstandings around the discussions of democracy, incited by the political unrest in several Muslim countries at present, there were concerns over whether the course may have an underlying political rhetoric. This view was reinforced during our interviews with participants:

When writing to the parents to discuss the ASDAN course, Islam and Citizenship education is a very new term and it did create a lot of confusion. It was not clearly explained at the start, some people thought it was to do with the British Citizenship, some thought it to do with the ESOL course. It needed to be explained to them that it was teaching citizenship with a faith perspective.

It was felt that these types of concerns could easily be allayed if the course had open support of Islamic leaders in the same way the SDSA had a forward written by high profile Muslim leaders of the main Sunni and Shia arms of the religion. It was felt that those involved in the pilot would have found it easier to gain the support of Madrassas, more easily and quickly if this had been the case.

[For the SDSA course development] we managed to get a very powerful advisory board which consisted of Sunni and Shia. So all the major schools of thought were represented and that was really crucial. Because the way that Islam works everywhere is its all by names. And so what people do is they look at organisations and individuals and they say, well, is X there? ...and if they are, they'll do it. And if they're not, they won't. It's as simple and as straightforward as that.

Having the funding for the pilot was critical. It provided the Madrassas with the funds to be able to take part in the project otherwise it is unlikely they would have paid out for the course and the materials themselves. There was a contradiction between those interviewed, some felt that continuing finding funding to run the course in Madrassas once the pilot was finished would be an issue and others not:

However, it will be an issue for some Madrassas; the parent contribution is maybe £1 a day or say £10 per week. If there is an extra cost onto their budget there may be a second thought, but for those that can see the value they will not let the cost undermine that. If the Madrassas successfully sell it to the parents then the parents will pay that. As long as ASDAN do not make it all silly prices!

The lead-in time for the implementation of ASDAN ICE and the evaluation was short. It was thought that many of the Madrassas and schools would start the ASDAN ICE in September 2011 in fact many were only just starting to implement the course in May 2012. Delays were mainly due to gaining

parent support in the Madrassas and timetabling sessions in the schools. It was very easy to foster the support of one tutor or lead within a delivery centre, but progressing that to implementing the course by gaining the support of elders or Head Teachers and creating space in the curriculum for the course was slow.

The ASDAN pilot funded two people to liaise with the schools and the Madrassas to help gain support for the pilot. Both of them had been involved in the pilot of the SDSA course and had strong links with the Muslim communities around the country. It was felt that there would be greater take up of the course by having individuals from within the communities promoting the ASDAN ICE Short Course and that it might enable the momentum to continue beyond the pilot phase. They would also have a greater understanding of Muslim culture than existing ASDAN Area Coordinators might have, including for example, observing protocols and expectations when engaging with Muslim schools and Madrassas:

What they [ASDAN Area Coordinators] might not have is that knowledge of a Madrassa or a Muslim school and how they work. If a school approached us, we would be able to give some very general knowledge about the running of it and how you gain your credits and things.

Throughout the evaluation there was no evidence of difficulties encountered in meeting and engaging with participants in any of the settings. Where protocols were desirable, or needed to be observed, advice was forthcoming and the reasons for different behaviours were explained, avoiding any potential difficulties.

Summary and Conclusions

It was clear from the evidence gathered for this evaluation that many of the adults/staff and the young people/pupils within the Madrassas and the Muslim schools valued the experience provided by the ASDAN ICE Short Course. Some of the schools indicated that they would want to continue with the ASDAN ICE Short Course once the pilot has finished and they would be prepared to pay for it. The reasons they gave were that they could see the value of the learning being accredited and they liked the way the subject was structured and taught. Continuation in the Madrassas, and perhaps some private schools, may depend upon the value that parents and Head Teachers place on the ASDAN ICE Short Course. It is likely that this will be influenced by the accreditation and qualifications resulting from the course. Also, we feel that the closer the content of the ASDAN ICE Short Course to what is usually studied in the Madrassas the more likely it is to be taken up, as one interviewee stated 'so for the Madrassas it isn't really doing anything extra, apart from keeping a record of the study.'

Feedback from the teachers and tutors involved in the ASDAN pilot was that the activities and challenges were well written and that they were suitable for all branches of the Islamic faith. The young Muslims involved appeared to enjoy the activities and challenges and felt that the portfolio required for accreditation purposes was easily attainable. The teachers and students could both see that skills developed on the ASDAN course would be transferable to other parts of the curriculum and would be useful skills to have in life as well as in educational settings.

It was seen as advantageous having the original SDSA ICE course materials freely available to provide lesson plans and subject resources at both Key Stage 2 and 3. Ensuring all centres delivering the ASDAN ICE Short Course are made aware of their existence is important. A systematic review of how the SDSA materials might be used to support school and Madrassa staff in the delivery of the modules would also be helpful.

