

Suggestions to Revamp *Madrasah* Curriculum in Pakistan

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KEYWORDS Curriculum. English Education. Integrated Curriculum. Madrasah. Revision of Syllabus. Science Education

ABSTRACT This study aims to explore the views extracted from the literature of prominent scholars of the sub-continent for integrated curriculum in *Madrasah* education. Pakistani *Madrasahs'* curriculum though based on *Dars Nizami* curriculum is implemented with minor modifications and additions. The current curriculum mainly consists of Islamic sciences such as *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, jurisprudence, etc. only. With the passage of time, modern sciences were excluded from original curriculum of *Dars Nizami* by *Madrasah* authorities. *Madrasah* authorities are still reluctant and confused to integrate the modern sciences that how one can integrate the modern sciences into *Madrasah* education that is confined only for religious education? But there are strong recommendations of prominent scholars of the subcontinent to integrate the modern sciences in *Madrasah* education so that the graduates of *Madrasahs* may render their services in every field of the society. This paper provides an overview of prominent scholars' statements and suggests that the integrated curriculum may be adopted in *Madrasahs* up to Higher Secondary level.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistani *Madrasahs'* curriculum though based on *Dars Nizami* curriculum is implemented with minor modifications and additions. This curriculum comprises of nearly 50 books based on 18 different sciences. Originally, the curriculum model was set by Nizamuddin Sehavi [d. 1748 AD] during the era of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb Alamgir [d. 1707] (Mohammad and Ameen 2011). This curriculum was developed for the civil services of the Mughal government (Salim 1993: 17). The Pakistani *Madrasahs'* curriculum is based on this *Dars Nizami* system that is implemented with minor modifications and enhancement (Mohammad and Ameen 2011). This curriculum mainly consists of religious and Islamic sciences such as *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, jurisprudence, etc. Since the curriculum developed by Mulla Nizamuddin Sehavi does not contain any sectarian aspect, all schools of thought, that is, Deobandi, Barelwi and Shia unanimously accept this curriculum and give it the religious inviolable status (Mohammad and Ameen 2011).

There was a huge number of articles, research papers, conferences, discussion for *Ma-*

drasah reforms in terms of curriculum changes, teaching methodology, examination system, certification, the role of teachers, administration system, etc. For instance, Nadvi (1979) traced the oldest Islamic *Madrasahs* in India. In this regard, he also traced the arrival of Muslims in India. He clearly explains how *Madrasahs* were spread throughout India; he thoroughly analyzed and studied about the curricula of these *Madrasahs* in different periods of Indian history. The author tried his best to collect the historical data of India's oldest *Madrasahs* and their curricula which definitely describes the educational evolution and objectives of these *Madrasahs* in India.

Salim (1993) researched about the Muslims' educational and character-building system in Indo-Pak. The author especially researched in this area with the spirit of imparting knowledge to the new generations about ancestors' exploits and their glorious past in Indo-Pak. He described the educational history of the Muslims in the subcontinent. The author compares and differentiates various prestigious *Madrasahs* of Indo-Pak with their featured educational system.

Saleem (1997) had written a small booklet. In this book the author had introduced briefly about the world-famous and historical *Madrasahs*. The historical development of *Ma-*

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drasahs is linked to the Masjid-e Nabvi in Madinah. The famous *Madrasahs* of various countries of the world are cited in this book such as Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Samarkand, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan.

Khalid (2004) has written an excellent book on the reforms of *Madrasahs* of Pakistan. This book is mainly composed of four parts: (i) The sermons of renowned scholars (ii) An analysis and suggestions over administration and teaching methodology in *Madrasahs*. (iii) Analysis of evolution and statistic of Pakistani *Madrasahs* with figures and charts. (iv) An annexure for the process of curricula of *Madrasahs* in Pakistan.

Ali (2009) provides valuable insights into the role of religious *Madrasahs* in Pakistan in both the political and historical contexts. The empirical evidence presents a nuanced understanding of how religious education impacts regional conflicts. The ultimate aim of this research is to prevent the escalation of existing regional conflicts while guiding the policymakers regarding their attempts to reform educational institutions.

