

SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Biomedicine, Religion & Education

*Proceedings and Policy Recommendations from the Symposium on
Biomedicine, Religion, and Education held on 17th July 2025*

ORGANIZED BY

AKU-IED & The Initiative on Islam & Medicine

Acknowledgements

This white paper is a co-publication of the Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED), Pakistan, and The Initiative on Islam & Medicine, USA. It documents the rich, interdisciplinary dialogue held at the Symposium on Biomedicine, Religion, and Education on July 17, 2025.

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The success of the symposium rested entirely on the willingness of the participants to engage across disciplinary boundaries with openness and curiosity. We are immensely grateful to all the Medical Professionals, Educators, and Theologians/Philosophers, including the esteemed international guests and local experts, who dedicated their time and expertise to this effort, helping to chart a meaningful path forward.

Finally, we acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Symposium Organizing Team, AKU support staff and volunteers who managed the logistics and ensured the day was structured for maximum dialogue and reflection.

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Executive Summary

This white paper describes the interdisciplinary dialogue held at the Symposium on Biomedicine, Islam, and Education on July 17, 2025. The event was co-hosted by the Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) and The Initiative on Islam & Medicine, USA with generous support from the John Templeton Foundation through the *Fostering Connections between Science and Theology for Medical Track Muslim Students* grant, led by Dr. Padela and hosted at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The symposium addressed the growing urgency of bioethical debates arising from unprecedented biomedical advances (e.g., genomics, AI, reproductive technologies) and the limited integration of Muslim perspectives within contemporary science and ethics curricula. The core insight of the convening was the critical need for integrating Muslim moral reasoning and biomedical inquiry within curriculum design.

Purpose and Process

The symposium was convened to foster sustained dialogue among experts and policy representatives across three key sectors: Medical Professionals, Educators, and Theologians/Philosophers.

The day's structure involved initial sectoral group discussions followed by three rounds of cross-sector dialogues, designed to reveal elements of the problem and encourage shared understandings.

Key Findings and Sectoral Insights

The interdisciplinary dialogue revealed a persistent epistemic fragmentation, or the “mister and mulla” divide, that separates science/medicine education from ethical and spiritual reasoning in many Muslim contexts.

Biomedical Perspectives: Medical practitioners emphasized that they increasingly encounter complex ethical questions arising from advances in medicine and biotechnology. Addressing these challenges requires nuanced reasoning that bridges theological, moral, ethical, and legal dimensions while remaining attentive to contemporary biomedical realities. Participants called for a more contextualized approach to bioethics that combines expertise from both the religious and medical fields.

Theologians & Philosophers Perspectives: Participants argued that metaphysics precedes ethics, noting that moral judgments in medicine cannot be resolved through empirical data alone. Theology is a dynamic interpretive tradition; the discourse should be framed around “Muslim medicine” (rooted in lived experience) rather than abstract “Islamic medicine” to acknowledge diversity and contextual realities.

Educational Perspectives: Science educators reported feeling unprepared to address students' complex questions about science, religion, morality, and existence. They identified significant barriers, including rigid subject divisions, curricula that prioritize memorization, and a lack of safe discussion spaces.

Key Outcomes and Recommendations

The symposium concluded with a strong consensus that progress requires structural commitments and long-term collaborative culture-building. The key recommendations are centered on institutionalizing collaboration, curriculum reform, and capacity building:

At a Glance — Core Recommendations

- Institutionalizing Dialogue: establish regular, structured, institutionally supported cross-sector conversations and a multi-sector working group (Medicine–Education–Theology).
- Curricular Reform: pilot the proposed Exploring Bioscience & Islam curriculum and infuse epistemology, philosophical inquiry, and moral reasoning across all levels of education.
- Capacity Building: invest in joint training of “bridge professionals” fluent in both scientific epistemology and Islamic ethical domains.
- Resource Development: produce high-quality, locally developed scholarship and case studies on Islamic bioethics as a global intellectual reference point.

The collective effort requires an ethos of epistemic humility and collaborative openness. The questions identified will form the agenda for future research and institutional innovation.

Background and Rationale

Context of the Symposium

The Symposium on Biomedicine, Islam, and Education was convened at the Aga Khan University – Institute for Educational Development (AKU-IED) on 17 July 2025, in collaboration with the Medical College of Wisconsin, and the Initiative on Islam and Medicine, with generous support from the John Templeton Foundation.

