

## **ALIYA MADRASA EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the problems and prospects of Aliya Madrasa education in Bangladesh. Education is the opportunity to enhance oneself and to develop society and the nation at large. To examine the problems and prospects of Aliya Madrasa in Bangladesh, this study employs a qualitative approach with library research and data sources from books, articles, research papers, reports of newspaper and magazine, education commissions, and government education policies. Madrasah education in Bangladesh is found to be associated with some problems from inside and outside. Through the study, some problems have been identified linked to curriculum, management, poor funding, lack of quality teachers, a shortage of instructional equipment for science subjects, and limited teacher training institutes. Furthermore, Madrasa graduates face many problems, such as university admissions examinations, government service interviews, and joining cultural activities. This paper advises that the government should consider madrasa education carefully as an important education system since it is a unique system in Bangladesh. It further suggests that the management committee, head teacher, staff, and students altogether must have to work to attain the goals of Madrasa education. Moreover, madrasa education must be restructured according to the current needs. The current curriculum approach needs to be modified and developed in accordance with the modern education system through providing all the necessary tools. Madrasas should also motivate their students to play a role in politics and to take part in cultural and national activities in Bangladesh.*

**Keywords:** *Aliya Madrasah, Education, Bangladesh, Problems, Prospects, Principles.*

### Abstrak

*Studi ini mengeksplorasi masalah dan prospek pendidikan Madrasah Aliyah di Bangladesh. Pendidikan merupakan kesempatan untuk meningkatkan diri dan mengembangkan masyarakat dan negara secara keseluruhan. Untuk meneliti masalah dan prospek Madrasah Aliyah di Bangladesh, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan penelitian kepustakaan dan sumber data dari buku, artikel, makalah penelitian, laporan surat kabar dan majalah, komisi pendidikan, serta kebijakan pendidikan pemerintah. Pendidikan Madrasah di Bangladesh diketahui menghadapi beberapa masalah dari dalam dan luar. Melalui penelitian ini, beberapa masalah telah diidentifikasi terkait dengan kurikulum, manajemen, pendanaan yang kurang memadai, kurangnya guru berkualitas, kelangkaan peralatan instruksional untuk mata pelajaran sains, dan terbatasnya lembaga pelatihan guru. Selanjutnya, lulusan Madrasah menghadapi banyak masalah, seperti ujian masuk perguruan tinggi, wawancara untuk pelayanan pemerintah, dan ikut serta dalam kegiatan budaya. Tulisan ini menyarankan agar pemerintah mempertimbangkan pendidikan Madrasah dengan seksama sebagai sistem pendidikan penting karena merupakan sistem unik di Bangladesh. Selain itu, diusulkan agar komite manajemen, kepala sekolah, staf, dan siswa bersama-sama bekerja untuk mencapai tujuan pendidikan Madrasah. Lebih lanjut, pendidikan Madrasah harus diubah sesuai dengan kebutuhan saat ini. Pendekatan kurikulum saat ini perlu dimodifikasi dan dikembangkan sesuai dengan sistem pendidikan modern dengan menyediakan semua alat yang diperlukan. Madrasah juga harus memotivasi para siswanya untuk berperan dalam politik dan mengambil bagian dalam kegiatan budaya dan nasional di Bangladesh.*

**Kata kunci:** *Madrasah Aliyah, Pendidikan, Bangladesh, Masalah, Prospek, Prinsip*

### Introduction

In early times, there were no formal educational systems for the masses in Bengal (of which most of the portion is present in Bangladesh) of the Indian Subcontinent, while the Madrasa was the only such kind of institution to educate the people, though it was only for Muslims. The roots of the existing madrasas in Bangladesh are connected with madrasas that were established in Bengal in the early thirteenth century by the Muslim ruler Bakhtiyar Khilji. These institutions were the only educational institutions that provided education to the Muslim population until the British took power in the Indian subcontinent in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Ayyub stated that without madrasas, the people of Bengal would not have enjoyed the

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad, M. (2006). ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: Tradition, Trends, and Trajectories. Paper prepared for the Islamic Education in South & Southeast Asia Survey Project of the National Bureau of Asian Research, June 2006. Hampton University, Hampton, VA 23668

bliss of education because they would have had no opportunity for education. Madrasa was known to people as a place where prestigious education was provided and Muslim scholarship was produced.<sup>2</sup> Currently, a large number of students are getting their formal education from madrasas in Bangladesh. There are now two types of madrasa education available: Qawmi, the traditional one controlled by a private body, and Aliya, the modern one with government approval.<sup>3</sup>

Ziaur Rahman, president of Bangladesh, took the initiative to re-structure Aliya Madrasa education and on July 4th, 1979, he established an independent Madrasa Education Board under the Madrasa Education Ordinance.<sup>4</sup> Primary education in Aliya (High) Madrasa is similar to formal primary school, and secondary and higher secondary in Madrasas also follow a formal school system with extra focus on religious education.<sup>5</sup> Madrasa education in Bangladesh is a part of the dual education system of modern secular education and traditional religious (Madrasa) education. Although madrasa education is a part of the national education system of Bangladesh, it has been frequently criticized by secular intellectuals since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, who have commonly asked the government to close down this system and to introduce one combined education for all.<sup>6</sup>