Bashir (2013) discusses *Dars Nizami* and its curricula in Pakistani *Madrasahs*. He denounces on the methodology of teachings in *Dars Nizami*, he proposes reforms for the *Madrasahs* in Pakistan. He has presented an extract of his forty years' experiments of teaching and identifies the flaws in the system of teaching in *Dars Nizami* and provided practical tips for eradicating these flaws. The author is a proponent of modern Arabic as a medium of instructions in *Dars Nizami*.

Narongraksakhet (2003) had conducted the research on developing local-based curriculum guidelines for Islamic private schools in southern Thailand. Delphi technique was used in this research for the application of proposed locally based curriculum guidelines to Islamic private schools in southern border provinces of Thailand. His research results show that no single section of the National Education Act 2542/1999 is contradicted to develop the locally based curriculum for the benefits of the southern stakeholders.

Iqbal and Raza (2015) analyzed the role of *Madrasahs* in Jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and reforms introduced by Pervez Musharraf to regularize *Madrasah* in order to reduce the involvement of *Madrasah* students

in Jihad activities. The article does not deal with the integration of the *Madrasah* curriculum with modern sciences.

Sajjad (2013) mainly dealt with concerns of Pakistani Ulama regarding the *Madrasah* reforms initiated by foreign elements after the 9/11 scenario. They were of the view that there must not be involvement of external forces in *Madrasah* reforms, it should be left to *Madrasah* authorities.

Butt and Khalid (2017) talk about the hidden potentiality of *Madrasah* of developing intercultural communication patterns, cooperation, and social mobilization for taking part in religious, political, and revolutionary movements of the country. Because teachers and students of *Madrasah* belong to different cultures and traditions.

Anjum (2017) focuses on the needs of modification of curriculum and education system of the *Madrasahs* but this study is confined to *Madrasahs* located in Lahore city of Pakistan. It gives some good suggestions but since this study is restricted to one city only, it does not serve the purpose.

Ahmed (2009) urges on carrying *Madrasah* reforms on the model of Bangladesh and Indonesia but gives no solid suggestions on how to do it? He relates the success of *Madrasah* reforms to the political will, and partly to the success of poverty alleviation efforts. This paper, like many others, addresses the issue of *Madrasah* reforms from only radicalism and extremism perspective.

Tracing the thoughts of Ibn Khaldoun, Shah Waliullah and Piaget on education, Rehman (2015) looks at the *Madrasah* system of education in Pakistan to find out whether it has the ability to produce scholars who could lead the administrative, economic, social and politically complex issues with an analytical and innovative approach which is required from an Islamic scholar.

The discussion in the previous section reveals that most of the authors have focused on the very few issues related to *Madrasah* and these studies do not discuss actual challenges and problems faced by *Madrasah* students. At present, no researcher is dealing directly with developing integrated curriculum guidelines for the secondary and higher secondary levels in

Madrasahs of Pakistan. Only a few scholars have talked about curriculum development and suggested minor or major modifications for upgrading *Madrasahs* according to the modern social changes, but no single scholar studied or analyzed the *Madrasah* curriculum in the perspective of students' need, psychology or philosophy of the curriculum. In this regard, this study will help to find out the space for the induction of subjects of modern science in the existing *Madrasah* curriculum.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to convince the *Madrasah* management in Pakistan to introduce some modern subjects to their syllabus so that their students may easily divert to the mainstream schooling system whenever they want. Also, to save them from dual travail of studying *Madrasah* education and appear in exams of mainstream schooling system separately because the current *Madrasah* degrees are not easily recognised and accepted for government jobs and hence, they are restricted to religious activities to earn their livelihood. In order to be in line with mainstream schooling system, they appear in governmental boards' examination and that is also possible in humanities group only. They cannot enter the fields of science and technology.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical interpretations and descriptive methods have been followed and interpretations have been made based on the wide review of literature that has been cited for the study.