The event brought together an interdisciplinary global group of educators, medical professionals, religious scholars, and policy representatives to explore how ethical, epistemological, and pedagogical questions at the intersection of Islam and modern biomedicine can inform educational practice and public discourse.

This collaboration builds on the Initiative on Islam & Medicine's pioneering work in rethinking biomedical ethics through Islamic intellectual frameworks (Al-Akiti & Padela, 2022; Padela, 2024). The symposium sought to seed sustained dialogue across disciplinary and institutional silos that often separate the laboratory, the seminary, and the school — spaces that, historically, were united in a shared pursuit of knowledge and moral formation.

Why This Conversation Matters

Reconnecting Science, Ethics, and Wonder

Biomedical sciences are advancing at an unprecedented pace — in genomics, artificial intelligence, reproductive technologies, and neuroscience — posing profound moral and philosophical questions about life, death, and human purpose. Yet contemporary bioscience education often presents knowledge as fixed and mechanical rather than exploratory and awe-inspiring. Scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1993) and Ziauddin Sardar (1997) caution that when science is taught without engagement with its metaphysical dimensions, it risks becoming a technocratic enterprise stripped of humility.

The Challenge of Epistemic Fragmentation

In many Muslim contexts, this issue is compounded by curricular fragmentation. Science and medical education often operate in isolation from ethical and spiritual reasoning, while religious education seldom engages with contemporary science. The result is what scholars describe as 'epistemic silos' (Iqbal, 2002; Bakar, 1999); each discipline developing internally yet failing to converse meaningfully with the others. The symposium, therefore, emerged from a recognition that education must serve as a bridge between scientific literacy and moral reasoning, enabling learners to navigate the complexity in science without ethical reflection anchored in both revelation and reason.

Global Ethical Crisis and the Muslim Imperative

Globally, bioethical debates are increasingly urgent as societies grapple with the possibilities of gene editing, medicalized dying, and AI-assisted medicine. Western secular bioethics, while influential, often reflects liberal individualist assumptions that do not fully account for relational, spiritual, or communal dimensions of moral life (Brockopp & Eich, 2008). In contrast, Islamic bioethics draws upon fiqh rules and constructs, the maqāṣid al-sharīʿah (higher objectives of Islamic law), as well as virtuous principles such as justice and compassion - offering alternative moral vocabularies and frameworks for deliberation (Al-Bar & Chamsi-Pasha, 2015; Padela, 2024). For example, in end-of-life decision making, an Islamic emphasis on the preservation of life (ḥifẓ al nafs) and accountability before God leads to different conclusions about

withdrawing life support than those grounded primarily in individual autonomy. Engaging these perspectives within educational systems can enrich both global discourse and local pedagogical practices.

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The Pakistani Context: Bridging Fragmentation

In Pakistan, the need for such dialogue is particularly acute. The “mister and mulla” divide - a metaphor for the separation between secular and religious knowledge traditions - has deepened over decades of colonial inheritance and post-independence educational bifurcation (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). School curricula often treat scientific knowledge as value-neutral, while religious instruction often remains detached from contemporary social and scientific realities (Memon et al., 2021). This epistemic fragmentation has produced parallel moral and intellectual worlds.

Re-imagining the relationship between biomedicine, Islam, and education thus represents not only an intellectual necessity but also a societal imperative. Historically, Muslim intellectual traditions enabled meaningful dialogue and overlap across disciplines: scholars who worked as scientists, jurists, theologians, and philosophers were frequently educated in both the ‘aqlī (rational sciences) and naqlī (revealed sciences), allowing different forms of reasoning to inform one another in practice. The symposium aimed to rekindle that spirit by fostering interdisciplinary exchange and co-creating educational models, such as the proposed Exploring Bioscience & Islam curriculum, that reconnects religious, ethical, and scientific frameworks of inquiry.

Symposium Overview

Objectives

1. Foster cross-disciplinary understanding among experts in science, religion, and education - creating mutually beneficial dialogue between biomedical professionals, Islamic ethicists, and educators to explore shared moral and epistemic ground.
2. Explore approaches for integrating Islamic theological perspectives into science and biomedical education, examining how curricula and teaching practices can help learners engage contemporary biomedical questions through scientific inquiry and ethical reasoning.
3. Identify actionable insights for policy and practice in Muslim contexts — informing curriculum design, teacher preparation, and educational policy through interdisciplinary collaboration.