According to Begum, religious hard-liners in society argue that in teaching religious and modern education in parallel, Madrasas cannot maintain the quality of both aspects. On the other hand, secular hardliners have opposed religious education; the Secular Moderate group wants religious education to continue, but it should not be from Madrasas only. Education is considered a powerful mechanism to develop qualities, skills, and outlooks that shape an individual into a good citizen.<sup>7</sup> Because these individual characteristics can be largely obtained from educational institutions, most likely madrasas, must have

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<sup>2</sup> Saleem, H. A. (2009). *Islam and Education Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Hasani, S.M.A., Ismail, A., Kazeem, k. B., & Elega, D. (2017). Creating a Practicing Muslim: A Study of Qawmi Madrasah in Bangladesh. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 20(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bjesbs/2017/30910>

<sup>4</sup> Abdalla, A., Raisuddin, A.N. M., and Suleiman, H. (2004). *Bangladesh Educational Assessment: Pre- Primary and Primary Madrasa Education Bangladesh*. Dhaka: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

<sup>5</sup> Rahman, M. M., Izham, M. M. H., T. S. M. M., and Mizan, R. (2010). Historical Development of Secondary Education in Bangladesh: Colonial Period to 21st Century. *International Education Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 February. CCSE. [www.ccsenet.org/ies](http://www.ccsenet.org/ies)

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad, M. (2006). *ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH: Tradition, Trends, and Trajectories*. Paper prepared for the Islamic Education in South & Southeast Asia Survey Project of the National Bureau of Asian Research, June 2006. Hampton University, Hampton, VA 23668

<sup>7</sup> Alam, G.M. (2009). The role of science and technology education at network age population for sustainable development of Bangladesh through human resource advancement. *Scientific Research and Essay Vol.4 (11)*, pp. 1260-1270.

very useful schemes to acquire the aforementioned qualities for successful use, as they provide both religious and modern knowledge at the same time.

But this combined approach demands a thorough revision and investigation intended to coach each and every stakeholder in this education system to make it suitable for conditions in Bangladesh. This study suggests efforts to scrutinize the problems and to illustrate the prospects of Aliya Madrasa education in Bangladesh.

## Discussion

### Aliya Madrasah

Aliya is a government-run Madrasah education system. This madrasa offers science-based modern education alongside religious education. With its pioneering method of unifying Islamic and secular education, Alia-madrasa-based education became widely popular in the country.<sup>8</sup> An integrated education with religious knowledge is being offered by the Aliya madrasa educational system in order to generate skilled graduates.<sup>9</sup> Alia madrasas have standardized curricula that cover disciplines like science, math, English, and Bengali. They are accredited by the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board, which also regulates them, and they grant degrees up to the MA level.<sup>10</sup>

According to Bangladesh Education Statistics 2016, a report released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), there are currently 10,450 Alia madrasas operating in Bangladesh with more than two million students enrolled in different classes from primary to post-graduate level.<sup>11</sup>

It has five levels, such as Ibtidae (Primary), Dhakhil (Secondary), Alim (Higher Secondary), Fazil (B.A. Degree/Honors) and Kamil (Masters). Dhakhil (Secondary) includes four groups: Arts, Muzabbid, Science, and Business Studies. Alim (Higher Secondary) includes four groups: arts, Muzabbid, science, and business studies. Fazil (B.A Degree) offers a three-year degree and also offers a four-year Fazil

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<sup>8</sup> Shah Nawaz, M. C. K. (2017, October 27). Alia Madrasa: an education system on its deathbed. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/alia-madrasa-1482232>

<sup>9</sup> Ashif, I. S. and Shohel, M. (2018, January 19). Bangladesh: What are madrasa students actually learning? Dhaka Tribune. <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/19/madrasa-students-actually-learning>

<sup>10</sup> Tahmima, A. (2011, May 21). An education: Inside Bangladesh's madrasas. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/21/inside-madrasa-for-girls-bangladesh-tahmima-anam>.

<sup>11</sup> BANBEIS, (2016). Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS).

Honours, and finally, Kamil (Masters) consists of four groups; Tafasir, Hadith, Arabic, and Fiqh.<sup>12</sup>

### **Problems of Madrasah Education in Bangladesh**

Currently, there are many problems and obstacles prevailing in madrasah education in Bangladesh, both from inside as well as from outside.

#### **1. Poor Management System**

The board of management committee of Madrasa is weak compared to the formal education system of schools. Most members of the Madrasa committee are selected or elected from a religious background. In them, no concern is visible regarding the needs of the current education market. Researcher Mehdy has moderately identified the low standards of the Madrasa management committee. Members of the committee are not open-minded to modern education because of their religious background. Because of their conservative attitude to society and their narrow world view of modern subjects, they are not able to give proper guidelines for sustainable education for students.<sup>13</sup> stated that they are busy only with religious education with no effective attention to modern subjects. In addition to this problem, students of madrasa are always religiously oriented. They are not involved in social activities and, moreover, are not interested in playing any effective role in national affairs.

