



MADRASA EDUCATION AROUND THE GLOBE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Careful review of literature is one of the major steps in any research study. It helps the researcher to lay a sound foundation for his own investigation. Review of related studies helps the investigator to know what theoretical frameworks have been developed already, and what work in the related field has already been carried out so that unintentional replications can be avoided and wheels not reinvented (Harlan & Schlep, 1998). This study is an attempt to survey the literature in connection with Madrasa Education around the globe. An overview of the literature/studies reviewed reveals that there is a very broad spectrum of work under this heading which raises various issues related to Madrasa education system.

Key words: Muslim Education, Madrasa Education, Quality Improvement, Curriculum Revision, Instructional Strategies, Teacher Empowerment, Pedagogic Practices



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INTRODUCTION

Careful review of literature is one of the major steps in any research study. It helps the researcher to lay a sound foundation for his own investigation. Review of related studies helps the investigator to know what theoretical frameworks have been developed already, and what work in the related field has already been carried out so that unintentional replications can be avoided and wheels not reinvented (Harlan & Schlep, 1998). The summary of related literature promotes an understanding of the problem and avoids unnecessary duplication. It helps the researcher to make a chance to gain an insight into methods, measures, subjects and approaches employed by other researchers which in turn will lead to significant improvements of his own research design.

LITERATURE RELATED TO MADRASA EDUCATION AROUND THE GLOBE

Zaman (2002) evaluates the *Ulama* (religious scholars) and their institutions of learning in both the colonial and postcolonial contexts of South Asia and examines the role of Islamic higher learning centers in the changing contexts of religio-political activism. The analysis of the learning centers is imbued throughout the study about the changing conceptions on the authority of the *Ulamas* in the new formed communicative forms and situations. Zaman's work is an elemental monograph to understand and suggest any kind of quality enhancement attempts related to the religious learning centers. This work offers fresh insight into the role of Islamic religious institutions in the modern world. It will shape for years to come how we understand religious tradition, sectarianism, religious knowledge and its carriers and the diverse ways in which religious arguments are created and disseminated. The writer compares the religious educational developments in South Asia with other parts of the Muslim world.

Anzar (2003) studied the history of Islamic education, structure, curriculum, pedagogy and teachers' qualification in Islamic schools in different parts of the world, and the interplay of politics and education related to Madrasas. The Investigator studied about the structure, curriculum and pedagogy in Qur'anic Schools (*Maktabs*) and in Madrasas in West Africa, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Egypt by surveying various literature. His major findings are the following: The purpose of Islamic education involves giving meaning to life and enriching it in the light of the Islamic faith as outlined in the Qur'an. Another purpose is strengthening and advancing human societies. The current state of Islamic religious education in many parts of the world does not pose an immediate threat to the world's security. Islamic education can be used to bring about greater social and societal changes in the Muslim world and should be begin with the basic literacy level. Every Muslim child is encouraged to read the Qur'an in a mosque or a *Maktab* by the parents and community. Major changes would be required for advanced and scientific learning in higher levels of Islamic education systems (in Madrasas). Independent reasoning (*Ijtihad*) pave the way for advancement in Muslim education. Only if Islamic leaders and scholars are able to articulate the way of Independent reasoning as a method of learning and are willing to adapt and change, the world could witness another Islamic renaissance.

Ahmed (2004) studied the Madrasa education in Pakistan and Bangladesh and found that that Madrasas constitute the core of the religio-cultural complex of Islam in South Asia. The Madrasas in today's Pakistan and Bangladesh, as in India, represent the legacy of the spectacular resurgence of Islamic religious education in India during the late nineteenth

century, beginning with the establishment of the *Deoband Madrasa* in 1867. Since then, the Madrasa system has played an important historical role by preserving the orthodox tradition of Islam in the wake of the downfall of Muslim political power; by training generations of Islamic religious scholars and functionaries; by providing vigorous religio-political leadership; and, more importantly, by re-awakening the consciousness of Islamic solidarity and the Islamic way of life among the Muslims of South Asia. Madrasas in Muslim South Asia teach a curriculum known as *Dars-i-Nizami*, first introduced by Mullah Nizamuddin Sihlvi (d.1747) who was a scholar of some repute in Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy in Lucknow. This curriculum is not the same as that associated with the name of Mullah Nasiruddin Tusi (d. 1064) and the Madrasa Nizamia, which he established in 11th-century Baghdad. . It consists of about twenty subjects broadly divided into two categories: *al-ulum an-naqliya* (the transmitted sciences), and *al-ulum al-aqliya* (the rational sciences). The subject areas include Grammar, Rhetoric, Prosody, Logic, Philosophy, Arabic literature, Dialectical theology, Life of the Prophet, Medicine, Mathematics, Polemics, Islamic law, Jurisprudence, *Hadith*, and *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Quran). It is important to note that out of the twenty subjects, only eight can be considered as solely religious. The remaining subjects are otherwise secular and were included in Nizami curriculum both to equip the students for civil service jobs and as an aid to understanding religious texts.