Structure of the Day

The symposium, held on 17 July 2025 at AKU-IED, was intentionally small, ensuring a carefully curated gathering where each participant's insights could be shared, evaluated, and critically refined.

After initial proceedings and an overview of the symposium's aims, participants were divided into three disciplinary groups:

- Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
- Education and Pedagogy
- Theology and Philosophy

These initial sessions enabled reflection on conceptual challenges and ethical questions unique to each field. Groups identified priority issues and prepared discussion points and questions for the collective dialogues that followed.

The collective dialogue took place as a rotational model, ensuring that every discipline both contributed to and was interrogated by the others. This was followed by a presentation titled Exploring Bioscience & Islam, illustrating practical possibilities for integrating biomedical and Islamic perspectives in classroom settings — paving the way to concluding reflections and a “Charting the Way Forward” session with proposals for collaborative research, policy engagement, and curriculum design.

The overall structure — dialogical, participatory, and interdisciplinary — embodied the symposium's guiding ethos: meaningful engagement across fields is essential for ethically grounded, contextually relevant educational reform.

Participant Profiles and Representation

The symposium's participant list was deliberately and thoughtfully curated to ensure inclusivity, depth, and diversity of expertise, spanning a broad range of institutions and sub-fields within each of the three core sectors.

In the medical and biomedical sciences, the symposium hosted practitioners, researchers, and educators. In the education sector, representation included teacher educators, curriculum experts, policy advisors,

school leaders, NGO representatives, and academics. In the theology and philosophy sector, participants represented a plurality of Islamic traditions and interpretive schools — Shia Ismaili and Sunni scholarly circles — along with philosophers and religious educators.

Table 1. Symposium Participants (Dr. denotes physicians; Prof. denotes formal academic appointments)

Medical Professionals	Educators	Theologians & Philosophers
Dr. Aasim I. Padela – Initiative on Islam & Medicine, MCW	Usama Javed Mirza – University of Cambridge	Prof Farid Panjwani – Dean, AKU-IED
Dr. Macksood Aftab – Michigan State University, USA	Dr. Ghazala Siddiqui – Generation's School	Rafiq Rahim Ajani – Institute of Ismaili Studies (UK)
Prof. Mohd Yusof Mohamad – IIUM, Malaysia	Prof Tasneem Anwar – AKU-IED	Maulana Bilal Ali – Darul Qasim College, USA
Prof. Farhat Moazam – SIUT, Karachi	Prof Naveed Yousuf – AKU-EB	Prof. Zeeshan Ahmed – Al-Ghazali University
Dr. Aamir M. Jafarey – CBEC-SIUT	Ali Nadeem Sipra – The Citizens Foundation (TCF)	Prof. Abdul Wahab Suri – University of Karachi
Dr. Robyna Irshad Khan – AKU	Maryam Razvi Padela – NoorKids, USA	Mufti Muhammad Faeq – Islamic Healthcare Insight / Barkat Foundation UK
Dr. Hadia Pasha – AKU	Prof. Sajid Ali, AKU-IED	Prof. Humaira Jamshed – Habib University
Dr. Tashfeen Ahmad – AKU	Zanira Hassan Kanjiani – GECE, Karachi	Prof. Amana Raquib – IBA Karachi
Dr. Sadia Fatima – AKU		Prof. Nazim Aman – AKU-IED
		Prof. Majid Montazer Mahdi – Institute of Ismaili Studies (UK)

Thematic Issues & Challenges — Sector-Wise

Biomedical Perspectives

1. Addressing Bioethical Issues

Participants underscored that medical practitioners today confront manifold ethical complexities arising from advances in biomedical technoscience — from stem cell research and organ transplantation to abortion and transgender health. The dilemma of organ transplant from a brain-dead person, and similar issues, require both clinical competence and theological understanding.

It was observed that many contemporary fatwas tend to misrepresent or be detached from biomedical realities, reflecting limited engagement between scholars and practitioners. Physicians expressed a desire for collaborative dialogue with theologians, emphasizing that religious guidance must be grounded in a robust understanding of biomedical science and the implications of biomedical technologies upon the human person.