#### **2. Poor Teaching Quality and Shortage of Teachers' Training Institute**

This educational system has been totally controversial due to a severe dearth of highly educated professors, a stigma against madrasa education, and a lack of academic reformation. Most of the madrasahs' teachers are not able to deliver their subjects in the light of the course outline. Without pedagogy training, a teacher or instructor cannot provide students with subject-specific knowledge and information. The Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) reported in the Post-Primary Education Survey 2005 that compared to the school, Aliya Madrasa teachers are not trained according to their subjects' specialization. For about 100,000 teachers of higher secondary level Alia madrasahs, there is only one training institute,<sup>14</sup> while school teachers have

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<sup>12</sup> Al-Hasani, S.M.A. (2017). Development of Bangladesh Aliyah Madrasah education and curriculum. Research Journal of Social Science & Management – RJSSM 6(09):14-19

<sup>13</sup> Abdalla, A., Raisuddin, A.N. M., and Suleiman, H. (2004). Bangladesh Educational Assessment: Pre Primary and Primary Madrasa Education Bangladesh. Dhaka: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

<sup>14</sup> Shahnawaz, M. C. K. (2017, October 27). Alia Madrasa: an education system on its deathbed. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/alia-madrasa-1482232>

enough training institutes all over Bangladesh.<sup>15</sup> So, it is difficult for madrasa teachers to get satisfactory training for their professional skills. Because of limited time and only one training institute all over the country, only a few teachers can manage to get an opportunity for a short training program.

### 3. Poor Funding

Regarding government funds for education, Madrasa gets nothing compared to the formal educational system of schools, colleges, or universities. Schools got a fund of TK 107,844,000 in the year 2004-2005, TK 177,037,000 in the year 2005-2006 and TK 207,286,000 for the year 2006-2007, while for the first time only TK 17,801,000 Madrasas got from the government for Madrasa Teachers Training.

According to the report by Amanur Rahman in the Daily Nayadiganta, the government of Bangladesh has announced the stipend for formal primary school students for the last five years, whereas for the first time, there is no allocation for Ibtedai (Primary) students of Madrasa. Maulana Zainul Abidin, principal of Tamirul Millat Kamil Madrasa, said that even though the syllabus and curriculum of Ibtedai (Primary) Madrasa were similar to the primary school, they were deprived of government facilities. 55 thousand primary students were nominated for scholarships, but not a scholarship for the students of Ibtedai.

There is intense anger and dissatisfaction with this and the frustrations of Ibtedai level students and teachers. The Madrasah teachers and students said that due to the lack of sincerity of the top policy makers of the government and education ministry, the students of Ibtedai level are being deprived of the benefits and encouragement of the government. It is being done to maintain the discrimination in education between madrasas and general education.<sup>16</sup>

### 4. Shortage of Instructional Technologies (IT)

In Bangladesh, madrasahs offer two types of education, namely religious and modern.<sup>17</sup> By providing modern education in parallel

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<sup>15</sup> Bano, M. (2011, December). Engaging madrasas to meet the EFA targets: Evidence from South Asia. Paper presented at 8th International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance. Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Economic Development from an Islamic Perspective. Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha – Qatar. 18th – 20th December.

<sup>16</sup> Nayadiganta. (2014, February 20). Prathomike 5 bosore 6 hajar shishu brittibonchito ibtedae shikhartider jonno boraddo nei.

<http://dailynayadiganta.com/details.php?nayadiganta=OTewNzI=&sec=MTY=&t=>

<sup>17</sup> Asadullah, M. N., Rupa, C., and Nazmul, C. (2011). What determines religious school choice? Theory and evidence from rural Bangladesh, Working Paper 11/0888 November, Draft: March 16, 2011, Final version: July 30, 2011, International Growth Centre (IGC) London School of Economics and Political Science 4th Floor, Tower Two Houghton Street London WC2A 2AE United Kingdom.

with religious education, the madrasah became the unique education system in Bangladesh.<sup>18</sup> Some of the madrasas have science groups besides their arts groups, but the quality of teaching is not good due to the unavailability of instructional technology (IT) facilities. Although some madrasahs have IT facilities, they are only nominal, and there are insufficient training labs. On the other hand, there is also a scarcity of scientific equipment, and the key apparatus for scientific experiments is also limited and old-fashioned.

According to the report of BANBEIS in 2016, there aren't many Alia madrasas in Bangladesh that are equipped to teach science. Only 14% have a computer lab, and only 25% of Alia madrasas have a scientific laboratory. This is another reason why students in Alia madrasas are hesitant to pursue science. The BANBEIS also reported that only 10% of total students are enrolled to study in science groups at the secondary and higher secondary levels in the Bangladesh Alia madrasa.