Data Collection

Data has been collected from literary sources alone for this study and another study is in the pipeline for the same objective in which data is being collected through the interviews with eminent scholars related to *Madrasah* education.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Importance of Education and Modern Sciences in Islam

The foundation of Islam was based on knowledge and education, as the first revelation was

with the word of "*Iqra*", which means 'read' (96:1). There are numerous verses of the Holy Qur'an, which highlight the importance of the knowledge. For instance, Hazrat Adam A.S was given highest rank among all creatures only because of knowledge as it is stated in the following verse:

"And He taught Adam the names" (2: 31). Again, it is stated in Surah al-Alaq, "He who taught by the pen. Taught man what he never knew" (96: 4-5). All messengers were sent to convey the message of Allah and to impart the knowledge to the people as it is clear from the verse of Surah Al Imran, "Allah has blessed the believers, as He raised up among them a messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them, and teaches them the Scripture and wisdom; although before that they were in evident error." (3: 164). Knowledgeable persons are given highest ranks in the Holy Qur'an. It says, "Allah elevates those among you who believe, and those given knowledge, many steps. Allah is Aware of what you do" (58: 11). The Holy Qur'an declares that the persons who possess knowledge and those who do not, they are not equal in the status, as it is stated in Surah al-Zumr, "Say! Are those who know and those who do not know equal?" (39: 9). Then Almighty Allah says in many places of the Holy Qur'an that He explains His verses and signs to those people and nations who have knowledge (6:97,105, 7: 32, 9: 11, 10: 5, 29: 43, 30: 22 and 41: 3). It is notable that in these verses and in other hundreds of verses the creation of earth, heavens, man and other creatures are highlighted to ponder over them and their Creator. Definitely, getting knowledge about these creatures is not possible without knowing modern sciences. These verses demand from that one should study about heavens, earth, stars, atoms, plants, inanimate objects, animal and human life (Husaini 2014). Therefore, it is clear that the Holy Qur'an not only demands its believers to seek religious knowledge but knowledge of modern sciences too.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) also initiated such steps to promote education among Muslims, besides religious education, as he allowed his companions to learn other sciences and skills too, like he directed Hazrat Zaid bin Sabit to learn Hebrew language

(Khan 2002). He sent some companions to Yemen for learning weaponry. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) ordered prisoners of Badar to teach children of Muslims how to write and read (Hussain 2015).

All the above references of Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) clearly explain that there is no difference in the religious education and modern sciences, as both sciences are very essential for Muslims. Albeit, religious education is more important than modern sciences, which is why Ghazali (1993) differentiates between both sciences, he ranked religious sciences as *Farz Ain* (individual obligation) and modern sciences as *Farz Kifayah* (Community obligation) (Alkanderi 2001). Ghazali is not alone in this concept but other prominent Muslim philosophers are also of this opinion that both sciences are compulsory in an education system. For example, Ibn Khaldun considers both sciences very essential for an individual to improve his personality for a perfect social life (Khuram 1996). Even Ibn Tufayl gives more emphasis on natural sciences and he claims that if Allah had not exposed Himself through His messengers then He would have been revealed by scientists and philosophers by their studies of nature (Palmer et al. 2006). Muslim scholars did not limit their studies to religious sciences only, but they also studied all modern sciences.

Importance of Integrated Curriculum at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

Secondary and higher secondary levels of any educational system are very important and play a vital role for students. Initial professional education starts at the secondary level while after completing higher secondary level, specific professional education is started throughout the world (Shirazi 2015). After completing both levels of secondary and higher secondary, students become eligible to select any professional field according to their interests and needs. But in *Madrasah* education system, students do not have such any kind of choice for selecting another field of interest due to non-flexibility of secondary and higher secondary levels. Although, *Madrasah* education system have same graduation levels like mainstream, but these levels do not have potentiality for providing choice

of professional field to the students. Students are strictly bound to complete *Madrasah* education. If any student discontinues after any level in *Madrasah*, then he loses his worth in the society and he cannot get further education in mainstream schooling system. Due to this reason, majority of students appear in mainstream examination to keep themselves on the safe side for their professional field. Definitely, this kind of practice is a huge academic and financial burden over the students. Therefore, it is the dire need of time, society and students that *Madrasah* educational levels should have flexibility of providing choice of various professional fields to the students according to their interests and needs. There is only one way that can solve this problem, that is, some modern subjects should be integrated at par mainstream educational system to synchronise secondary and higher secondary levels of *Madrasah* with mainstream educational system. The integrated system of education will enable students with more skills and capabilities for various professional fields.