This disconnect, they noted, reflects a broader epistemic rupture: earlier Islamic civilizations cultivated polymaths — physicians who were also philosophers and theologians — whereas modern medicine has become compartmentalized and technocratic. Reclaiming that integrated approach is seen as essential to cultivating a morally coherent and contextually relevant bioethics for Muslim societies.

2. Issues in Medical/Bioethical Education

Participants noted that, although biomedical ethics education is often structured around widely accepted principles and frameworks (such as the Georgetown principles), discussing ethically contentious issues in Pakistan can be challenging due to diverse sectarian interpretations and social sensitivities. As a result, educators may avoid sustained engagement with certain topics. Several participants called for more dialogical approaches to ethics education that create space for respectful engagement with secular, religious, and philosophical perspectives.

3. Erosion of the Medical Profession

A recurring theme was the commercialization and dehumanization of modern healthcare. Participants lamented how the 'noble profession' of medicine has been rebranded as a 'healthcare industry,' where metrics like productivity and revenue have overshadowed compassion and patient dignity.

This economic instrumentalization, coupled with Western-imported models of bioethics, has distanced medicine from its moral and spiritual core. Physicians expressed concern that ethical decision-making is increasingly driven by business imperatives rather than Hippocratic and Islamic ideals of service, humility, and justice.

4. Religion, Society, and Mental Health

Clinicians shared experiences where religiously infused fears (e.g., of 'azāb al-qabr, or divine punishment) sometimes triggered severe anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behaviors. This highlighted the need for religious literacy in medical training, especially in psychology and psychiatry, so that clinicians can respond empathetically to faith-shaped anxieties while distinguishing between spiritual belief and pathological fear.

5. The Need for Contextualized Bioethics and Theological Engagement

Participants agreed that bioethics curricula and institutional frameworks remain overly dependent on Western paradigms, resulting in conceptual and moral dissonance in Muslim contexts. They called for a contextualized bioethics model rooted in Islamic epistemology but open to universal ethical principles.

Physicians are merely asbāb (means), while God is the ultimate healer.

— Dr. Tashfeen Ahmad

Participants suggested that this perspective has important implications for medical education, emphasizing that not only are ethical principles required but also the cultivation of virtues such as humility, compassion, empathy, and moral responsibility. On this view, healthcare practice requires character formation alongside technical competence and ethical knowledge.

6. Bridging the Divide: Religion, Healthcare, and Ethics

The group acknowledged the persistent bifurcation between religious and biomedical knowledge. Many practitioners feel pressured to suppress their faith identities to appear 'objective' within medical institutions — a stance that ultimately undermines holistic identity formation.

Reclaiming the integrated ethos of Islamic medical ethics, participants argued, requires cultivating professionals who are at ease in both scientific and theological domains. The dialogue concluded with a call for ongoing collaboration between medical practitioners, theologians, and educators to co-develop innovative curricula and policies.

Questions Raised by the Medical Professionals — for Educators

- How can curricula incorporate existential questions — such as the meaning of suffering, death, and spirituality — so future physicians are better equipped to address moral and emotional dimensions of care?
- How can educators guide young professionals toward a more principled and humanistic understanding of medicine to counter its growing commercialization?

Questions Raised by the Medical Professionals — for Theologians and Philosophers

- How can we disentangle cultural practices from authentic Islamic teachings in healthcare decisions?
- How can humility and dialogue be fostered between physicians and religious scholars to bridge disciplinary divides?
- How can theologians collaborate to present a unified understanding of Islam that aids practitioners in navigating complex bioethical questions?
- How can theologians and educators co-develop a framework for ethics and morality that accommodates people of different religions, fostering an inclusive bioethical discourse?

Theologians & Philosophers Perspectives

The dialogue opened by juxtaposing two foundational assumptions: medicine grounded in empiricism, and religion viewing all occurrences as issuing from Divine will.

1. Medicine, Metaphysics, and the Limits of Empiricism

This contrast revealed that clinical practice inevitably involves moral judgment that cannot be resolved through empirical data alone. Participants emphasized that metaphysics precedes ethics: how one conceptualizes human purpose, the soul, suffering, destiny, and justice shapes what one perceives as morally right or wrong. A utilitarian physician may reach conclusions different from a deontological one, or from someone whose ethical decisions are grounded in Qur'anic notions of accountability (ḥisāb) and Divine mercy (rahmah).