##### **5. Shortage of Expert Teachers**

The number of expert teachers in Aliya Madrasa is very limited. It is another big problem in the Aliya Madrasa of Bangladesh. Teaching without quality and expertise will not be effective for the students' practical lives. According to Al-Ghazali, a teacher must be a master of his or her own specialization, with the additional quality of giving examples during teaching sessions related to the subject topic and not quoting only other people's opinions. Every teacher and instructor need to be trained according to their course specialization so that he or she can carry out the lesson properly in the classes.<sup>19</sup>

According to experts, the main cause of pupils' inadequate foundational knowledge of science courses is a shortage of trained teachers in Alia madrasas. The principal of the Government Madrasah-E Alia, Professor Siraj Uddin Ahmad, claims that there is a chronic lack of trained teachers at almost all of Bangladesh's Alia madrasas. Moreover, there are 70 open positions for teachers at the dakhil and alim levels, but we only have 31.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding this point, the quality of Madrasa teachers is very low due to the poor instruction offered on modern subjects' pedagogy.

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<sup>18</sup> Ellis, T. (2007). MADRASAS IN BANGLADESH. IPCS SPECIAL REPORT; No 47, August. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, B 7/3 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110029, INDIA.

<sup>19</sup> Asari, H. (1993). *The Educational Thought of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*. Master of Arts, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

<sup>20</sup> Shahnawaz, M. C. K. (2017, October 27). Alia Madrasa: an education system on its deathbed. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/alia-madrasa-1482232>

Teachers or instructors teach the students only on a theoretical basis and require summery memorization of the chapter.<sup>21</sup>

Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) in 2006 reported in the Post-Primary Education Survey 2005 that 72.50% of school teachers got their certificates from higher secondary, and 71.92% of teachers have undergraduate degrees, while in Madrasa, only 25% of teachers have higher secondary certificates, and 26.50% of teachers have undergraduate certificates, and the rest of the teachers don't have undergraduate certificates or only possess their own Madrasa certificates. In this regard, teachers from schools are more qualified than those from madrasas. So, without providing good teachers and proper action to make existing teachers experts, madrasas cannot compete with schools and colleges in Bangladesh.

## 6. Incompleteness of Syllabus and Curriculum

Despite the fact that it provides modern education, the system places a greater emphasis on religious education than on modern education. After many wanted and unwanted changes and modifications, the syllabus and curriculum of Aliya Madrasah are still religiously oriented. Mehdy criticized the Madrasa curriculum on some important points. Therefore, he argued that the Madrasa curriculum was not prepared by the curriculum experts and specialists and was not organized according to the psychological level, including a certain age and the process of mental and intellectual growth of a student. The current education system does not encourage students to take part in cultural activities and national politics. The main focal point of this system is religious and spiritual development, while modern subjects are taught roughly on a theoretical basis. The contents of the Social Science subjects are allied with very simple topics, basic discussions, and mere historical overviews. Concerning modern subjects, their contents contain very theoretical and literal explanations, which are insufficient for students to cultivate a scientific approach, improve rational thinking, and open their minds to observe scientific thoughts.

Dr. Mohammad Kaykobad, a professor of computer science and engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, asserts that science textbooks at the secondary and higher secondary levels of Aliya madrasah are quite difficult and tiresome.<sup>22</sup>As a result, most Aliya Madrasa students in Bangladesh

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<sup>21</sup> Mehdy, M. (2003). *Madrasah Education: An Observation*. Edited by Abul Mumen and Rokeya Kabir. Published by Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS). House 255, Road 10A (old 19) Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 1209.

<sup>22</sup> Shahnawaz, M. C. K. (2017, October 27). *Alia Madrasa: an education system on its deathbed*. The Daily Star. <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/alia-madrasa-1482232>



have a severe shortage and inadequacy of many functional qualities that are critical for being a competent person in a competitive world.

## **7. Discrimination and Constraint**

Opponents of the madrasa system stand against the madrasa in various ways, which have become major challenges for Bangladesh's madrasa education. Public university admission, government college admission, and getting a government job are the major challenges for Madrasah students. According to the report of a daily newspaper, the authorities of Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) did not allow Madrasa students to get admission for semester 1, level 1 of session 2012/2013, though Madrasa students got a good place on the university admission exam and their certificates are also equivalent to the formal education of the modern school system and recognized by the government of Bangladesh. Some universities have decided not to allow Madrasa students in several subjects. The University of Dhaka prohibits Madrasa students from taking 13 subjects, and National University restricts Madrasa students from taking two subjects. Without these, many universities intend to stymie Madrasa education by denying Madrasa students the opportunity to study.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, a report was published in the newspaper Daily Ittefaq in 2017 under the title "Madrasa students are not getting certain departments even after fulfilling the conditions." The report said that two Madrasa students, namely Tofael and Nayemur Rahman, did not get the suitable subjects they desired at Dhaka University, even though they got the 9th and 118th positions in the Kha Unite admission test for the arts faculty.