What Was Dars Nizami Originally?

This is not a new idea at all for the integration of modern sciences with religious sciences. The whole history of Muslims testifies that Muslims never separated educational system on the basis of religious and modern sciences. The history of *Dars Nizami* itself witnesses that originally this system was a blend of modern and religious sciences. It was also divided into various levels, and each level was set purposively and productively to enable students for certain skills. As (Salim (1993) describes that there were three levels of education, namely,

1. *Maktab*: In this level the Holy Qur'an (Nazrah) and initial Persian language were taught.
2. *Madrasah Farsi*: During this level Persian language was taught and through this medium of language other modern sciences were taught to the students.
3. *Madrasah Arabi*: In this level Arabic language and religious sciences were taught.

Further, he explains that the first level was focused on basic religious knowledge and char-

acter building. The second level was known as *Darjah Farsi* that was popular before the British invasion and Persian language was considered as the national language due to its implementation in government offices and business sector. Therefore, the Persian language and literature was the integral part of the educational curriculum. This level was equal to the modern higher secondary level, and modern sciences were taught in this level that fulfilled the needs of criteria that were used in official requirements. The graduates of this level were able and eligible for every kind of job. The third level was known as *Darjah Arabiah*, in which higher education of religious and modern sciences was provided through Arabic medium of language. This level was considered as the final and actual education and graduates of this level were named as *Alim*.

According to the above statement, it is clear that the original system of education was divided in three levels, and each level was carrying some certain purposes and goals. For example, the purpose of the first level was to impart the basic teachings of Islam that was and is the basic need of every Muslim to follow the Islam with true spirit throughout his or her life. The purpose of second level was to produce the human resource for the society in every field to run the governmental affairs and business system in the country. The purpose of the third level was to produce scholars specialised in Islamic sciences and to promote higher education in the country. If one compares the old and original system with the current *Madrasah* educational system, then one finds that the current system is quite opposite to the original one. It focuses on religious education only and disregards the modern sciences. Therefore, it is time to make the *Madrasah* education system productive and purposive, and it must follow the old and original system of *Darse Nizami*. Modern sciences should also be integrated in the current *Madrasah* education system to produce human resource in various fields of the society.

Hindrances in the Implementation of Integrated System

On the other hand, *Madrasah* authorities are still reluctant to integrate the modern sciences

in curriculum because they are very confused and grumble about how can they integrate modern sciences into *Madrasah*, which is only for religious education. By adding modern sciences into *Madrasahs*, they will lose their uniqueness. People will no longer prefer *Madrasah* if they become like conventional schools. First of all, there should be no confusion with regard to the integration of modern sciences as per religious point of view and old Islamic education system, as earlier Muslim scholars never opposed learning the modern sciences. Secondly, there are strong recommendations of recent prominent scholars of the subcontinent to integrate the modern sciences in *Madrasah* education system so that the graduates of *Madrasahs* may render their services in every field of the society. For instance, Tayyab (1947) clearly says that one cannot change the teachings of Islam that belong to *Wahyi* (revelation) in the curriculum of *Madrasahs*, but one can exchange those sciences that were considered in past as modern sciences like philosophy and Sufism with science and technology. When it was time of Philosophy and Sufism, the holy Qur'an was explained in a philosophical and mystical way. Science and technology have now replaced those sciences. So now if it is the time of science and technology, then Qur'an can be well explained in the light of science and technology. *Madrasah* authorities should be convinced that this integration will be up to a certain level and *Madrasah's* status of being specialisation institute in Islamic sciences will remain intact.

Scholars' Opinions about the Inclusion of Modern Sciences in *Madrasah* Curriculum

Nomani (2014) says that there is a dire need to study English language and modern sciences along with old sciences (religious) to know the modern philosophy.