This recognition led participants to conclude that ethical reasoning is shaped by underlying assumptions about what a human is and what moral responsibility is. Effective biomedical ethics education should therefore not be limited to the application of ethical principles alone but should also encourage critical reflection on the philosophical and theological commitments that inform moral judgment.

2. What Is Health? What Is Theology? Rethinking the Foundations

Qur'anic notions of shifā' (healing) and holistic wellbeing were explored, emphasizing that Islamic conceptions of health integrate the physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the human being. This led participants to reflect on questions including:

- What role should theology play in informing medical ethics and healthcare practice?
- Whose theological interpretations inform ethical judgments?
- How do practitioners distinguish between doctrinal Islam and lived Muslim experiences?

Theology is a dynamic interpretive tradition shaped by human agency, not merely a static body of rulings. Moral rulings are human attempts to apply revelation to new contexts; simply citing Qur'an and Sunnah as direct answers to modern bioethical challenges can be anachronistic. Moral reasoning must acknowledge both scripture and the interpretive processes that mediate it.

3. Barriers to Integrating Religion and Medicine

Theologians and philosophers identified several structural and cultural barriers:

- Lack of institutional spaces for sustained dialogue between religious scholars, physicians, and educators.
- Lack of consensus on methodology in conceptualizing medical issues, even within religious circles, creating fragmentation.
- Terminological divides: physicians, theologians, and philosophers 'speak different languages.'

Participants stressed the need to revive a culture of multi-disciplinarity — not to collapse disciplines, but to enable genuine epistemic exchange.

4. Religion as Lived Experience: from “Islamic” to “Muslim” Frameworks

A significant insight from the discussion was the argument that religion must be understood as lived experience, not merely doctrinal abstraction. This raised a provocative point: Instead of speaking about

“Islamic medicine,” perhaps the more accurate framework is “Muslim medicine” - an approach grounded in how Muslims actually experience illness, healing, suffering, gender, family, and death in daily life.

5. Education as a Site for Transformation

Theologians and philosophers emphasized that many of the deepest divides are educational problems. Participants agreed that:

- Education must cultivate critical thinking about the “taboo questions.”
- Students should be encouraged to ask metaphysical questions.
- Curricula should integrate multiple epistemologies.
- Theological voices must be included in curriculum design, especially on moral and existential topics.

Education, they argued, is the only long-term mechanism for reconstructing an integrated worldview that bridges religious and biomedical reasoning.

Questions Raised by Theologians & Philosophers — for Educators

- How can theological voices be included meaningfully in curriculum design and policymaking to facilitate joint knowledge creation?
- To what extent does contemporary educational theory and practice allow the integration of diverse epistemic traditions, and what gaps must be bridged to make this possible?

Questions Raised by Theologians & Philosophers — for Medical Professionals

- How can theological voices be integrated into medical curriculum design and clinical practice in a way that enriches rather than burdens professional training?
- To what extent do medical curricula allow engagement with alternative medical systems (e.g., Ayurveda, Unani, traditional healing frameworks), and how can these be integrated thoughtfully?

Educators' Perspectives

1. Educators' Identity and Responsibility

Educators described themselves as sitting at a critical intersection between scientific knowledge, religious worldviews, and students' lived realities. Several key insights emerged:

- Teachers often become the first point of contact when students grapple with questions about science, religion, existence, morality, or emerging topics in bioethics — yet many teachers feel unprepared or unsupported, leading at times to avoidance, dismissal, or attitudes that shut down student curiosity.
- Schooling environments frequently prioritize content transmission over inquiry, leaving little room for reflective dialogue on science–religion intersections.
- With the increasing role of AI and digital media, educators feel an added responsibility to cultivate moral reasoning, digital discernment, and citizenship values in students.

- Educators noted that their profession is inherently interdisciplinary, even if the system presents subjects as rigidly divided.

A strong theme was the belief that education should support the holistic development of students, but current structures — disciplinary tracks, exam-driven cultures, and lack of epistemic integration — limit this aspiration.