English, Bengali, economics, International Relation, Journalism, Mass Communication, Women and Gender Studies, and applied linguistics did not appear in their subject select form because of their Madrasah background. The issue was informed to Abu Muhammed Delawar Hossain, Dean of the Arts Faculty, and Prof. Dr. Akhtar uz-Zaman, VC of Dhaka University, but they could not give any correct answer. As a result, students will be hopeless and will leave the madrasa. Thus, this discrimination will lead to the end of madrasa education in Bangladesh.

Thus, other students, namely: Tawhidah Islam, Mehedy Hassan, Mashrur Al-Zabir and Salah Uddin reported to Daily News Paper<sup>24</sup> that they passed the Dakhil examination with a GPA of 5 and

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<sup>23</sup> Amardesh. (2012, October 1). Students Welfare Association Calls for celebrate Madrasa education day.<http://www.amardeshonline.com/pages/details/2012/10/01/166595>.

<sup>24</sup> RTN. (2013, Jun 20). HSC admission is restricted for Madrasah students under Borisal Education Board. <http://www.rtnn.net/newsdetail/detail/1/3/70374#.UjcrHdKw37w>

applied to two different colleges for further study under the Borisal Education Board, but they were rejected, even though they were not on the waiting list either. Meanwhile, they observed that some students from the school background were given the opportunity to study in those colleges despite having GPAs lower than 5.

Shojib Wajed Joy, son of Bangladesh's Prime Minister, said on 13 September 2013 in the "China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Hall" that since 1975, madrasa students have increased a lot. We have to control it and we have already started our movement to decrease the number of Madrasa students, according to news published by a daily newspaper.<sup>25</sup> Due to these hostile attitudes, madrasa students are observing various programs and seminars to withdraw the condition of madrasa students' admission to Dhaka University.<sup>26</sup>

#### 8. The Government's Biased Policy:

Through the study of research papers, articles, journals, and various national education policies from time to time, it is found that the government of Bangladesh did not make any effective plans for Madrasa education like the ones that have been made for formal education. According to the report of the National Education Commission [NEC] in 2003, there are many disparities and problems in madrasa's education, administration, and management systems. From the report, it is known that about 20,000 primary schools are governmental out of 37,709 schools, while there is no governmental Ibtidai Madrasa (Primary Madrasa) out of 18,268 madrasas. However, on the other hand, there were 9,319 Alia madrasas in operation nationwide, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) as of 2015. In total, only three government-run Alia madrasas exist in Bangladesh; this reflects how our policymakers feel about these educational institutions.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, these primary schools get all kinds of facilities from the government, but madrasas are deprived of them. Manzoor revealed from the "Major Donor Education Projects" of the ministry that assistance for Madrasa education is nothing compared to that for formal general education<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Amardesh. (2012, September 4). Madrasa students are being denied to get admission in BAU: Student Movement Groups Threatened. <http://www.amardeshonline.com/pages/details/2012/09/04/161989>

<sup>26</sup> Manabzamin. (2012, October 12). Madrasah shikhharti vortir shorto prottahaarer dabite <http://mzamin.com/details.php?id=MjYyMzU=&ty=MA==&s=MjU=&c=MQ==>

<sup>27</sup> Abedin, M.J. (2018, May 11 May). Madrasa Education: Where Are We Heading Towards? daily Sun. <https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/307916/>

<sup>28</sup> Manzoor, A., Khondoker, S. A., and Kishwar, K. K. (2005). Bangladesh Education Sector Mapping, Institute of Education and Development. BRAC University, REPORT PREPARED FOR CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.

Looking at that condition, indeed, we can't expect quality education from Madrasa at all. But it is a core condition for any teaching and learning sector that has an effect on quality education, as mentioned by Alam<sup>29</sup>. In order to improve the quality of education, institutes must have qualified teachers, and by doing so, qualified students will come out of the madrasas. On the issue of excellence and skill, teachers need to be trained in a Teachers' Training Institute. But there are 54 institutes for primary teacher training, 11 colleges for secondary teacher training, 40 private teachers' training institutions for B.Ed. students and a technical teachers' training institute, but only one teachers' training institute for madrasa teachers all over the country<sup>30</sup>

As a result, madrasa teachers are not sufficiently qualified. Since qualification is a vital issue, then, madrasa teachers, like mainstream school teachers, cannot command competitive salaries due to a lack of good skills. Aliyah madrasahs receive funding from a number of sources, including 15.5 percent from student tuition, 2% from property income, 5% from public donations, and 78.0 percent from the government's wage support. In contrast, teachers in general formal education receive a subvention of Tk3500, while those in the ibtidae parts of dakhil madrasahs only receive a Tk500 subvention. Most madrasah instructors do not qualify for similar subventions as their mainstream counterparts, because pay subvention is contingent on qualifications. The report was published by the Technical Assistance (TA) project of ADB in 2008 on "Capacity Development for Madrasa Education in Bangladesh". The project was carried out from April 2009 to September 2010.