Azad (2014) says that *Madrasahs* could not maintain their relationship with time, as time and the development of the world run away very fast, but *Madrasahs* remained in the same position. Consequently, the relationship of *Madrasah* education is disconnected with the demands and needs of the time. It was prime duty to go through with the demands of time.

Madani (2014) expressed his views that when the Holy Prophet peace be upon him ordered Zaid bin Sabit for learning Hebrew language and he himself prepared the ring to stamp on letters for corresponding with kings of other countries to follow the customs of the time, then how can one deny and neglect the importance of foreign languages and sciences in modern times? Religious status also demands like other social demands that one should learn foreign languages, customs and sciences.

Shafi (n.d) articulates that at the beginning time of *Dars Nizami*, subjects like Persian, logic, philosophy and mathematics were included in the curriculum. Definitely these sciences were not religious at all nor they were essential to understand the Qur'an, Sunnah and religious sciences. The only rationale of including these sciences was to enable the graduates of *Madrasah* for political and state affairs. Further, Shafi (2014) argues that when the predecessors included a huge portion of Persian language, mathematics, Greek philosophy and logic in their educational curriculum according to the need of time, then why would one not follow them to include English language and modern sciences according to the need of modern times? If one replaces the Persian language and philosophy with English language and modern sciences, it is not against the teachings of Islam, nor against the educational pattern of the predecessors.

According to Usmani Taqi (2005) every *Madrasah* should establish such elementary schools that carry the same curriculum of mainstream for the education, where there should be no difference of dual (religious and modern) systems of education. Therefore, *Madrasah* education system should be divided in four levels, namely, *Ibtidaiyah* (primary), *Saniyah* (secondary), *Aliah* (higher secondary) and *Takhasus* (graduation, master's, specialisation). Furthermore, Usmani Taqi (2014) explains that now the world is a global village, and the whole world is connected with fastest communication and transportation systems. Every day, latest and new things are happening in every field like medical science and technology. It is very difficult to guide and solve the current problems of Muslim *Ummah* without the knowledge of these modern sciences. In this point of view, studying and imparting the knowledge of modern sciences would itself be the part of religious sciences.

Ghazi (2014) describes that there is a big misconception regarding *Dars Nizami* that this system of education was developed for specialisation in religious sciences only, and this kind of thinking is totally wrong. But the real fact is that *Dars Nizami* was a modern and up to date educational system prevailing at that time. Mulla Nizamuddin Sehavi compiled nearly fifty-six prevalent sciences in an eight years' educational program, which is equivalent to the graduation level of the modern educational system. His purpose was that graduates of this educational program should become able to go to any professional field for a job and specialisation.

Sham (2009) suggests that one should launch a system in which *Madrasahs* and mainstream schools should not work as two parallel institutions. They should be integrated in one educational system in the country because for every Muslim it is very essential to acquire the basic knowledge of Islam and modern sciences.

Murtaza (2009) tells that there is no difference and discrimination between religious and non-religious education in Islam, because in the past these *Madrasahs* were the centres of the modern sciences of that time and were fulfilling all needs of Muslim society.

Rahman (2009) states that in the past, *Madrasahs* were educational centres not only for religious, but worldly affairs too. Students of *Madrasah* studied science, medicine, engineering, algebra, geometry, logic and philosophy alongside *Fiqh*, Arabic and Persian grammar. The broad and the practical nature of the syllabi enabled the students of *Madrasahs* to be good doctors, engineers, architects, teachers and statesmen. Moreover, he describes the current situation that now demands are growing for *Madrasahs* to widen their role in society by adding modern education to religious curriculum because people are looking to *Madrasahs* to answer the questions about economic, financial, sociological and professional matters. Therefore, for playing a dynamic and effective role, *Madrasahs* need to be productive, visionaries and reach out to the world.