The Madrasa system is supporting close to six million students in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. An overwhelming majority of these students come from poor families who cannot afford to send their children to modern schools because, primarily, in most cases modern schools do not exist at an accessible distance, and secondly, the schools are either too expensive or too crowded. In the case of Bangladesh also, the ulama have shown remarkable flexibility in adapting to the changing social, economic, and political conditions, as is evident in the important changes in the social organization of Madrasa education. The *Alia Madrasa* system is a spectacular example of how modern and traditional systems of education were combined, notwithstanding its well-known inadequacies and shortcomings. But what is not widely known and appreciated are the important changes that have been introduced in Quomi Madrasas during the last three decades. He found that the total number of Madrasas in Pakistan is 14680 and in Bangladesh is 31406 Including 18000 *Ibtadaiyya* Madrasasah (2002).

Abdalla (2006) studied the *Improving the Quality of Islamic Education in Developing Countries: Innovative Approaches* and found that Islamic educational institutions are not immune to positive change and modernization. Despite the many negative aspects related to

that education, several Islamic education institutions have demonstrated the willingness and ability to adjust to the needs of today's world. Nonetheless, addressing the challenges facing Islamic education will require much more than the good will and action of those responsible for them; it will require the support and action of states, the media, and various members of civil society. The success of the efforts to address challenges facing Islamic education will require attitudinal changes on the part of those responsible for that education, and those who continue to view it with fear and suspicion. Such transformation is possible as long as its significance and necessity are recognized.

Malik (2008) depicts a clear picture of ideologies and curriculums of various Islamic schools that existing in India including Deobandi, the Barelwi, the Ahl-i Hadith and the Jama'at-i Islami. He also discusses the dynamics and pluralist as well as non-pluralist, globalizing as well as localizing tendencies in the pedagogy and subject matters that disseminate knowledge in Madrasas. Mention has been made of the titles of major canonical texts and of the books added from time to time. But so far little academic effort has been invested to research the exact content of the texts taught in religious schools. What is required then is a careful look into the gradual changes in the subject matters. In contrast to the widespread perception that Madrasa education is out-dated and in need of reform, it is contended here that there has been a process of between-the-line-changes to the major texts, which can be discerned from the classical texts that still enjoy universal popularity within the Madrasa system. Given the societal, religious and curricular dynamics in Madrasas, these changes should not be too difficult to install, once the tussle between and among different contenders from above and from below has taken on a constructive shape. He assesses the characteristics and attributions of the religious learning centers in the premise of accusations against the Madrasas as the production-centers of the terrorism. Though the question of terrorism and violence is inculcated in the volume, many articles provide a good grounding to the indulgent openings about the Madrasas of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The introduction by Jamal Malik, the papers by Usha Sanyal on the so-termed *Ahl-i-Sunnat* Madrasas and by Christopher Candland on the recent experiences of the reforming activities in the Madrasas announce the distinction of the work, comprising and contrasting to the title of the work. Though the volume has a vast geographical boundary, it helps us to understand various problems could be addressed in the reforming and quality enhancement processes of the Madrasas in the new space and time, as the Christopher Candland suggests in his article.

Noor (2008) appraises the significance of Madrasas and such-like religious institutions in the contemporary world. Though the volume is concentrated on the political

activist and transnational connections, for the most part it deals with the reforming attempts to be made for the reforming of existing Madrasa educational system. He argues that the word Madrasa is synonym for the modernity. In many parts of Asia, the term 'Madrasa' itself carries connotations of modernity and development, because the earliest institutions thus called in Malaysia and Indonesia emerged as a reaction to what was then seen as an outmoded form of education provided by the traditional *pondok* or *pesantren* systems of British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. These early Madrasas represented a response to colonial rule and missionary activities but were also influenced by recent reforms in the traditional education system in India and the Middle East, known to Southeast Asian Muslims through the connection to Mecca. Mecca was not only the centre of the annual *hajj* pilgrimage but also the centre of learning that attracted scholars and students from all over the Muslim world, and where many who refused to live under colonial rule took up residence. Indian traders and scholars established a modern Madrasa there in 1874, the Madrasa *Sawlatiyya*, which trained several generations of Indians as well as Southeast Asian scholars and played the part in the national awakening of both regions. This school was part of the religious and national revival in North India that also gave rise to the Madrasa at Deoband. The evaluative suggestions and conclusions made in the papers like "Voices for Reform in the Indian Madrasas" by Yoginder Sikand and "Change and Stagnation in the Islamic Education: The *Dar al-Ulum of Deoband* after the Split in 1982" by Dietrich Reetz are shortly applicable in the quality enhancement processes of the Madrasa education in Kerala too.