Thus, two reports have been published by Amanur Rahman in the daily newspaper 'daily Nayadiganta' on April 9th and December 4th, 2014 regarding government activities in Madrasa. The report said that, for the management and control of Madrasah's education system through separate departments, the government decided to open a new independent Madrasah Education Department. Government and non-government Madrasa education will be controlled by this Madrasa Education Department. The Education Ministry has already finalised the matter. Almost all the procedures have been completed for the Madrasah Education Department. Public administration and the finance ministry have also been

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<sup>29</sup> Alam, G.M. (2009). The role of science and technology education at network age population for sustainable development of Bangladesh through human resource advancement. Scientific Research and Essay Vol.4 (11), pp. 1260-1270.

<sup>30</sup> Manzoor, A., Khondoker, S. A., and Kishwar, K. K. (2005). Bangladesh Education Sector Mapping, Institute of Education and Development. BRAC University, REPORT PREPARED FOR CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY.

approved. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid confirmed the matter.

Through the new department, 17 thousand 907 government and private madrasas will be run by the country. 50 posts have been created for this department. The work of the Madrasah Education Department will be carried out from the educational building. But its offices will be on the fifth floor of the building. There will be separate directors, including other officers and employees. But the directorate could not start the operations because no director general had been appointed.

On October 12, the Ministry of Education sent a letter to the Public Administration Ministry requesting the appointment of the Director General, but the Ministry of Public Administration could not do anything. The Ministry of Education and Madrasah Education Board said it was late for an unknown reason, while another source stated that the matter is still pending because the government has not received consent and preferred officials from policymakers to appoint the director general.

#### 9. Disparity with the Madrasa Graduates

Syed Ashraful Islam, Minister of Public Administration, said students from Fazil and Kamil's backgrounds are not allowed to participate in the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Examination, though Fazil and Kamil have got government recognition. The minister said that to attain the BCS examination, a candidate must have a 4-year honors degree after passing the HSC examination, as reported by a daily newspaper.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from this, there were some incidents that happened to Madrasa students during the interview session for a government job, which were reported in a daily Bengali newspaper.<sup>32</sup> According to that report, Tanvir, a student who graduated from Dhaka University, applied for the job at the National Board of Revenue (NBR). After a successful result in the written exam, he came to an interview session for the post he applied for. Once he entered the room, they started to ask him various types of questions. One of the board members asked him why he studied in a madrasa when there was no school in his village. After asking him some irrelevant questions at one stage, Johurul Alam, one of the board members, asked him to leave the room. Another applicant who went for viva for the Additional Director post was humiliated by SK Shor, the

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<sup>31</sup> RTN. (2013, September 16). Madrasa students need to complete four years honors degree for BCS Examination.<http://www.rtnn.net/newsdetail/detail/1/3/70374#.UjcrHdKw37w>

<sup>32</sup> Amardesh. (2013, September 14). Consequence of the stopping the school establishment after 75: Madrasah students have been increased; we are working to reduce it: Joy.<http://www.amardeshonline.com/pages/details/2013/09/14/216477#.UjVRrdKw37w>

Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank. Due to his Madrasa background, they laughed at him and asked him why he studied in a Madrasa while there were many schools in his area. In addition to this, they also asked him not to apply for a job in the banking sector. Thus, Karim stated madrasah graduates from both public and private institutions have an equal opportunity to work in all branches of government in accordance with their fields of study, but they are unable to do so due to discrimination<sup>33</sup>.

Experience has been shared by a graduate of Dhaka University who did his SSC and HSC in Madrasa education. He shared with us that he got a job in the teaching cadre through the 33rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination. He added that due to giving a low mark on the viva board, he could not manage to get a good cadre. During viva time, they asked him to become a teacher in a madrasa rather than a school because of his madrasa background.

Applicant Razib (given name) graduated from Dhaka University and went for viva on May 4th, 2013 for an assistant inspector post in a government office. After he entered the room, he found the people very positive and simple, but once they saw his certificate, they became puzzled. They started asking a lot of irrelevance questions and laughing at him. They enjoyed being with him for a while and asked him to go and keep the beard because he is from a madrasah background. In fact, this narrow-mindedness toward madrasa education has also marginalized madrasa graduates in the job market.

Not only have all these, but for a long time, Madrasa students have also been facing a lot of problems with getting government jobs and facilities. Therefore, another report published in the daily Amardesh newspaper on October 1st 2012 mentioned that today's madrasa education is the victim of a deep-rooted conspiracy and extreme discrimination. Concerning higher education, government jobs, the salary structure of Ibtidai teachers, and students' stipends, with all these together, the Aliya Madrasah education system is still backward. On the other hand, Dhaka University banned 13 subjects and 2 subjects at the National University for Madras background students, as well as other universities' illegal postulation and deep planning to try to bring an end to Madrasah education and make Madrasah students hopeless.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Karim, M. (2018). Some Notes on Madrasah Education in Bangladesh: A Historical Description. IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities). 1.1.10.26555/ijish.v1i1.130.