2. Challenges in Navigating Plurality and Identity

Participants emphasized that Pakistani classrooms are religiously, culturally, and socially diverse, which creates both opportunities and challenges:

- Students come with different sectarian backgrounds, levels of religiosity, and varying conceptions of science and faith.
- Educators struggle to design curricula or learning experiences that respect this diversity while maintaining coherence and academic rigor.
- Teachers face dilemmas balancing scientific integrity with students' religious sensibilities on sensitive topics (e.g., evolution, gender, mental health); their role is to guide reflection, not prescribe belief.

3. Structural and Pedagogical Barriers

Participants identified significant systemic issues that constrain their ability to bridge science and religion meaningfully:

- Lack of safe discussion spaces in classrooms.
- Rigid subject divisions (science/commerce/humanities) that reinforce artificial intellectual boundaries.
- Curricula that prioritize memorization over inquiry or moral reasoning.
- Teacher training programs that inadequately prepare educators for philosophical or ethical conversations.
- A system shaped by political and economic pressures, where knowledge is often instrumentalized for employability rather than human development.

4. Philosophical Tensions: Defining Science, Knowledge, and Meaning

Educators raised foundational philosophical questions that emerge in their classrooms:

- How do we define science, and what distinguishes it from pseudo-science? Is there such a thing as Islamic science?
- Why are science and religion taught as separate, competing spheres when students experience life holistically?
- How can teachers help students navigate uncertainty, ikhtilāf (differences of interpretation), and evolving scientific knowledge?

5. Expectations from Other Sectors

What Educators Need from Medical Professionals

- Help clarify what science is and is not.
- Input on how to teach bioethical controversies.

- Guidance on how to explain informed consent and ethical decision-making to young students.
- Support in bridging the perception that science excludes metaphysics or ethics.

What Educators Need from Theologians and Philosophers

- Guidance on navigating sectarian diversity and ikhtilāf in classrooms.
- Insight on the role of the Qur'an in education — book of life, ethics, or science?
- Assistance in articulating theological concepts in accessible language.
- Collaboration on creating safe spaces for discussions of meaning, suffering, identity, and existence.
- More engagement with contemporary school realities.

Educators repeatedly emphasized that theologians and scientists often operate far from classroom realities, making ongoing, structured collaboration essential.

Questions Raised by Educators — for Medical Professionals

- How should we define science?
- How can we differentiate between science and “Islamic science”? Does such a dichotomy meaningfully exist?
- What does informed consent look like for biomedical interventions, and how can these concepts be taught?
- What is your role in bridging the gap between medical science and Islamic ethical perspectives?
- How should educators respond to controversial issues that arise in the classroom?

Questions Raised by Educators — for Theologians and Philosophers

- Is there — or should there be — a difference between ‘Islamic’ and ‘worldly’ education?
- What is the role of the Qur'an in education? Is it primarily a book of life, ethics, or science?
- What theological language should be used in religiously diverse classrooms?
- How can theologians help bridge gaps in science and ethics education?

Questions That Remain / Require Further Exploration

Despite the rich discussions, several deep and unresolved questions remained. These questions point toward an agenda for future research, policy deliberation, and curriculum development, and fall under five broad categories.

1. Foundational Epistemic Questions

- What are the limits of science, and what are the limits of religion? How do we conceptualize 'Islamic science,' and is the term intellectually coherent?
- What philosophical frameworks can guide interdisciplinary integration in a Muslim-majority context?
- How do we construct shared vocabularies between different sectors?

2. Ethical and Biomedical Questions

- How do we navigate complex biomedical cases where theological rulings, lived experience, and scientific uncertainty collide?
- How do religion and culture shape core bioethical constructs—such as informed consent—within Pakistan's sociocultural context?

3. Educational Questions

- How can teachers be trained to facilitate discussions on religion, science, and ethics without prescribing belief?
- What pedagogical models best integrate metaphysical inquiry with science education for children and adolescents?
- How do we measure the impact of integrated science–religion–ethics curricula?

4. Institutional and Policy Questions

- How do we build cross-sector working groups that are sustainable and effective?
- What models of institutional partnership (local or global) can support this work?
- How can funding, operational support, and administrative structures be mobilized?

5. Societal and Cultural Questions

- How do we communicate interdisciplinary work to a public that may react with suspicion or fear?
- How can we involve parents, communities, and religious authorities in productive ways — to integrate spirituality, not only ethics, into models of holistic wellbeing and education?