Asian Development Bank conducted a study on "**Bangladesh: Capacity Development for Madrasa Education**" (2011) study found that 1) **Madrasa Curriculum:** *Aliyah Madrasas* expound religious education with the BMEB-adapted national curriculum. Certificates granted by BMEB after completing *dakhil* public examinations are recognized by the Government as equivalent to secondary school certificates. In addition, certificates granted after completing *alim* are equivalent to higher secondary certificates. Students who complete the *dakhil* and *alim* levels can be admitted to the general formal education stream, but there are no data on how many enrolled in general formal education. Some *Qoumi Madrasas* follow the national curriculum, at least at the primary level. To be recognized by religious community, good quality *Qoumi Madrasas* register themselves with *Befaquul Madarisil Arabia Bangladesh* or other similar religious education Boards, and follow the curricula approved by those Boards. However, the competency skills of Madrasa graduates are generally perceived to be much lower than those of formal education students due to

poorer quality of teaching and learning processes and inputs. 2) **Teacher Training:** Most *Aliyah Madrasa* teachers are not well-trained. According to a BANBEIS survey, they possess lower qualifications than their general formal school teacher counterparts. About 25.00% of Madrasa teachers have higher secondary certificates or lesser qualifications, and 26.50% have undergraduate degrees. In the general formal education system, 72.50% of teachers have higher secondary certificates, and 71.92% have undergraduate degrees. Further, training opportunities for Madrasa teachers are rare. The Bangladesh Madrasa Teachers Training Institute conducts about 3 weeks of short training courses with its limited capacity, and only about 10%–14% of Madrasa teachers receive this training.⁹ Madrasa students' performance in comparison with that of general formal education students, quality inputs that Madrasas receive in relation to those of general formal education, Madrasas' contributions within the general education system, and improvements needed to strengthen Madrasa students' learning outcomes need to be assessed. 3) **Financing Madrasa Education:** *Aliyah* Madrasas generate funds from various sources; about 15.5% from student fees, 2.0% from property income, 5.0% from public donations, and 78.0% from the Government's salary support. However, *ibtedaye* sections of *dakhil* Madrasas only receive Tk 500 subvention whereas general formal education teachers receive Tk 3500. Since salary subvention is dependent on the qualifications, most Madrasa teachers do not qualify for similar subventions as their mainstream counterparts. Madrasa superintendents do not receive the same salaries as head teachers within the formal education system scale because they often do not have bachelor of science in education degrees. Quomi Madrasas generate revenue through donations from individuals and local and international Islamic organizations; some have their own trusts, foundations, and other income-generating resources. Others, such as *Iqra Bangladesh*, are dependent on students' fees and donations by the community. Often, after paying teachers' salaries, funds are not available for non-salary quality inputs such as teaching aids and library books. Furthermore, Madrasas usually have poor book keeping and fund management skills and require skills for efficiency and transparency in managing funds.

Abbas (2011) studied Muslim education around the globe, being mainly an academic fringe interest to a central concern of governments, with issues of theology, migration, development, identity, and economic and political ideology all important considerations in understanding the essential issues impacting on Muslims and the nature of Muslim-non-Muslim relations. Education is often the only route to social mobility in Western European liberal democratic contexts. Education is also conditioned by issues of class, the effects of schools, the education of parents and wider societal issues affected by globalisation and the

internationalisation of capital and labour, namely the role of labour markets. In Muslim majority lands, education suffers from acute under-investment, gender inequality and the lack of an appropriate social infrastructure to support intellectual, moral, ethical and cultural development. Classical Islamic education is explored, analyzing the impact of the classical Islamic period in history and the developments in education which have emanated from it. With focuses on education in Muslim Asia, Africa and the Middle East, capturing the essential issues in each of the countries studied, and how they vary across a vast region, the impact of culture and modernisation on traditional societies as well as the ways in which westernised modes of education are introduced, and the aspirations of youth are in turn determined. The education of Muslims in North America and Europe, minorities in advanced liberal secular democratic nation-states, are also studied, where matters of identity, culture, gender, social class, the effects of educational institutions and the wider societal context in which these social forces are played are all important. It is worthwhile and relevant for the present study to understand what are the changes taking place in the field of religious education around the globe.

CONCLUSION

A critical analysis of the above mentioned studies raises certain substantive inquiries which need to be highlighted and addressed to for the sake of further investigation. An overview of the literature/studies reviewed under broader heading of Madrasa education around the globe reveals that there is a very broad spectrum of work under this heading . Most of the studies reviewed about the Madrasa education around the globe advocates immediate need of curriculum revision in Madrasas (Anzar 2003), and little academic effort to research the content of the curriculum (Malik 2008). Many studies high lights the contribution of the Madrasas in imparting knowledge to a wide range of student population. Madrasas can change the society (Zaman 2002) and imparting education to a large student population all over the world including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Ahmed 2004). Few studies reveal that Madrasas admits the modernization process; they are the developed forms of *Pandok* (Malaysia) and *Pesantren* (Indonesia) system of education (Noor 2008), Islamic educational institutions are not immune to positive change and modernization (Abdulla, 2006). Some studies demands for teachers empowerment. Teachers are not well trained, training oppurtunities are rare, after Madrasah education in Bangladesh student can be admitted to general education system (ADB, 2011) . Very few studies highlights the financial problems related to Madrasa. Education suffers from acute under-investment, gender inequality and the lack of an appropriate social infrastructure (Abbas 2011).

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