<sup>34</sup> Amardesh. (2012, September 4). Madrasa students are being denied to get admission in BAU: Student Movement Groups Threatened. <http://www.amardeshonline.com/pages/details/2012/09/04/161989>

In sum, the government of Bangladesh is carrying out a lot of projects and developing programs promoting formal education along with keeping madrasas apart from those facilities to be benefited. Madrasa education has always been remained by the government as a stepson for whom to be alive is an extreme achievement.

### **Prospects for Madrasa Education**

Madrasa has been the institution for excellence in the Muslim World since the Medieval Period, where students have been trained in the unique education system so that they can contribute in the field of education with religious values. During the golden age of the Muslim Ummah, madrasas provided knowledge and scholarship not only in Islamic cities but also throughout Europe. In addition to this, madrasas contributed to building a brilliant Islamic civilization through developing education, scholasticism, and research in the various fields of knowledge and culture. Despite the current position of madrasas in the whole Muslim world, however, there are many prospects for madrasa education in Bangladesh for the betterment of society. The following are some of the reasons that motivate a researcher to look upon madrasa education in Bangladesh as a seeker of optimistic visualization.

For a Muslim country like Bangladesh, madrasa education is needed because no emphasis on religious education is provided in the formal schooling system. If schools do not provide adequate education for moral and spiritual development for school-age students, many social problems in Muslim communities can be anticipated in the future. Currently, many immoral and inhumane activities are occurring in public life in Bangladesh due to the absence of moral and religious education in traditional secular teaching institutions. Sexual harassment, Kishor gang (teen gang), drug abuse, unsocial activities, and social diseases such as eve teasing exist among teenagers throughout Bangladesh, whether in rural or urban areas. The influence of Indian films and western cultural aggression are also the causes of these unethical issues among the boys of Bangladeshi society. On the other hand, Madrasa students are nearly safe from these kinds of social illness. In relation to this, Bano stated that Madrasa offers a unique education system of religious and modern combination, which prepares students with religious values as they are against these activities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bano, M. (2011, December). Engaging madrasas to meet the EFA targets: Evidence from South Asia. Paper presented at 8th International Conference on Islamic Economics and Finance. Sustainable Growth and Inclusive Economic Development from an Islamic Perspective. Qatar National Convention Centre, Doha – Qatar. 18th – 20th December.

Mohammad Shahjahan, the controller of publications for the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, said that madrasa education is one of the best education systems in Bangladesh. In this system, modern and religious education are combined together. For instance, students studying in the science group are required to take four courses like Arabic, the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic law in addition to their regular science coursework.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, a graduate from this background not only becomes a good citizen or a good maulana (religious man) but also becomes a good responsible man in his workplace because of having religious values in his education.

According to Karim<sup>37</sup>, Aliya produces intellectuals who specialize in both general studies and religious matters. Aside from that, a student from a madrasa can enroll in Bangladesh's modern education system. Students can study in agriculture, engineering, medical, or technical universities, either private or public, according to their area of specialization according to Daily Inqilab in 2014. Thus, Alia madrasa graduates can pursue higher education; in fact, 32% of Bangladeshi university professors teaching in the humanities and social sciences are Alia madrasa graduates.<sup>38</sup>

Religious education is the demand for building up the image of *ukhuwah* (Muslim brotherhood) among Muslims through ordinary human development. Development in Islam refers to moral, character, personal, and social development, while in modern education, development refers on a large scale to materialistic and technological development. By offering religious education in the madrasas of Bangladesh, madrasa students are different from school students in terms of characters, moral behaviors, attitudes, and conduct as formal modern education offers religious education as an optional subject, which does not encourage students to study religious education in an attentive way.

Due to a lack of religious knowledge and ethical understanding, students from school or college backgrounds, having a wider outlook towards the world, do not feel the urge to build their own selves prepared to nourish moral instincts. Modern education represents the western values that generate the capitalist system in economics and the

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<sup>36</sup> Ashif, I. S. and Shohel, M. (2018, January 19). Bangladesh: What are madrasa students actually learning? Dhaka Tribune. <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/19/madrasa-students-actually-learning>.

<sup>37</sup> Karim, M. (2018). Some Notes on Madrasah Education in Bangladesh: A Historical Description. *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)*. 1.1.10.26555/ijish.v1i1.130.