These unanswered questions are not obstacles but markers of a growing intellectual terrain. They signal the need for long-term commitment, collaborative scholarship, and institutional innovation — precisely the work that the symposium set into motion.

Key Outcomes & Recommendations

CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD

The concluding session articulated concrete steps for sustaining and expanding this emerging interdisciplinary movement, emphasizing the need for structural commitments and long-term collaborative culture-building. The key outcomes and recommendations are presented below thematically.

1. Institutionalizing Interdisciplinary Dialogue

A central outcome was unanimous agreement that such cross-sector conversations must be regular, structured, and institutionally supported, rather than one-off events. Participants called for:

- Recurring in-person dialogues with tight agendas to ensure progress.
- Frequent online sessions to maintain momentum between major convenings.
- A dedicated professional learning center or hub to serve as a standing home for interdisciplinary engagement, curriculum development, and collaborative research.
- Provision of formal institutional spaces — within universities, madaris, medical colleges, and teacher education institutes — where sustained interdisciplinary learning can occur.

These calls collectively highlight the need for permanent structures, not ad hoc gatherings, to sustain the intellectual and professional integration participants envision.

2. Developing Subgroups and Focused Working Clusters

Participants recommended creating subgroups aligned with thematic interests, such as:

- Islamic perspectives in biomedical ethics.
- Curriculum and pedagogy.
- Metaphysics, theology, and philosophy of science.
- Youth education and school-based interventions.
- Mental health and spirituality.

Such subgroups would enable deeper work, distributed responsibilities, and the development of tangible outputs (policy briefs, course modules, position papers, pilot projects), ensuring focused, productive progress.

3. Strengthening Curricula: Philosophy, Epistemology, and Critical Thinking

Participants stressed the need to integrate epistemology, philosophical inquiry, and moral reasoning into school, university, medical, and religious curricula. Key recommendations included:

- Embedding philosophy and epistemology across levels of education, rather than treating them as niche subjects.
- Developing school-based interventions to test integrated curricular models and generate local evidence.
- Ensuring that curricula allow students to ask 'big questions'; about existence, suffering, purpose, morality, and scientific uncertainty.

These curricular commitments were viewed as the foundation for long-term transformation.

4. Building Intellectual Capacity and Cross-Sector Expertise

Participants highlighted the critical need to develop individuals who can fluently operate across sectors, especially:

- Medical professionals with grounding in Islamic theology and ethics.
- Theologians' literate in modern biomedical issues and ethical complexities.
- Educators with a strong grasp of both scientific epistemology and theological diversity.

This includes investing in joint training modules, micro-credentials or certification programs, interdisciplinary fellowships, and cross-institutional teaching. The long-term goal is to cultivate a generation of 'bridge professionals' who embody integrated expertise.

5. Public Communication and Influencer Engagement

Participants acknowledged that interdisciplinary integration remains unfamiliar - and sometimes threatening - to the broader public. To shift perceptions, participants proposed:

- Engaging public intellectuals and influencers to normalize and champion interdisciplinary thinking.
- Creating accessible educational content — short videos, public lectures, and op-eds — for general audiences.
- Marketing the work so that communities see its relevance and legitimacy.

This was framed as essential for building societal support, especially in a context where reactions to religion-science integration can be defensive or polarized.

6. Producing High-Quality Scholarship and Resources

Participants stressed the long-term importance of generating excellent scholarship and teaching materials, including:

- Introductory texts on Islamic bioethics.
- Locally developed case studies for education and medicine.
- Jointly authored books and curricula.
- Research papers exploring metaphysical, ethical, and pedagogical intersections.
- School-level resources to help teachers handle complex questions.

It was emphasized that meaningful global collaboration is possible only when Pakistan builds high-quality intellectual resources, similar to how Islamic finance became a global reference point.

7. Sustaining a Culture of Humility, Reflection, and Collaboration

A final area of consensus, emphasized by multiple participants, was the need for an ethical and spiritual posture in carrying this work forward. Participants highlighted:

- Epistemic humility — acknowledging the limits of one's own discipline.
- Collaborative openness, recognizing that each sector holds only “a shard of the mirror.”
- Patience and long-term thinking, recognizing that meaningful integration may take decades.

Each sector holds only “a shard of the mirror.”

— Dr. Farid Panjwani

This ethos was seen as foundational to the integrity and sustainability of the initiative.

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