The above-mentioned opinions of prominent scholars of the subcontinent clearly provide information that prevailing modern sciences always remained an integral part of the Islamic education system and Islamic teachings do not

oppose to acquire modern sciences. The current *Madrasah* education system was adopted temporarily to save the religious education after the advent of British rule in the subcontinent, when the British government implemented a pure secular educational system and excluded religious education from it. Temporary *Madrasah* education was introduced purely on the basis of protecting religious education. Later on, this temporary system (which is not according to the spirit of Islamic teachings) became a permanent education system of *Madrasah*. Therefore, it is a dire need of modern times that *Madrasah* education system should be integrated with modern sciences in broad benefit to the Muslim society and to eradicate difference and discrimination between two parallel educational systems.

To What Extent and Level Should Modern Subjects be Incorporated in Madrasah Education?

Another issue related to this discussion is to what extent and level should modern sciences be integrated in *Madrasah* education? There are two major opinions in this regard.

Most of the scholars suggest that modern subjects should be integrated up to secondary level. Like Usmani Rafi (2000) suggests that the curriculum should be integrated up to secondary level without difference (between religious and modern), whereas basic education of Qur'an and Sunnah should be provided along with mother tongue and modern sciences. Iqbal (2007) expresses his views that modern sciences are only acceptable up to secondary level. Giving more provision to modern sciences after secondary level will make religious education subdued. Mazahri (2012) proposes that religious and modern sciences should be included as compulsory subjects up to secondary level, and curriculum should be divided in various professional fields in subsequent levels. Nadvi (2012) gives his opinion that the curriculum of *Madrasahs* and mainstream schools should be integrated and made same up to secondary level. Al-Rashdi (2007) shares his assessments that there should be a limitation of integration of modern sciences in *Madrasah* curriculum and this is secondary level. After this level, demanding integration of modern sciences is not justifiable because reli-

gious education is a permanent field like other fields of medical and engineering. Therefore, integration of modern sciences should be confined up to secondary or higher secondary level where basic education is required and needed.

Very few scholars think that integration of modern sciences should extend up to higher secondary level as per mainstream educational system.

For example, Murtaza (2009) thinks that modern sciences should be integrated up to higher secondary level, so that graduates of *Madrasahs* have same status and opportunities like graduates of mainstream schools. Ghazi (2009) recommends that modern sciences should be integrated in some limits, and its minimum limit is secondary level, while its maximum limit is higher secondary level. After higher secondary level there should be government or private institutions for specialisation in various fields. Naimi (2009) says that there should be one equal educational system in *Madrasahs* and mainstream schools up to secondary or higher secondary level.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge is the most important factor in Islamic teachings and Muslims have been urged to get knowledge by God and the prophet (peace be upon him). Knowledge, whenever mentioned in Qur'an or Hadith, refers to any knowledge in general, and not the religious one only, as it has been misunderstood by many orthodox Muslims. It is crystal clear from the history that early Muslims integrated modern sciences and philosophy with religious sciences, and they urged to study them. This study suggests that most scholars are of the strong opinion that the *Madrasah* education system be revamped by including modern sciences in the curriculum. In the light of above discussion, some recommendations are presented as under.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of all the above statements, the study strongly recommends and supports the following.

1. The modern sciences should be incorporated in *Madrasah* education up to at least secondary level.

2. English language (replacing Persian, which was part of the *Madrrasah* curriculum earlier) should be taught as a subject, as it has become the language of communication globally.
3. All modern subjects which are taught in mainstream schools like physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, etc. should be included in *Madrrasah* curriculum so that the students can switch to any school and field of their choice at any stage.
4. The original *Darse Nizami* system should be implemented in true letter and spirit by including modern subjects mentioned previously.
5. The reservations of *Madrrasah* authorities may be taken into consideration and removed after dialogue with convincing arguments. They must be guaranteed that their sovereignty will not be harmed and *Madrrasahs'* independent status of being specialising institutes for Islamic sciences will remain intact.

It is clear that unless the current *Madrrasah* education system is not synchronised with globally prevailing schooling systems by adding modern sciences into curriculum, the *Madrrasah* graduates will continue to feel alien and will lag behind others in pace and qualifications necessary to survive in modern world with dignity and authority.

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Paper received for publication in February 2020
Paper accepted for publication in April 2020