<sup>38</sup> Tahmima, A. (2011, May 21). An education: Inside Bangladesh's madrasas. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/21/inside-madrasa-for-girls-bangladesh-tahmima-anam>

secularist system in politics. On the contrary, madrasa symbolizes religious education, which signifies religious values for every aspect of life. Moreover, the current modern education system has been influenced by the impact of globalization. It advocates the reformation through economic, technological, industrial, and scientific developments, whereas no importance is accorded to moral and ethical phenomena. This stratagem of globalization has already removed the precedence of religious entities, destroying the pre-settled cultures and norms of society and religion by driving away the essential values of man.<sup>39</sup>

From the very beginning, madrasa education in Bangladesh has been playing a significant role in building and shaping the Muslim Ummah (generation) according to the Islamic way of life. Madrasa education stands on the basis of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which produce the sense of Ukhuwah (Muslim brotherhood) to the broad concept of Muslim Ummah.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Madrasas have a long golden tradition from the dawn of Islam till today. It produced scholars, scientists, philosophers, and mystics who once led the world for a thousand years. But ironically, it is to say that in a new world order, Muslims have turned their faces away from Madrasa education, or in other words, Madrasa has lost its appeal towards Muslim society. To produce a good Muslim or to convey pure Islamic knowledge, no way other than the Madrasa is still the real picture in a post-modern civilization. Madrasa is one of the oldest Islamic traditions that is still serving the Ummah and preserving Islamic culture.

Prof. AKM Saif Ullah, the chairman of the Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board, asserted that the Alia madrasa system is modern and that subjects like science and IT have been added, but Jahirul Islam, an assistant professor in the Arabic department at Dhaka University, contended that to function in the world and in daily life, this education is insufficient, so the system still needs to be worked on.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, Dr. Kaykobad proposes a few plans to enhance Alia madrasas education. First, it is necessary to update science textbooks. Inventive textbooks that will draw pupils in and encourage creative thinking. Secondly, the way teachers are trained has to change. Teachers must

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<sup>39</sup> Abushouk, A. I. (2006). Globalization and Muslim Identity Challenges and Prospects. International Islamic university, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Volume 96, No. 3, pp. 487-505. DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-1913.2006.00139. x

<sup>40</sup> Ashif, I. S. and Shohel, M. (2018, January 19). Bangladesh: What are madrasa students actually learning? Dhaka Tribune. <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/19/madrasa-students-actually-learning>



receive training on how to support students' learning rather than simply impart knowledge. And finally, he advises offering distance learning for madrasa students in order to address the lack of skilled teachers. Due to the shortage of qualified teachers, he urges recording and televising the classes of top teachers through a dedicated education-based television channel and uploading the videos to free online platforms such as YouTube. This would make top-notch academic materials available and free to all madrasa students as well as those in schools and colleges.<sup>41</sup>

The madrasah education system in Bangladesh is integrated, which offers both religious education and modern education together. Although this education is combined, but still has many problems from inside and outside, which are very important to overcome<sup>42</sup>. According to Bakar the view of madrasa education and current curricular and pedagogical changes in Islamic faith-based education is in reaction to the shifting role of Islam in a globalized world and the necessity to rethink madrasa education to prepare and position Muslims in contemporary society.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Shahnawaz said its curriculum and teaching-learning procedures both require a full makeover. To remove the allegation associated with this innovative madrasa stream of education, which provides both spiritual and materialistic knowledge, awareness-raising campaigns should be started at the same time.

Therefore, adequate corrections are required both inside and outside of this educational setting. Efforts should be made to improve and to make this education appropriate to be the best supportive for the graduates of this madrasa. Therefore, the researcher makes the following formal recommendations based on the problems found through reviewing the literature on Aliya Madrasah education and suggestions from the previous researchers, scholars, academicians from public universities, policymakers and elites of the society.

1. The authority of the madrasa must be able to have a strong management body, including modern education background people. Modern-educated members of the committee can realize the need for modern subjects.
2. The government should increase the fund for madrasas. Without a sufficient budget for education, madrasas will not be able to improve their education system.

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<sup>41</sup> Shahnawaz, M. C. K. (2017, October 27). Alia Madrasa: an education system on its deathbed. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/alia-madrasa-1482232>

<sup>42</sup> Karim, M. (2018). Some Notes on Madrasah Education in Bangladesh: A Historical Description. *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)*. 1.1.10.26555/ijish.v1i1.130.

<sup>43</sup> Bakar, M.A. (Ed.). (2018). *Rethinking Madrasah Education in a Globalised World* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315184234>

3. The government and other public and private organizations must give up their disparate and hostile attitude towards Madrasa students in terms of job opportunities, university admissions, and public exam competitions.
4. In order to improve the teaching and learning environment, the government should establish some new madrasa teacher training institutions. Without training, teachers would not be able to create an atmosphere in the class. Training will enable them to keep up with suitable modern trends in education.
5. A technology-based training program for Madrasa teachers needs to be introduced, especially at the Dakhil and Alim levels, to make sure that they have enough skills and knowledge to deal with the students by providing good tuition according to subject and skill areas.
6. To prepare the curriculum and syllabus for Madrasa education, the ministry of education must appoint people who are curriculum specialists in both religion and modernity and have contemporary knowledge, including religious values.
7. The government should fulfil all the activities of madrasas, especially expediting the establishment of an independent Madrasa Education Department.
8. And finally, the government should form an independent monitoring cell for madrasas under the Ministry of Higher Education Bangladesh to monitor the educational quality of madrasas.

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