Muslim schools could clearly identify how the content of the ASDAN ICE Short Course fits with a number of existing curriculum areas, such as Citizenship, PHSE and Religious Education. Teachers and pupils were also very animated about adopting more of the student-centred approach to teaching and learning that is promoted via ASDAN courses. It was felt that the ASDAN ICE Short Course could have links into, or with, other ASDAN courses such as CoPE, the Leadership Short Course and possibly the Universities Award.

It was suggested that following the pilot take up would be higher if it had the open support of Islamic leaders in the same way the SDSA had a forward written by high profile Muslim leaders. This could be particularly relevant given the subject matter and suspicion within some communities around anything that concerns citizenship.

Madrassas have limited access to teaching and learning materials and resources; for example, computers are not generally available at the Madrassas. This has meant that the main methods of delivery involve note taking or handouts in this setting. Although ASDAN does not stipulate that presentations etc must be in electronic format there is an expectation amongst young people that tasks are computer-orientated. The students therefore see it as a requirement to have access to

computers at home for task completion in turn creating homework which is not a usual expectation of parents or young Muslims and is thought to have contributed to a number of young people dropping out of the pilot. In contrast any completion of activities at home is not an issue within the school environment as pupils are expected to be set and complete homework.

In Madrassas many of the tutoring staff are volunteers with no teaching experience and there is a high turnover of volunteers. Regular training courses would be necessary to ensure volunteer Madrassa tutors have background knowledge and understanding of the ASDAN ICE Short Course and provide at least some of the basic teaching skills necessary to deliver it.

The evaluation has found that the course has been piloted with a wide age range of young people from 6/7 up to 14 years of age. As a result there is a need to identify the most appropriate age range for the students following the ASDAN ICE Short Course as they need to be mature enough to be able to fully engage with both the knowledge aspect of the course and the portfolio creation. If the accreditation is unlikely to lead to attainment at GCSE level the indications from the evaluation suggest that around 12/13 is the most appropriate age. Although ASDAN ethos is that students complete the portfolios to the best of their ability there is a need to implement strategies to enable the sharing of best practice and to provide quality assurance, this would reassure centres and enable them to achieve the high quality outcomes that they are keen to achieve for the young people they are working with.

Madrassas, and some private Muslim schools, have limited funding with much of it provided by parents paying fees and/or making donations. Therefore, the benefits to young people following the ASDAN ICE Short Course would have to be very clear for parents to support it beyond the free pilot phase. As leaders and parents are seeking recognised national accreditation for the learning that happens within the Madrassas the reputation of ASDAN within the education sector makes it a suitable vehicle for this to happen. Madrassas are not necessarily looking for GCSE level accreditation but something that would be seen as having value for the young people.

Year 10 school pupils wanted the ASDAN course to provide them with credits towards a GCSE qualification. They could see how the learning could contribute towards GCSE qualification that they were currently studying, such as, Citizenship and Religious Education. They said that they would only be interested in the ASDAN course if the work required to obtain the credits was going to provide something for their CV or continuing education. The staff however felt that the course would be suitable to be taught in Year 8 and Year 9 as revision of Islamic studies and as an introduction to citizenship. It was felt by both parties that the creation of the portfolio would help the pupils develop learning and researching skills that would be transferable to other subject areas. The consensus was that even if the ASDAN course did not lead to a GCSE it would be beneficial to pupils in the school setting.

An intention of ASDAN is to offer the course to mainstream schools the evaluation concluded that that the ASDAN ICE Short Course could be completed in mainstream schools if:

- The school had a large Muslim intake - many of the activities require the interviewing of a Muslim or speaking to local Muslims or researching events in the local Muslim community.

- Changes were made to the wording of the booklet in a number of cases terms such as: ‘as a Muslim’
- The majority of it was taught by someone knowledgeable of Muslim culture or Islamic faith – for example a Religious Education teacher.

In regard to the pilot process itself it was determined that the lead-in time for the implementation of the ASDAN ICE Short Course, and the subsequent evaluation, was too short. It was thought that many of the Madrassas and schools would start the ASDAN ICE in September 2011. In fact many were only just starting to implement the course in May 2012. Delays were mainly due to: gaining parent support in the Madrassas and timetabling sessions in the schools. It was very easy to foster the support of one tutor or lead within a delivery centre but progressing that to implementing the course was slow. Having the support of the Association of Muslim Schools was crucial in disseminating the course. In many cases it is those that are heavily involved in the Association of Muslim Schools that are involved in the pilot. If ASDAN are looking to write similar short courses for other religions it would appear to be vital to gain the support of the relevant community leaders and teaching associations. Future pilots will need to take account of the time it takes to implement programmes that require the engagement of a range of stakeholders within the target community.

Background Sources

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